

# FORTUNE Prelims Precise

APRIL 2023



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FORTUNE IAS

# Toppers in Top 100



# History & Culture

## Konda Reddi tribe

- » Recently, a Konda Reddi tribal habitation had to be rehabilitated for the **Polavaram irrigation project**.
- It is **one of the most backward tribal groups** in the **states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**.
- Traditionally they practise **shifting cultivation (Podu sagu)** and they live in the **interior forest areas** largely **cut-off from the mainstream**.
- They are listed as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)** and are known for their **eco-friendly practices** such as use of household articles made of bamboo, bottle gourd, and seed.

## Yangli Festival



Yangli Festival Of Tiwa

- » The Yangli festival of the **Tiwa community** was recently held in Assam.
- The Yangli festival, also known as the **Lakshmi Puja of the Tiwa people** was organised in the **Guva region of Assam**.
- **Tiwa/Lalung** is an **ethnic group** mainly inhabiting the states of **Assam and Meghalaya**.
- This festival is celebrated **once every five years** by the members of the community.
- It is the **opportunity to welcome the Goddess Lakshmi** and seek blessings for a good harvest.
- The **sowing of seeds for paddy** starts soon **after the completion of this festival**.

## Guru Tegh Bahadur



- » The Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, the **ninth guru of the Sikhs**, is being **celebrated on April 11**.
- **Parkash Purab** is a term used in **Sikhism** to refer to the **birth anniversary celebrations** of the **ten Sikh gurus**. “Parkash” means “illumination” or “light”, while “Purab” means “day”.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur, the **ninth guru of the Sikhs** was born in Amritsar in 1621.
- His writings are housed in the ‘**Guru Granth Sahib**’ as 116 poetic hymns.
- He **founded** the **town of Chak-Nanki** and played a key role in **setting up preaching centres** throughout the Indian subcontinent.
- He is regarded as the **saviour guru**, as during the reign of the Mughals, there were oppressions in which **people were forced to convert to Islam** under the **Mughal ruler Aurangzeb**.
- He was **executed on the orders of Aurangzeb** in **Delhi in 1675**. His martyrdom is remembered as the **Shaheedi Divas** every year on **November 24**.

## Abhilekh Patal



अभिलेख  
**Abhilekh-PATAL**  
PORTAL FOR ACCESS TO ARCHIVES AND LEARNING



- » The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has praised Abhilekh patal, a **portal with over 1 Crore pages of historical records** of the National Archives.
- Abhilekh Patal is an **online portal to access National Archives of India's reference media** and its digitized collections via the internet.
- The name ‘Abhilekh patal’ is derived from the **Sanskrit word ‘Abhilekh’** meaning the **records of ancient times** and the word ‘patal’ meaning the **platform, board or a surface**.
- The acronym ‘PATAL’ stands for ‘**Portal for Access to Archives & Learning**’.
- It contains the reference media of more than **3.7 million files** held by the **National Archives of India**.

## Mahavir Jayanti

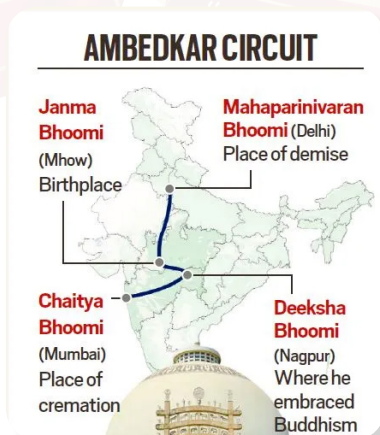
- » The Prime Minister has greeted people on Mahavir Jayanti, recalling the noble teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir, especially the emphasis on peace, compassion and brotherhood.
- **Mahavir Jayanti** is celebrated on the **13th day of the bright half of the moon** in the month of **Chaitra** (usually in the month of March or April).

### Lord Mahavira:

- Mahavir was born to King Siddhartha of Kundagrama and Queen Trishala, a Lichchhavi princess in the year 540 BC in the Vajji kingdom.
- He abandoned worldly life at the age of 30 and attained 'kaivalya' or omniscience at the age of 42.
- Lord Mahavir was named **Vardhamana**, which means "one who grows".
- Mahavira taught **ahimsa** (non-violence), **Satya** (truth), **asteya** (non-stealing), **brahmacharya** (chastity) and **aparigraha** (non-attachment) to his disciples and his teachings were called **Jain Agamas**.
- It is believed that Mahavira passed away and attained **moksha** at the age of 72 in 468 BC at a place called **Pavapuri** near modern **Rajgir** in Bihar.



## Ambedkar Circuit



- » The **Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train** tour on Ambedkar circuit was flagged off from New Delhi.
- The **Ambedkar circuit** or **Panchteerth** is fourth in the list of special tourist circuits, namely, **Ramayana circuit**, **Buddhist circuit** and **North East circuit**.

First proposed in 2016, the circuit would include:

- ➔ **Janma Bhoomi:** Ambedkar's birthplace in Madhya Pradesh's Mhow.
- ➔ **Shiksha Bhoomi:** The place in London where he stayed while studying in the UK.
- ➔ **Deeksha Bhoomi:** In Nagpur where he embraced Buddhism.
- ➔ **Mahaparinirvan Bhoomi:** Place of his demise in Delhi.
- ➔ **Chaitya Bhoomi:** The place of his cremation in Mumbai.
- The Bharat Gaurav Tourist train will be on an **8 day tour** with visits covering places associated with the life of Ambedkar including **New Delhi, Mhow, Nagpur** and sacred Buddhist sites such as **Sanchi, Sarnath, Gaya, Rajgir** and **Nalanda**.
- The train is being operated under the **Dekho Apna Desh** initiative, aimed at promoting domestic tourism, and is a joint collaboration between the **Ministries of Tourism** and **Railways**.

## Pushkaram Festival

- » The **12 day Pushkaram festival** of **Telugu speaking people** commenced in Varanasi along Ganga banks.
- **Pushkaram**, also known as **Pushkaralu**, **Pushkara** or **Pushkar** is an Indian festival that is celebrated along the banks of **12 major sacred rivers** in India.
- The celebration happens **annually, once in 12 years** along each river.
- Each river is associated with a **zodiac sign**, and the river for each year's festival is based on which sign **Jupiter** is in at the time.
- The 12 rivers are **Ganga, Narmada, Saraswati, Yamuna, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Bhima, Pushkar, Tungabhadra, Sindhi** and **Pranahita**.

## Bihu Dance



- » Over 11000 dancers and musicians performed Bihu dance and created 2 world records.
- Bihu dance is a traditional folk dance popular across Assam and performed during Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu, which is the spring festival that heralds the Assamese New Year in mid-April.
- The joyous dance signified by red colour theme costumes is performed by both young men and women and is characterised by brisk dance steps and rapid hand movements.

## Thirunelly temple – Kashi of South

- » The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has urged the government to conserve historically significant structures, including the 600-year-old 'Vilakkumadom' at the Sree Mahavishnu Temple in Thirunelly, Kerala, during its renovation.
- It is a 15th century temple dedicated to the Lord Maha Vishnu.
- Also known as the Sahyamala Kshetram and Kashi of the South, the temple is located on Brahmagiri hills, in Wayanad.
- Thirunelly Temple embodies classical, traditional Kerala architecture.
- Thirunelli Temple is the only temple in the world where the devotees can perform all the rituals related to one's life, starting from birth to death and life after death.
- The temple is part of 108 Abhimana Kshethram or Abhimana Sthalam apart from the other 108 Divya desams of Vaishnavite faith.



## Global Buddhist Summit 2023

- » The Ministry of Culture in partnership with the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) has organised the first Global Buddhist Summit 2023.
- The Global Buddhist Summit is an effort towards engaging eminent scholars, Sangha leaders and Dharma practitioners from all over the world to discuss matters of Buddhist and universal concerns and to come up with policy inputs to address them.
- Theme of the 2023 Summit was "Responses to contemporary challenges: Philosophy to praxis", which saw the participation of key figures from the global Buddhist community including the Dalai Lama.
- The two day summit concluded with the New Delhi Declaration that called upon all nations, organisations and individuals to work towards creating a world free from conflict, violence and war.

## Hakki Pikki Tribe

- Members of the Hakki Pikki tribe, traditionally semi-nomadic bird catchers and hunters in Karnataka, were stranded during conflicts in Sudan.
- Classified as Scheduled Tribes, they were rehabilitated after the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 banned hunting.
- Known for indigenous medicines, some have recently moved to Africa.
- Their mother tongue, Vaagri, an Indo-Aryan language, is endangered according to UNESCO.
- During Operation Kaveri, India evacuated citizens from war-torn Sudan, including members of the Hakki Pikki tribe.



## Tughlaqabad Fort



- » Recently, the Delhi High Court directed the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** to remove encroachments in the historic Tughlaqabad Fort at **New Delhi**.
- It was built by **Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq** (1320-25) who belongs to the **Tughlaq dynasty** (1320-1413).
- The **fortified city** was built in four years on the rocky terrain, as a defense mechanism against **Mongol Invasion**.
- Across the main entrance from the south, **Ghiyasuddin's tomb** is located.
- It is **enclosed within high walls** forming an **irregular pentagon**.
- **Red sandstone** and **White marble** was used in the construction.

## Polity & Governance

### FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act)

- » The **Enforcement Directorate (ED)** has registered a case against the **British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)** India under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) for alleged foreign exchange violation.
- **FEMA** (Foreign Exchange Management Act) came in **1999** as a successor to the **Foreign Exchange Regulation Act or FERA of 1973**.
- The act seeks to regulate **foreign exchange transactions, currency transactions, and foreign payments to promote orderly development and maintenance** of the foreign exchange market in India.
- The act also **empowers the RBI to make rules and regulations** to carry out the provisions of the act.
- **Violation of the provisions of FEMA** can result in **penalties and fines**.

### E-Courts Project

- » The e-Courts project was conceptualised based on the recommendations from the **“National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary, 2005”** submitted by e-Committee, Supreme Court of India.
- It is a **Pan-India Project**, monitored and funded by the **Ministry of Law and Justice**, for District Courts across the country.
- The project aims to improve access to **justice using technology** as part of the **National eGovernance Plan**.



### ONLINE WORKING PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

Kiran P B, IPS

**Kiran P B**, achieved an outstanding feat by securing All India Rank 100 in the UPSC Civil Service Exam while actively working as a full-time IT professional. As an online working professionals student at Fortune IAS Academy, he could balance his professional commitments and academic pursuits effectively.

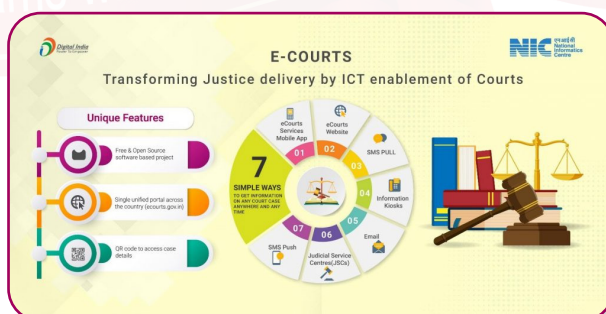
Scan QR Code to know more about the program



**Marina Victor**, shattered all barriers to clear the prestigious UPSC Civil Service Exam while being a dedicated mother. She was an online working professionals student at Fortune IAS Academy.



Marina Victor, IRS  
CSE-2023



## Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)

- » The **Ministry of Home Affairs** has added a new feature to its **e-prosecution portal** that aims to ensure the timely disposal of criminal cases and fix the accountability of government lawyers.
- The **e-prosecution module** is part of the **Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)**, a national **platform** for enabling integration of the main IT system **used for the delivery of criminal justice**.
- It seeks to promote **smooth functioning and transfer of data and information** among the pillars of the **criminal justice system** i.e., **courts, police, jails and forensic science laboratories**.
- **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** will be responsible for the implementation of the project in association with **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.
- The project will be implemented in collaboration with the **States and Union Territories**.

## National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)

- » National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), a flagship project established as part of the “**eCourts Project**” in 2020.
- It functions under the aegis of the **e-Committee Supreme Court of India**.
- It started off with a system for **monitoring pendency and disposal of the cases in High Courts and Subordinate Courts**. Recently the Supreme Court came onboard on the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).
- NJDG provides a **comprehensive database** of orders, judgements, and case details. It also provides the statistics of pendency at **National, State, District and at Individual Court level**.
- NJDG is acknowledged as an **innovation** under the **Ease of Doing Business initiative** of the Government of India.

## Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records (FASTER) System:

- It will enable the **Supreme Court** to instantly, directly, securely, and electronically transmit bail and other orders to jail authorities, district courts, and High Courts.

## Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software (SUVAS):

- It is an **AI system** that can assist in the **translation of judgments into regional languages**.

## Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court's Efficiency (SUPACE):

- It is an **AI based portal** which aims to **assist judges with legal research**.
- It is a tool that collects relevant **facts and laws** and makes them available to a judge.
- It is **not designed to make decisions**, but only to **process facts and to make them available to judges** looking for input for a decision.
- Initially, it was used on an experimental basis by the judges of **Bombay and Delhi High Courts**.
- It will produce results customised to the need of the case and the way the **judge thinks**.

## National Party Status

- » Recently, the **Election Commission** granted **national party status** to AAP and revoked the status of **Trinamool Congress, CPI, NCP**.
- The **Election Commission India** has laid down the criteria for a party to be recognised as a national/state party in the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order 1968**.
- **National parties:** BJP, Congress, CPI(M), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), National People's Party (NPP) and the AAP.

## Criteria for a Party to be Recognised as a National Party

1. If its candidates polled **at least 6% of total valid votes in any four or more states** in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and has **at least four MPs in the last Lok Sabha polls**.
2. If it is **recognised in four or more states as a state party**.
3. If it has won **at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from not less than three states**.

## National Political Parties of India



## Rural-Urban areas in India

- » Recently, Economic Advisory Council to the PM has **suggested change the definition of rural-urban area**.

### Current Definition

- There are mainly **two types** of **urban settlements**:
  - **Administratively urban settlements:** They are those that are governed by an Urban Local Body.
  - **Census Urban Settlements:** They are those that have a population greater than 5000, 75% of the male population working in non-agriculture, and a density of 400 people per sq. Km.
- Any settlement that is not 'urban' is automatically considered 'rural'.

## Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN)

- » Recently, the CBN launched a **unified portal to facilitate licensing and export and import authorizations** for the **pharmaceutical and chemical industries**.
- CBN functions under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**, with its headquarters in **Gwalior**.

### Its functions include:

- ➔ Licence farmers to cultivate opium poppy.
- ➔ Supervises and controls the cultivation.
- ➔ Procures the opium produced by licenced cultivators.

- It also implements various **United Nations Conventions** and the provisions of the **Narcotics Drugs & Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, of 1985**.

## Namsai Declaration

- » It was **signed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu**.
- They met at **Namsai** in **Arunachal Pradesh** and signed the agreement.
- It **aims to reduce the inter-State border dispute** affecting 123 villages.

## National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

- » The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** recently released the **National Credit Framework (NCrF)**.
- **NCF is one of the key components of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** which serves as a framework for designing curricula, textbooks and teaching practices.

### Four sections of NCF:

- NCF for School Education**
- NCF for Early Childhood Care and Education (Foundational Stage)**
- NCF for Teacher Education**
- NCF for Adult Education**

### NCF for School Education (NCF-SE)

- The **formulation of NCF-SE** is undertaken by the **NCERT**.
- It is revisited and **updated once every 5-10 years**, considering the frontline curriculum.
- It **aims to shift from rote** (memorization by repetition) **learning**, connecting education to **real-life situations**, making examinations more flexible and enriching the curriculum beyond textbooks.

### National Credit Framework (NCrF)

- The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** unveiled the **National Credit Framework (NCrF)** for **school and higher education in the country**.

- National Credit Framework (NCrF) is a framework, as part of **New Education Policy (NEP)** jointly-developed by UGC, AICTE, National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVT), (NCERT), CBSE, Ministries of Education and Skill Development, NIOS and Directorate General of Training.
- It is an **inclusive one single meta framework** to seamlessly integrate the credits earned through school education, higher education and vocational & skill education

#### Key Elements

- The framework has **divided the learning ecosystem** into **eight levels**, assigning credits based on learning hours and assessments from Class 5 all the way up to PhD level.
- Every academic assessment can be credited and accumulated in the **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)**.
- As per this system the **final certificate/degree** will be awarded post the accumulation of the required number of and types of courses and the associated credits.

### Exemptions under RTI

- » The Indian **Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-in)** will be exempted from responding to queries under the **Right to Information Act**, the government informed Parliament

#### Right to Information Act 2005

- Under the provisions of the Act, **any citizen may request information** from a public authority by **making an application in writing or through electronic means**.
- The information seeker is **not required to give reasons** for seeking information.

#### The time period for supply of information:

1. In the **normal course**, information shall be **supplied within 30 days** from the receipt of the application by the public authority
2. If the information **sought concerns the life or liberty of a person**, it should be **supplied within 48 hours**.

#### Section 24 & 2nd Schedule of Right to Information Act 2005

- Section 24 of the RTI Act 2005, states that the **law is not applicable to the intelligence and security organisations** specified in the 2nd Schedule of RTI.
- These organisations are **exempted from the purview of act** except the information related to allegations of corruption and human rights violations.
- Under the **2nd schedule of RTI**, there are **26 intelligence and security organisations** like Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of the Cabinet Secretariat, Central Bureau of Investigation, Border Security Force (BSF), National Security Guards (NSG), Assam Rifles and CERT-In, etc.

#### Section 8 of the RTI Act

- It deals with **exemption from disclosure of information** under this legislation.
- It says that **there shall be no obligation on Government to provide any citizen information**, disclosure which will affect:
  1. **India's sovereignty and integrity**
  2. **Security**
  3. **Strategic, scientific or economic interests of the state**
  4. **Relations with foreign States**
  5. **Will lead to incitement of an offence.**

#### Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules (IT Rules) 2021

- » The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** notified amendments to the IT Rules 2021.
- The IT Rules 2021 is related to the **digital news publishers, including websites, portals and youtube channels and Over The Top (OTT) platforms**.
- It is jointly administered by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.

### Key features

- Social media intermediaries with **more than 50 lakh registered users** will be considered **Significant Social Media Intermediaries**. They should appoint a **Chief Compliance Officer, Nodal Contact Person and Resident Grievance Officer**.
- A **three-tier grievance redressal mechanism** which includes; **self regulation by publishers** at the first level, **self regulation by self regulating bodies** of the publishers and an **oversight mechanism** by the central government.
- The rules make it **mandatory** for platforms such as WhatsApp to aid in **identifying the originator of unlawful messages**.
- **Code of Ethics** laid down in the rules prescribe the guidelines to be followed by OTT platforms and online news and digital media entities.
- The OTT platforms would be **required to self-classify the content into five age based categories: U (Universal), U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+ and A (Adult)**.

### Amendments to IT Rules

- The aim of these amendments is to **enforce greater due diligence by online gaming and social media intermediaries** in respect of **online games and fake or false misleading information** related to government business.
- It has been made obligatory on the part of intermediaries to make **reasonable effort not to host, publish or share any online game that can cause the user harm or that has not been verified by an online gaming self regulatory body** by the central government.
- The amendment rules cast **additional obligations on online gaming intermediaries** in relation to online games involving real money.
- It makes it obligatory on the intermediaries to **not to publish, share or host fake, false or misleading information**.
- These fake, false or misleading information will be identified by the **Fact Check Unit (FCU)** of the central government.

### Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)

- » According to CERT-In, **ransomware incidents in India have gone up by 53% in 2022** from the previous year.
- CERT-In is a **functional organisation** of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** with the objective of **securing Indian cyber space**.
- Operational since **2004**, it is the **national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents** as and when they occur.

#### Key functions:

- **Collection, analysis and dissemination of information** on cyber incidents.
- **Forecast and alerts of cyber security incidents**.
- Emergency measures for **handling cyber security incidents**.
- Coordination of **cyber incident response activities**.
- **Issue guidelines, advisories and vulnerability notes** relating to information security practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents.

### National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS)

- » **28 States/UTs** have **adopted the National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS)** for Land Records.
- The NGDRS is a **common, generic and configurable application** developed for **registration departments** across the country.
- It is initiated by the **Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**.
- NGDRS facilitates states to **create state specific instances** and configure the software as per requirements.
- Offering a **complete user interface for property and document registration**, the application **enables citizens to proceed with land buying online**.

## Objectives;

- One Nation One Software
- A single platform of all the stakeholders in registration process
- Citizen empowerment by enabling property valuation and online document submission.

## National Mission for Cultural Mapping (NMCM)

- » The government has **identified and documented distinctive features of more than one lakh villages** across the country.
- The entire exercise has been carried out under the '**Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar**' (**My Village My Heritage**) programme of the **National Mission for Cultural Mapping (NMCM)**.
- NMCM is a scheme launched by the **Ministry of Culture** in 2017 for the purpose of **developing a comprehensive database of artists, art forms** and other resources across the country.
- Having made little progress since 2017, the NMCM was handed over to the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** in 2021.
- Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar (MGMD) is a component of NMCM, undertaken as part of **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav**.
- Under the MGMD, **cultural mapping** of 6.5 lakh villages is being carried out and more than 2 lakh villages have **already been mapped and uploaded** on the **mission portal**.
- In the cultural asset mapping, detailed surveys were carried out by joint teams of the **Ministry of Culture and the Common Service Centres (CSC)**, under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.

## Kirit Parikh Panel

- » The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** approved the Kirit Parikh Panel recommendations on **natural gas pricing**.
- The Kirit Parikh Panel was constituted by the **Government of India** in 2022 and is headed by **energy expert Kirit Parikh** to **review the natural gas pricing formula**.

- The new guidelines are intended to ensure a **stable pricing regime for domestic gas consumers** and **provide adequate protection to producers** from **adverse market fluctuations**.

## Revised Domestic Gas Pricing Guidelines

- The **price of natural gas** shall be **10% of the monthly average of Indian Crude Basket** and shall be **notified on a monthly basis**.
- Indian Crude Basket is the weighted average of the prices of Oman and Dubai sour crude and the Brent sweet crude.
- For the gas produced by **ONGC and Oil India Limited**, the **Administered Price Mechanism (APM)** price shall be subject to a floor and a ceiling.
- Under the APM, the price of gas was based on a formula that equated the weighted average of prices of Canada, the US, the EU and Russia
- There shall be **no revision in the ceiling price for 2 years**, after which the cap will **increase by 25% per year**.

## National Mission on Natural Farming

- » Recently, the Government has formulated **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)** as a **separate and independent scheme**.
- The aim is to **motivate farmers to adopt chemical free farming** and **enhance the reach of natural farming**.
- The scheme to be implemented from **2023 to 2026** is an upscaling of the existing **Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddati (BPKP)**.

## Benefits to farmers:-

- **Incentive for one time manure production infrastructure:-** financial assistance of Rs. 15000/- per ha @ Rs. 5000/- per ha/year for three years.
- Farmer field classes and training provided by **Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO)**.
- A **Digital web portal** (naturalfarming.dac.gov.in) has been launched for promotion of natural farming to display information about implementation framework, resources, implementation progress, farmer's registration, blog etc.

## Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission

- » Recently, the Supreme Court stated that the government may need to “**recheck**” the report of the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission.
- Ranganath Misra Commission is also called **National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities**.
- It was constituted by the **Government of India in 2004**.
- **Objective:** to look into various **issues related to Linguistic and Religious minorities** in India.
- **Important recommendations:-** To permit Dalits who convert to Islam or Christianity to avail of reservation benefits under the Scheduled Caste reservation quota.

## Doctrine of promissory estoppel

- » Recently, Advocate Prashant Bhushan argued that instead of implementing the Agnipath scheme, the government should complete the old process and cited the **doctrine of promissory estoppel**.
- It is a doctrine in **contract law** which enforces a promise **whether executed as a contract or not**.
- The doctrine **seeks to protect the rights of a promisee or aggrieved party against the promisor**.
- The doctrine is invoked in **court by a plaintiff** (the party moving court in a civil action) against the defendant to ensure **execution of a contract or seek compensation for failure to perform the contract**.
- The doctrine of promissory estoppels is based on the **principles of justice, fair play, and good conscience**.

## Economy

### Sagar-Setu

- » Recently, the **mobile app version** of the **National Logistics Portal (Marine)**, named ‘**Sagar-Setu**’, was launched by the **Ministry for Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- The app will **provide real-time information** on vessel-related information, gate, container freight stations, and transactions, enabling digital transactions for payments.
- The app will also **boost maritime trade, enhance the economy of the country, and increase the visibility of operations and tracking**.

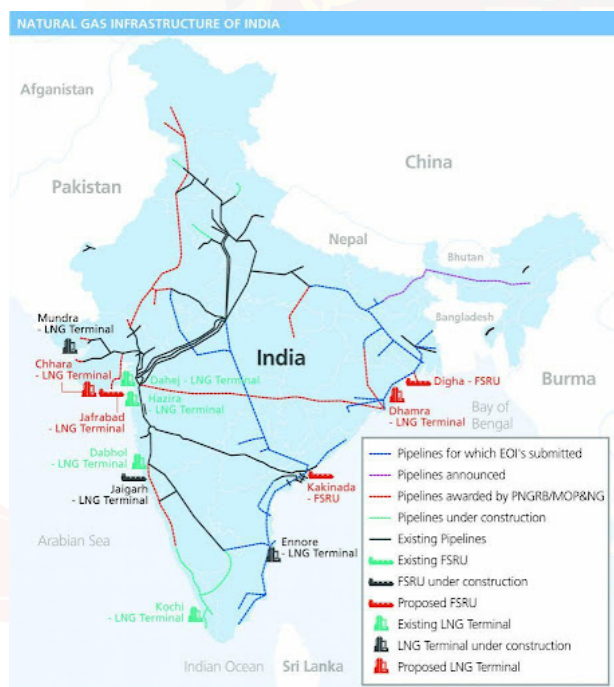
**National Logistics Portal (Marine)** is a national maritime **single window platform** encompassing complete **end-to-end logistics solutions** to help exporters, importers, and service providers exchange documents seamlessly and transact business.

### Indian Handmade Portal

- » The **Ministry of Textiles** recently launched the **India Handmade Portal**, a **virtual store connecting artisans and weavers directly to buyers**.
- Aligned with the “**Vocal for Local**” initiative, it **promotes local artisans and craftsmen**.
- The platform, emphasising **Indian handloom and handicraft**, **welcomes diverse sellers such as artisans, weavers, producer companies, SHGs, and cooperative societies**.
- It **offers a variety of products**, from clothing to home decor and accessories. The portal ensures secure transactions with multiple payment gateways.

## National Gas Grid

- » The Bihar portion of the Barauni - **Guwahati pipeline** which connects **Bihar to the National Gas Grid** was completed recently.
- The **National Gas Grid** is a **33,764 Kms long, Natural Gas pipeline network** that the Centre under the purview of **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)**.
- It aims for the idea of **“One Nation, One Grid”** integrating all regional grids into a national grid.
- **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)** is a **statutory body** that **protects the interests of consumers and entities** engaged in specified activities relating to petroleum, petroleum products.
- The Grid when fully established will **ensure easy availability of Natural Gas across all regions of the country** and connect all major supply and demand centres in the country
- Around **21,500 km Natural Gas Pipelines** are operational and a total of around **13,500 km** length of pipelines are under various stages of construction.



## Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) framework

- » India is pushing to widen the scope of the **common reporting standard (CRS)** at the **G20 grouping** to include non-financial assets like real estate properties under the **automatic exchange of information** among **OECD countries**.
- **Automatic Exchange of Information Framework of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** provides for the **exchange of non-resident financial account information** with the tax authorities in the account holder's country of residence.
- It **reduces the possibility of tax evasion**.
- Presently, the OECD's **Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI)** framework provides for **sharing of financial account details** among **signatory countries**.
- The Signatory countries follow a **Common Reporting Standard (CRS)** to obtain **information from their financial institutions** and automatically exchange that information with other jurisdictions on an **annual basis**.

## Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC)

- » The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** put in place a dispute resolution mechanism for **Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC)**.
- **Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC)** is an organisation that has been created to manage the process of **clearing and settling repo transactions**.

**A repurchase agreement (repo)** is a **short term secured loan** where **one party sells securities to another and agrees to repurchase those securities later at a higher price**. The **securities serve as collateral**. The **difference between the securities' initial price and their repurchase price** is the interest paid on the loan, known as the **repo rate**.

- The dispute resolution mechanism is aimed at addressing **disputes between clearing members** (a member who helps clear and settle transactions in securities), **between clearing members and the LPCC**, **between clearing members and their clients** and **between LPCC and its vendors**.

## UDAN 5.0

- » **Ministry of Civil Aviation** launched UDAN 5.0
- **UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme** is the flagship **Regional Connectivity Scheme** of the **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)**, launched in **2017**.
- It aims to fulfil the aspirations of the common man with an enhanced **aviation infrastructure** and **air connectivity** in **tier II and III cities**.
- It created a framework based on the need and led to the formation of:
  - ✍ **Lifeline UDAN:** For transportation of medical cargo during pandemic
  - ✍ **Krishi UDAN:** To ensure seamless, cost effective, time bound air transportation and associated logistics for all agri produce originating especially from Northeast, hilly and tribal regions
  - ✍ **International UDAN:** Routes for Northeast region to explore international connectivity from/ to Guwahati and Imphal.

### Key features of UDAN 5.0

- Ministry has invited bids from Airlines for routes focusing on two categories of aircrafts; **Category-2 (20-80 seats)** and **Category-3 (>80 seats) aircrafts**.
- There is no restriction on the distance between the **origin** and **destination of the flight**.
- **Viability Gap Funding** to be provided will be capped at **600 km stage length** (Stage length is the length of the flight from take-off to landing). Earlier it was **500 km**.
- **Exclusivity of operation** provided to an airline will be withdrawn if the average quarterly **Passenger Load Factor (PLF)** (measures the ratio of actual passengers to the available seats) is higher than **75%** for **four continuous quarters**.
- Airlines would be required to commence operations within **4 months** of the award of the route.

## Mahila Samman Savings Certificate (MSSC)

- The **Ministry of Finance** launched Mahila Samman Savings Certificate (MSSC) Scheme.
- MSSC is a small savings scheme **launched specifically for female investors** to promote **investment among women**.
- Accounts opened under this scheme will be **single-holder accounts** that can be opened at the Post Office or any registered bank.
- The minimum investment amount is **Rs 1000**, and the **maximum investment is Rs 2 lakh**.

## Mission 50K-EV4ECO

- » **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** announced Mission 50K-EV4ECO to boost the **electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem** in the country.
- Under this mission, SIDBI will **directly provide loans to eligible micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** for the purchase of EVs and developing charging infrastructure.
- The scheme is the **precursor to EVOLVE Scheme by SIDBI and World Bank**, which will offer affordable commercial financing for EV loans.

## Dabba trading

- » Recently, the **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** issued notices naming entities involved in 'dabba trading'.
- It is a form of **informal trading that takes place outside the purview of the stock exchanges**.
- It is a **type of gambling** centred around **stock price movements**.
- Traders **bet on stock price movements without incurring a real transaction** to take physical ownership of a particular stock as is done in an exchange.
- Dabba trading is **recognised as an offence** under the **Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act (SCRA), 1956**.

## Water Metro and Underwater Metro

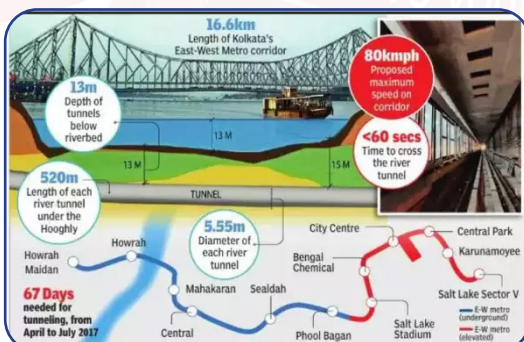
### Kochi Water Metro

- » The Prime Minister dedicated the **Kochi Water Metro** to the nation.
- The Kochi Water Metro is an **innovative and sustainable mode of transportation** that connects various parts of the city through **electric hybrid boats**.
- It is the **first water metro system in India** and the **first integrated water transport system** of this **size in Asia**.
- The project aims to **reduce traffic congestion and improve the connectivity of the city** while promoting ecofriendly means of transportation.
- It envisages the development of **15 identified routes, connecting 10 islands along a network of routes that span 78 km with a fleet of 78 electrically propelled hybrid boats**.



### Underwater Metro

- » India's **first underwater metro** conducted its trial run under the **Hooghly river**.
- India's first Underwater Metro is a part of **Kolkata Metro's East-West Corridor**.
- The underwater tunnels will connect **Kolkata and Howrah with a Metro station at Howrah** which will be the deepest metro station (33 metres below the surface) of the country.
- The metro is expected to cover the **520 metre stretch under the Hooghly river in a span of 45 seconds**.
- Commercial services of the underwater metro are expected to **begin by the end of 2023**.



## Nifty REITs & InvITs Index

- Recently, India's first-ever **Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) Index** was launched by **National Stock Exchange Indices Ltd.**
- The index aims to track the performance of **REITs and InvITs** that are publicly listed and traded on the NSE.
- The index has a base date of **1 July 2019** and a **base value of 1,000**.
- The index will be **reviewed and rebalanced every quarter**.
- The top constituents of the index include **Embassy Office Parks REIT, Powergrid Infrastructure Investment, Mindspace Business Parks Reit, and India Grid Trust**.

### Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs)

- InvITs are **similar to a mutual fund**, which **enables direct investment of money** from individual and institutional investors in **infrastructure projects**.
- InvITs are **listed on exchanges** just like stocks through **Initial Public Offering (IPO)**.
- InvITs are regulated by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014**.

### Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)

- The REIT was introduced by the **SEBI in 2007**.
- REIT can be defined as an entity created for channelling **investible funds into operating, owning or financing income-producing real estate**.
- REITs are designed on the lines of **mutual funds** and provide investors with an extremely liquid way to get a stake in real estate.
- It is a **type of security** that provides all types of investors with an outlet for **regular income, portfolio diversification, and long-term capital appreciation**.
- REITs can enlist themselves on a **stock exchange**.

## Seed Traceability, Authentication and Holistic Inventory (SATHI) portal



- » Recently, the **Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister** launched the **SATHI Portal and Mobile App**.
- It is a **centralised online system** for **seed traceability, authentication, and inventory system**.
- The **objective** is to address the difficulties of seed production, quality seed identification, and seed certification.
- It has been developed by the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** and is based on the theme of '**Uttam Beej – Samriddh Kisan**'.
- The system will consist of integrated **7 verticals of the seed chain** - **Research Organisation, Seed Certification, Seed Licensing, Seed Catalogue, Dealer to Farmer Sales, Farmer Registration and Seed DBT**.

## Green Deposits

- » Recently, the **RBI** introduced a framework enabling **banks and NBFCs** to accept green deposits for investment in **eco-friendly climate projects**.
- Green deposits are **interest-bearing deposits** earmarked for green finance.
- The framework applies to **Scheduled Commercial Banks, including Small Finance Banks, and all deposit-taking NBFCs, including Housing Finance Companies**.
- **Corporate and individual customers** can invest in these deposits, denominated exclusively in rupees.
- The initiative aims to foster a **financial system** supporting the transition to a **low-carbon, resource-efficient, and sustainable economy**.

## Red Herring Prospectus (RHP)

- » Recently, a company named **Cyient DLM** got SEBI's nod for ₹740-cr. IPO.
- When a company wants to raise funds from the public via Initial Public Offering, it is needed to file a **draft prospectus with Securities and Exchange Board of India**.
- This prospectus **contains information** related to the **company's operations, its directors, its past record** etc.
- It won't **include some key details** such as **issue price**.
- This is called **Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP)**.
- SEBI **reviews and ensures** that adequate disclosures are made by the issuer to enable investors to make an **informed investment** decision in the issue.
- SEBI's observations on the draft offer document are forwarded to the **merchant banker**, who incorporates the necessary changes and files the **final offer document with SEBI, Registrar of Companies (RoC) and stock exchanges**.
- After reviewing the DRHP, SEBI gives its observations **which need to be implemented by the company**.
- Once the **observations are implemented**, it gets final approval and the document then becomes **Red Herring Prospectus**.
- When RHP's registration with RoC becomes effective, a final prospectus which contains **IPO price and issue size** is released.

## Transfer Pricing

- Recently, In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court pronounced that High Courts can examine whether the findings of **Income tax appellate tribunal (ITAT)** are rational.
- **Transfer pricing** refers to the **prices of goods and services that are exchanged between companies** under common control, i.e, subsidiaries.
- The **Arm's Length Principle** requires that related companies agree on their transactions **as unrelated companies would be in comparable circumstances**.

## Income Tax Appellate Tribunal

- » The Supreme Court has directed the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) to ensure that all appeals filed by the revenue authorities are **only in the e-filing mode**.
- Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) is a **quasi-judicial institution** set up in **1941** under **section 5A of the Income Tax Act, 1922**.
- **Initially**, it had **3 Benches** at **Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai**. But, **presently ITAT has 63 Benches at 27 different stations**.
- ITAT is often referred to as '**Mother Tribunal**' being the **oldest tribunal in the country**.
- The orders passed by the ITAT can be subjected to **appellate challenge**, on substantial questions of law, before the **respective High Court**.

## MAHARISHI Initiative

- » Recently, MAHARISHI Initiative was unanimously launched by the G20 Meetings of **Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS) 2023** in Varanasi.
- **MAHARISHI** stands for **Millet And other Ancient Grains International Research Initiative**.
- The aim is to improve **research and awareness** about **agro-biodiversity, food security, and nutrition** aligning with the **International Year of Millets 2023**.
- MAHARISHI secretariat shall be housed at **Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad**.

## Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA)

- » Recently, **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** approved a framework for an **Application Supported by a Blocked Amount (ASBA)** like facility being made available to investors for secondary market trading.
- ASBA is a **SEBI-developed IPO** (Initial Public Offering) application process.

- ASBA is a **facility that allows** investors to apply for initial public offerings (IPOs) and invest in the stock market **without actually transferring the money to the IPO issuer or stockbroker upfront**. Instead, the investor's application money is temporarily blocked in their bank account until the shares are allotted to them.
- This helps investors **earn interest on their money while it is blocked** and also **eliminates the risk of fraud or misappropriation of funds** by intermediaries.

## Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA) law

- » Recently, the **European Union**, approved the **world's first set of comprehensive rules 'the Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA) law'** for **cryptocurrency markets**.
- It will come into force after formal approval by **member states**.

### Need

- About **22%** of the **global crypto industry** was concentrated in **central, northern, and western Europe**, which received **\$1.3 trillion worth of crypto assets**.
- 2022 saw some of the **biggest failures and wipeouts in the crypto industry** involving **bankruptcies and fraud scandals**.

### New Rules

- MiCA will impose **compliance on the issuers of crypto assets** (legal person who offers to the public any type of crypto-assets).
- It will apply to **crypto-asset service providers (CASPs)** providing services like the custody, administration, and exchange of crypto assets.
  - A CASP can get authorised in any one member country and will be allowed to conduct their services across the **27 countries**.
- It requires crypto companies to send information about senders and recipients of crypto assets to their **local anti-money laundering authority**.
- **Exemptions** - **Central bank digital currencies (CBDC)** and the digital assets including **non fungible tokens (NFT)** are exempted.

## Intellectual Property Rights

- **Intellectual property (IP)** is a **category of property** that includes **intangible creations** of the **human intellect**.
- **Intellectual property rights** are the **rights given to persons** over the **creations of their minds**.
- It usually **gives the creator an exclusive right** over the **use of his/her creation** for a **certain period of time**.

### Types of Intellectual Property Rights in India

Type	Definition	Legal Provision	Administered by	Period
<b>Copyrights</b>	Rights given to <b>creators of literary and artistic works</b> like books, music, paintings, sculpture and films, to computer programs, databases, etc.	<b>Copy Rights Act of 1957</b>	<b>Copyrights Office, Ministry of Commerce and Industry</b>	It lasts for <b>60 years</b> .  In the case of original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works the <b>60-year period</b> is <b>counted from</b> the year following the <b>death of the author</b> .
<b>Trademark</b>	It is a <b>symbol, design, word or phrase</b> that is identified with a business or an entity.	<b>The Trademark Act 1999</b>	<b>The Registrar of TradeMarks, Ministry of Commerce and Industry</b>	<b>10 years</b> from the date of filing of an application.
<b>Geographical Indications Tag</b>	An indication to identify <b>goods having special characteristics</b> originating from a definite <b>geographical territory</b> .	<b>Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999</b>	<b>Geographical Indication Registry, Ministry of Commerce and Industry</b>	Period of <b>10 years</b>
<b>Patent</b>	It is <b>granted for invention</b> which is a new product or process	<b>Patents Act, 1970</b>	<b>Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and TradeMarks (CGPDTM) - Ministry of Commerce and Industry</b>	<b>20 years</b> from the date of filing of an application.
<b>Plant Variety Protection</b>	Rights given to <b>farmers &amp; plant breeders</b> to encourage the development of new varieties of plant.	<b>Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Act, 2001</b>	<b>Ministry of Agriculture</b>	<b>15 years</b> to <b>field crops</b> and <b>18 years</b> for <b>trees and vines</b>

Type	Definition	Legal Provision	Administered by	Period
Industrial Design	It consist of <b>three dimensional features</b> like shape of an article/ two dimensional features like patterns/colour	<b>Designs Act 2000</b>	<b>Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and TradeMarks (CGPDTM) - Ministry of Commerce and Industry</b>	Period of <b>10 years</b> , with additional 5 years after the expiry of the validity.
Semiconductor Integrated Circuits Layout Design	It is conferred for the <b>protection of semiconductor integrated circuits layout-designs</b> so that rival companies <b>do not copy the design and sell it</b> as their own	<b>Semiconductors and integrated Layout design Act, 2000</b>	<b>Semiconductor Integrated Circuits Layout Design Registry (SICLDR)- Ministry of Commerce and Industry</b>	<b>10 years</b> from the date of filing an application

#### Recent Addition To Geographical Indications Tag List

Item	State/Union Territory	Description
<b>Nagri Dubraj Rice</b>	Chattisgarh	A special aromatic rice, known as <b>"Basmati of Chattisgarh"</b> .
<b>Mircha Rice</b>	Bihar	A <b>rice similar to the size and shape of Black pepper</b> , hence known as mircha/marcha rice.
<b>Manamadurai Pottery</b>	Tamil Nadu	Made out of a <b>unique type of clay</b> sourced from water bodies like <b>Vaigai river</b>
<b>Cumbum Grapes</b>	Tamil Nadu	Cultivated in <b>Cumbum valley-the Grapes City of South India</b> . This variety is also known as the <b>Muscat Hamburg</b> .
<b>Basohli Painting</b>	Jammu and Kashmir	A reputed school of <b>miniature paintings with geometric patterns, bright colours and glossy enamel</b> . It is considered the first school of <b>Pahari paintings</b> from the <b>Kathua District</b> .
<b>Ladakh's Wood Carving</b>	Ladakh	Known for its <b>intricate designs and unique patterns</b> inspired by Buddhist themes and motifs.
<b>Attappady Aattukombu Avara (beans)</b>	Kerala	It is <b>curved like a goat's horn</b> as its name indicates.  Its higher <b>anthocyanin</b> content is <b>helpful against cardiovascular diseases</b> along with its <b>antidiabetic properties</b> .

# International Relations

## UN Statistical Commission

- » India has been elected to the **UN Statistical Commission** for a **four-year term** beginning on **1 January 2024**.
- The **United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC)** is a subsidiary body of the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** established in 1947.
- It comprises **24 member countries**, elected for a **four-year term** by the ECOSOC, on the basis of **equitable geographic distribution**.

### Major Functions include:

- It sets **global standards for the production and dissemination of official statistics**.
- It is responsible for **promoting the development of national statistical systems**, improving statistical methods and data.

## Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

- » India's **External Affairs Minister** co-chaired the **4th India-CARICOM ministerial** meeting with his Jamaican counterpart.
- **CARICOM** stands for **Caribbean Community** is an **organisation of Caribbean countries and dependencies** originally established as the **Caribbean Community and Commons Market** in 1973 by the **Treaty of Chaguaramas**.
- Currently it has **15 members**.
- The **Chairmanship of the Community** is **rotated every six months** among the **member countries' Heads**.
- The primary objectives include to **promote economic integration and cooperation among its members**, ensure that the **benefits of integration are equitably shared**, and **coordinate foreign policy**.

## Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

- » The Government of India will carry out a **sectoral analysis** to see how the **European Union's** proposed **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** is set to affect the Indian industry.
- **CBAM** is a type of **carbon pricing mechanism** designed to prevent "**carbon leakage**" which **occurs when companies move their operations to countries with weaker climate policies** in order to **avoid carbon pricing** or other **climate regulations**.
- It is part of the "**Fit for 55 in 2030 package**" which is the **EU's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to the 1990 levels**.
- CBAM will enter into force in its **transitional phase** as of **1st October 2023**.
- In the first phase, CBAM would cover sectors with **high carbon emissions and high risk of carbon leakage** such as **iron and steel, cement, fertilisers, aluminium, hydrogen production and electricity**.

## United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

- » **Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog** and the **United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)** launched a **white paper** aimed at **making India a global leader in agritech innovation**.
- The **UNCDF** is the **United Nations flagship financing entity** for the **world's 46 Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**, established in 1966 by the **UN General Assembly (UNGA)**.
- It works to **invest and catalyse capital** to support these countries in achieving the **sustainable growth and inclusiveness** envisioned by the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Doha Programme of Action for LDCs**.
- The **UNCDF** is **entirely funded by voluntary contributions from UN Member States, multilateral organisations and other sources**.

## Chicago Convention

- » The **Chicago Convention** or the **Convention on International Civil Aviation** was signed on 7th December 1944.
- It covers a wide range of issues, including the **rights of aircraft in international airspace, the registration of aircraft, safety standards, air traffic control, taxation and environmental protection.**
- It also **led to the creation of the International Civil Aviation Organisation.**
- ICAO is a **United Nations specialised agency**, which laid the foundation for the **standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation.**

## W12+ Blueprint

- » Recently, in the United Nations, the **2023 Water Conference** the participant members were informed about **W12+ Blueprint** and its potential.
- Launched in partnership with **UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme**, the W12+ Blueprint is an **online database and knowledge-sharing platform.**
- Its primary objective is to **create a tool that provides insight into how to address common urban water challenges** through **easy-to-read case studies.**

### Two cities from India are listed in this Blueprint:

- ➡ **Bengaluru-** Community Leadership for Water Source Rejuvenation
- ➡ **Chennai-** Rainwater Harvesting Policy for Enhanced Supply.

## Dakar Declaration

- » Recently, '**Dakar Declaration**' was **adopted** by **21 African countries** committing to strengthening reporting on road safety.
- It includes data on **road crash fatalities, enhancing data capture, analysis, sharing, and coordination to shape better road safety policies.**

**Dakar Declaration on Climate change** was jointly issued by ministers of **Least Developed Countries** regarding their expectation on **COP 28 UNFCCC.**

## Language Friendship Bridge Project

- » Recently, the **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** proposed a project named '**The Language Friendship Bridge**' to expand India's cultural footprint.
- The project aims to **enable India to translate its epics and classics, as well as contemporary literature, into other foreign languages.**
- The Project will **create a pool of experts** in languages spoken in countries like **Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan and Indonesia** to **facilitate better people-to-people exchanges.**
- It will train five to **10 people in the official languages of each of these countries.**
- Currently, the ICCR is **focused on promoting 10 languages: Kazakh, Uzbek, Bhutanese, Ghoti** (spoken in Tibet), **Burmese, Khmer** (spoken in Cambodia), **Thai, Sinhalese and Bahasa** (spoken in both Indonesia and Malaysia).

## UN Democracy Fund

- » Recently, the **UN Democracy Fund** extended support for NGOs funded by **George Soros**, who is on a watchlist in India.
- UNDEF was established in **2005** as a **United Nations General Trust Fund** to support **democratization efforts around the world.**
- It is used to **empower civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes.**
- **India is a co-founding member of UNDEF** along with the **US.**
- **India is the fourth highest donor to the UN Democracy Fund, and consists entirely of voluntary contributions** from the governments.

## PRET Initiative

- » The **WHO** recently launched the **PRET (Preparedness & Resilience for Emerging Threats) Initiative**, focusing on **improving disease pandemic preparedness** based on **transmission modes**.
- It **incorporates lessons from COVID-19** and emphasizes **equity, inclusivity, and coherence**.
- PRET provides a **collaborative platform** for national, regional, and global stakeholders.
- In line with pandemic preparedness, the Government of India introduced the **PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)** to enhance health system capacities, address critical gaps in health infrastructure, surveillance, and health research.

## Environment & Ecology

### Project Elephant

- » President Droupadi Murmu took part in **Gaj Utsav at Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR)** in Assam to mark **30 years of Project Elephant**.

#### About:

- It was launched in **1992** as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- Currently the project is being implemented in 22 states/UTs.

#### Status of elephants in India:

- India is home to more than **60% of wild Asian Elephants** (*Elephas maximus*) in the world.
- The last elephant census recorded 29,964 elephants in India's jungles. Currently there are **33 elephant reserves** in the country.
- **Karnataka has the highest number** of elephants followed by **Assam and Kerala**.
- Elephant is a **national heritage animal of India** and they are protected under **Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.

#### Other Government measures to protect the elephant:

- **Project RE-HAB (Reducing Human Attacks using Honey Bees):** Fencing of Bee-boxes on the routes of movement of elephants blocks the path of wild elephants thereby preventing attacks and loss of crops.
- **MIKE (MONITORING OF ILLEGAL KILLING OF ELEPHANTS) programme:** This CITES project is being implemented under Project Elephant.
- **Gaj Yatra campaign:** To spread awareness about elephant conservation was launched by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** in 2017.

## INTERVIEW MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

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Shri TKA Nair (IAS Rtd, Former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of India).



Shri Sanjay Kumar Srivastava (IAS Rtd, Former Secretary, Ministry of Coal) etc.

## Biomass Pellets

- Recently, the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** revised the financial grants for biomass pellet manufacturing units.
- Biomass** is **organic matter** that comes from living or recently living things, like plants and animals.
- Biomass pellet** is a **type of solid biofuel resource** made from biomass by compressing and **reducing its water content**. Usually agricultural and other solid wastes are used as its raw materials. **For Ex:** Crop stalk, rice husk, coconut shell, junk paper, bark, leaves etc.



### There are two types of biomass pellets:

- **Torrefied:** Biomass processed at 250–350°C without oxygen.
- **Non-torrefied:** Biomass shredded, ground, and compressed in a pellet reactor.
- The Union Government through its **SAMARTH scheme and Biomass Policy**, has mandated that all **Thermal Power Plants (TPP)** in the country to use **5%** of biomass pellets in the co-firing with coal.

## Platform for Real-time Analysis of Yamuna, Ganga and their Tributaries (PRAYAG)

- » Recently, the union **Minister of Jal Shakti** launched **PRAYAG**.
- It is a **real-time monitoring** centre for planning and monitoring projects, river water quality, etc
- It comes under the ambit of **Namami Gange Programme (NGP)**.
- It monitors various projects through various online dashboards such as **Ganga Tarang Portal, Ganga Districts Performance Monitoring System**, etc.

## Fly Ash

- » **Spheroidal carbonaceous particles (SCP)**, a component of fly ash, have been identified by researchers for the **first time in an Antarctic ice core**.
- Fly ash is the **unwanted unburnt residue of coal combustion**, which, **if disposed of improperly, is hazardous**.
- It is emitted along with **flue gases** (gas existing to the atmosphere via a pipe or channel from a fireplace) during the **burning of coal**.
- In modern coal-fired power plants, fly ash is generally captured by **electrostatic precipitators**.
- Composition of fly ash depends upon the **composition of the coal being burnt**.
- It is used in **concrete and cement products, road base and metal recovery** among others.

## International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

- » The Prime Minister launched the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** in an event to commemorate **50 years of Project Tiger**.
- The IBCA will work towards the protection and conservation of the **7 major big cats- Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Puma, Jaguar and Cheetah**.
- The alliance aims to reach out to **97 range countries** covering the natural habitats of these big cats.
- It will **strengthen global efforts and partnerships on big cat conservation**, while evolving a **platform for convergence of knowledge and best practices**, supporting existing species specific intergovernmental platforms and providing direct support to recovery efforts.
- Project Tiger** was launched by the central government at the **Jim Corbett National Park** on **April 1, 1973** in a bid to promote conservation of the tiger.
- Administered by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority**, a statutory body under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change**, project tiger also ensured the **preservation of natural habitats of tigers**.

## Safety across Asia for the Global Environment (SAFE)

- » China decided not to participate in the **Safety across Asia for the Global Environment (SAFE)** project.
- The SAFE project focuses on the **connection between wildlife trafficking and zoonotic disease transmission** with the aim to **prevent future pandemics**.
- It is **funded by the European Union** and implemented in cooperation with the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** and the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- Implemented in **Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia**, it will identify facilities with a **high risk of disease transmission from wild animals to humans**.

## First Ever Census on Water Bodies in India

- » The **Ministry of Jal Shakti** has released the **first-ever Census of Water Bodies across the nation**.
- The Census was launched under the **centrally sponsored scheme, "Irrigation Census"** in convergence with the **6th Minor Irrigation Census**.
- It provides a comprehensive **inventory of India's water resources**, including natural and manmade water bodies and to collect data on the encroachment of water bodies.
- It covered **all the water bodies (specific types of water bodies were excluded like Oceans and lagoons and Rivers, streams, springs, waterfalls, canals, etc.)** which are free flowing, located in **rural & urban areas** that are **in-use or not in-use**.

### Key Findings

- Out of 24.24 lakh water bodies in the country, **97.1% or 23.55 lakh** are in **rural areas**, and only **2.9% or 69,485** are in **urban areas**.
- **78% water bodies are man-made water bodies** whereas **22% are natural water bodies**.
- **55.2%** of water bodies are **owned by private entities**, while **44.8%** are in the domain of **public ownership**.

## International Day of Zero Waste

- » The **first International Day of Zero Waste** was observed on March 30, 2023, by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** and **UN-Habitat**.
- It urged global stakeholders to engage in activities **promoting awareness of zero-waste initiatives**.
- It emphasises **responsible consumption**, sustainable urban waste management, and achieving zero waste for sustainable development.
- The initiative supports **environmentally friendly practices**, encourages circularity, and aligns with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

## 5th cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation

- » The Prime Minister of India released the summary report of the **5th cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation**.
- The tiger count is prepared **every four years** by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** along with the **Wildlife Institute of India**.
- It provides details on the number of tigers in the **18 tiger reign states with 50 tiger reserves**. This time **data from the north eastern states were also included**.

### Key Highlights

- The tiger population in India **grew by 200 from 2018 to 2022**.
- Tiger occupancy has also **declined** in the states of **Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana and Western Ghats**.
- The **north-western states** such as **Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh** now have **more tigers outside reserves**, requiring officials to step up habitat conservation.

## Seed Bank

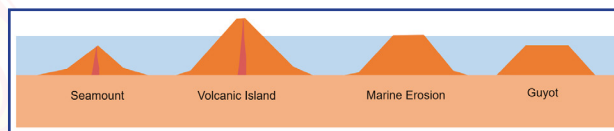
- » A seed bank of species of plants **native to the Aravallis**, is gradually taking shape at a nursery at the **Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, New Delhi**.
- Seed Bank is an important repository of plant genetic resources for research & agriculture.
- The seed bank at Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary aims to **supply native plants to the city** and **reintroduce species that have become rare or hard to find**.

### Other Seed Banks:

- India has established its **own seed storage facility at Chang La in Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir** previously.
- **Svalbard Global Seed Vault or Doomsday Vault** is the **world's largest seed storage facility** situated in Norway. **India joined the global initiative Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV) in 2014**.

## Geography

### Seamounts



- » Satellite data reveal nearly 20,000 previously unknown **deep-sea mountains** on earth's ocean.
- Seamounts are **underwater mountains** that rise hundreds or thousands of feet from the seafloor but **do not reach the surface of the water**.
- They are **generally extinct volcanoes**, which are **formed near mid-ocean ridges**, where the earth's tectonic plates are moving apart.
- The **highest mountain on Earth** is a seamount—**Hawaii's Mauna Kea**, a dormant volcano

### Sea Surface Temperature (SST)

- » The global average **Sea Surface Temperature (SST)** reached **21.1°C**, **highest in recorded history**, according to data released by the US Government.
- It was extremely **high over the Indian Ocean, 29-31°C**, which is above normal by 1-2 degree Celsius.
- Sea Surface Temperature is the water temperature **close to the ocean's surface**.
- It varies mainly with latitude, **warmest near equator and coldest at poles** and provides fundamental information on the **global climate system**.
- The ocean temperatures are shooting up mainly due to **climate change, very high solar radiation** combined with certain **ocean dynamics**.

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## Indira Gandhi Canal

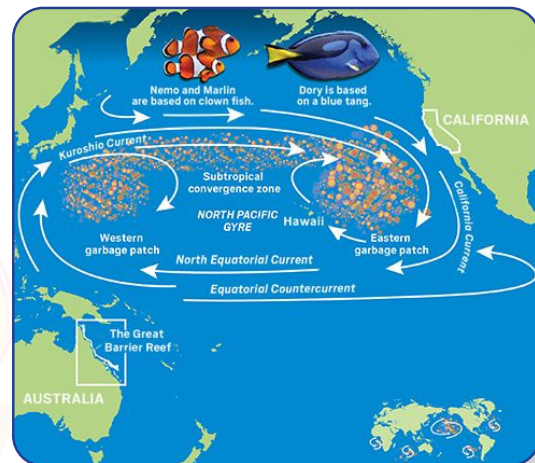


- » Recently, reports have suggested that the closure of the Indira Gandhi Canal for repairs may impact Rajasthan's **drinking water, and irrigation needs**.
- Indira Gandhi canal is the **longest canal in India**.
- It starts at the **Harike Barrage** near Harike, in Punjab state, and ends in irrigation facilities in the **Thar Desert** in the northwest of Rajasthan.
- It was constructed from **1952 to 2010**.
- Initially it was known as the **Rajasthan canal** and was renamed in 1984 as Indira Gandhi canal.
- It is built on **Sutlej and Beas rivers** and the origin of this canal is from the **Harike barrage in Punjab**.

## Upward Lightning or Upward Flashes

- » Recently researchers in Brazil captured pictures of **positive upward discharges of electricity from lightning conducting rods**, travelling to connect with negative discharge from lightning in the clouds.
- Upward lightning is a phenomenon whereby a **self-initiated lightning streak** develops from a tall object that travels upward toward an **overlying electrified storm cloud**.
- When upward lightning occurs without any preceding lightning activity, we refer to it as **self-initiated upward lightning**.

## Great Pacific Garbage Patch



- » Recent studies have reported that **coastal lifeforms have colonised plastic items** in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.
- It is a collection of **marine debris** in the **North Pacific Ocean**.
- It is the **largest accumulation of ocean plastic in the world** and is located between **Hawaii and California**.
- This is formed by the movement of **Kuroshio, North Pacific, California, and North Equatorial currents** in a clockwise direction.
- It is **6 million sq. km in size** and more than 50 years old.
- The patch contains an estimated **45,000-1,29,000 metric tonnes of plastic**, mainly in the form of **microplastics**.

## Heat Strokes

- » Recently, 13 people died due to heatstroke after they attended a large public gathering in Mumbai.
- Heatstroke is a **life-threatening condition** in which the **body overheats** when it can **no longer maintain a healthy body temperature**.
- Heatstroke occurs when a person's body temperature rises from about **37°C to above 40.5°C**. It is sometimes called **hyperthermia**.
- Primary causes are due to **high temperature and humidity**.
- Heatstroke needs immediate first aid to lower the body temperature as quickly as possible. **Dehydration and heat exhaustion** are milder types of heat-related illnesses.

## Genome India Project

- » The secretary of the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** said that under the **Genome India project**, close to 7,000 genomes have been sequenced.
- The **genome refers to the genetic materials present in an organism**. It represents the **total hereditary information of an organism** present in its DNA.
- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) launched the ambitious Genome India project in January **2020**.
- It **aims to collect and analyse the genomic data of over 10,000 individuals** from pan India, representing the **diverse population** of the country.
- The project seeks to **identify genetic variations** and correlate them with health outcomes, disease risks, and drug responses.
- It involves collecting genomic data from participants through various methods, including **DNA sequencing, genotyping, and phenotypic** data collection (such as health history, lifestyle, and environmental factors).

## Raccoon Stealer

- » Eight Central government entities, including central paramilitary forces and the **Income Tax department**, were targeted by the Raccoon Stealer malware
- **Malware** (malicious software), refers to any **intrusive software developed to steal data** and damage computers and computer systems.
- **Raccoon Stealer** is an **information stealer malware** that retrieves **sensitive data from infected machines through emails**.
- It is typically distributed through **various methods** such as phishing emails, malicious websites and social engineering attacks.
- It runs **silently in the background**, collecting data from the victim's system and sending it to the **attacker's command and control (C&C) server**.

## Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD)

- » Recently, **Lumpy skin disease** resurfaced in the state of Assam, affecting approximately 40,000 cows.

### Lumpy skin disease

- LSD is a **highly infectious viral disease** that affects cattle, caused by **lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV)**.



- LSDV is **not a zoonotic virus** and primarily spreads between animals through the bite of vectors, such as **mosquitoes and flies**.
- LSD affects the **lymph nodes** of the infected animal, causing the nodes to enlarge and appear like lumps on the skin, which is where it derives its name from.
- There is currently **no treatment for LSD**.
- **Lumpi-ProVacInd** is a **live attenuated vaccine** developed jointly by **ICAR's National Research Centre on Equines** and the **Indian Veterinary Research Institute**.
- The vaccine is yet to be distributed on a large scale. It would provide **protection upto a year**.

## LockBit ransomware

- It has been found that LockBit ransomware was found to be **targeting Mac devices**.
- A **ransomware** is a type of malicious software (malware) which **encrypts the files on a victim's computer or network**, making them inaccessible, and demands a ransom payment **in exchange for the decryption key**.
- LockBit Ransomware (formerly known as ABCD Ransomware), first appeared in **2019** and is called a **crypto virus**, because it asks for payment in **cryptocurrency to unlock the files**.
- It **focuses mostly on enterprises and government** organisations rather than individuals.
- It has been used to target companies in many countries including the **U.S, China, India, Ukraine and Europe**.

## Extended Range Anti-Submarine Rocket (ER-ASR)

» The **Extended Range Anti-Submarine Rocket (ER-ASR)** designed by two Pune-based facilities of the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** was recently successfully test-fired for the first time.



- ER-ASR was designed and developed by Pune-based **Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE)** and **High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL)**.
- It is designed to **intercept submarines at specific depths** in anti-submarine operations.
- It has been **designed to replace the existing Russian origin RGB rockets** which are already fitted in ships.
- It consists of **two motor propulsion systems** which can fire the rocket in **Short Range mode** and **Long Range mode** to achieve different range capabilities.
- The ER-ASR can achieve a **range over 8 KM**.

## Antineutrino

- » Recently, In a lab buried around 2000 km underground in Canada, scientists **accidentally discovered antineutrinos** using extremely pure water for the first time.
- Antineutrinos are the **antimatter of neutrinos** (tiny particles that travel at near light speeds)
- They have an almost **nonexistent mass and charge**.
- They **rarely ever interact with other particles making them difficult to detect**.
- They are produced as a byproduct when neutrons separate into protons and electrons in nuclear reactors.
- This new discovery suggests that it would be possible to build neutrino detectors using ultrapure water, which is non-toxic, relatively inexpensive and easy to handle.

## Shingrix

- » **GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Pharma** has announced the **launch of the Shingrix vaccine in India** for the prevention of **shingles** (herpes zoster).
- **Shingle** is a **viral infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus**, the same virus that causes chickenpox.
- It causes **painful rashes** anywhere in the body.
- Vaccine **Shingrix** is the **world's first non-live, recombinant subunit vaccine** to be given in two doses.
- The vaccine helps to **prevent shingles and post-herpetic neuralgia** in adults aged 50 years or more.

## Garbh-Ini Programme

- » Recently, the Indian scientists working in the **Garbh-Ini programme** have identified 19 **single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs)**, or genetic markers, that are associated with **preterm or premature birth**.
- The identification of genetic markers associated with preterm birth could **help in predicting high-risk pregnancies and monitoring them** closely, leading to improved maternal and neonatal outcomes.

### Garbh-ini program

- It is an initiative under the **Department of Biotechnology** of the Union **Ministry of Science and Technology**.
- The program aims to **use advanced technology to improve maternal and child health** outcomes and address the high incidence of preterm births in India.

### Preterm Birth

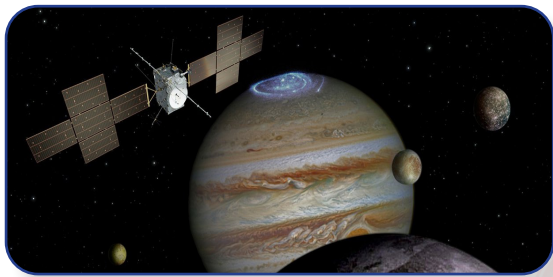
- Preterm birth, also known as **premature birth**, refers to the **birth of a baby before the completion of 37 weeks of gestation**. There are sub-categories of preterm birth, based on gestational age:

- **Extremely preterm** (less than 28 weeks)

- **Very preterm** (28 to 32 weeks)

- **Moderate to late preterm** (32 to 37 weeks)

## JUICE Mission



- » The **European Space Agency (ESA)** launched the **Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer (JUICE) Mission**.
- The Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer will make detailed **observations of Jupiter and its 3 large ocean bearing moons- Ganymede, Callisto and Europa-** by using remote sensing, geophysical other instruments.
- It was known that these **3 moons of Jupiter possess icy crusts** making them potentially habitable. Juice will help probe these water bodies by creating **detailed maps of their surface**.
- The main focus will be on **Ganymede** as it is the **largest moon in the solar system**.
- Juice will analyse the **chemistry, structure, dynamics, weather and climate of Jupiter** and its ever changing atmosphere.

## National Quantum Mission (NQM)

- Cabinet approves National Quantum Mission.
- The **National Quantum Mission** aims to **seed, nurture and scale up scientific and industrial Research & Development (R&D)** and create a vibrant and innovative ecosystem in quantum technology.
- It will be implemented by the **Department of Science & Technology** in partnership with other departments.
- With the launch of the mission, India will be the **7th country to have a dedicated quantum mission** after the US, Australia, Finland, France, Canada and China.
- This will accelerate the quantum technology led economic growth and make India one of the leading nations in the development of **quantum technologies and applications (QTA)**.

## Electromagnetic Ion Cyclotron (EMIC) Waves

- » Scientists have identified **Electromagnetic Ion Cyclotron (EMIC) waves** in the **Indian Antarctic station, Maitri** and studied its characteristics.
- EMIC waves are **traversing plasma waves** observed in the **Earth's magnetosphere**.

Plasma waves are a type of electromagnetic wave that propagates through plasma, which is a state of matter.

- These waves play an important role in **precipitation of killer electrons** (electrons having speed close to speed of light, which form the radiation belt of planet Earth), which are **hazardous to the space-borne technologies**.
- The study can help understand the **impact of energetic particles in the radiation belts on the low orbiting satellites**.
- **Maitri is India's second permanent research station in Antarctica after Dakshin Gangotri, built in 1989.**

## Haemophilia

- » April 17th is observed as **World Haemophilia Day** annually, commemorating the birthday of Frank Schnabel, who founded the World Federation of Haemophilia.
- Haemophilia is a medical condition, **mostly inherited**, in which the **ability of blood to clot is severely reduced**.
- This can be caused by a **mutation in one of the genes** that provides instructions for making the clotting factor proteins needed to form a blood clot. These genes are **located on the X chromosome**.
- Since **males have one X and one Y chromosome (XY)** and **females have two X chromosomes (XX)**, males cannot offset damage to these genes with an additional copy as can females.
- The **best way to treat haemophilia is to replace the missing blood clotting factor** which can be done by **infusing** (administering through a vein) commercially prepared factor concentrates.

## Zero-Click Attacks

- » According to the findings of Citizen Lab, Israel based firm QuaDream's spyware has been used against journalists, opposition figures and advocacy organisations across at least 10 countries.
- A **zero-click attack** helps spyware like Pegasus to **gain control over a device without human interaction or human error**.
- It **exploits existing loopholes** in the data verification function of apps and operating systems.
- These attacks are **hard to detect** given their nature and hence **harder to prevent**.

## Know Your Medicine App

- » The **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** in India has launched the Know Your Medicine App **to promote a clean sporting environment**.
- The app, available in **Hindi and English**, allows users to search for medicines and ingredients through **text and image options**.
- It helps the sports community identify **prohibited substances in medications**, enabling informed decisions and ensuring compliance with anti-doping regulations.

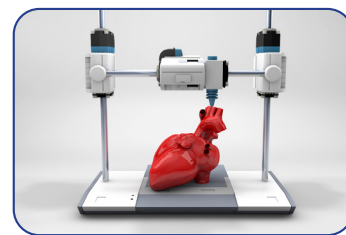
## Amogha-III

- » Recently, the **Bharat Dynamics (BDL)** conducted a field firing test of Amogha-III, a **man-portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile**.
- It is an indigenous missile which has been developed under **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)**.
- It has a **fire-and-forget capability** and does not require external intervention after the launch.
- It is a dual-mode Imaging Infra-Red (IIR) Seeker system with a **range of 200 to 2500m**.



## 3D - Printing

- » India's **first 3D-printed post office**, was announced in April 2023 and inaugurated in August 2023 in Bengaluru by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw
- It was constructed in just 43 days by **Larsen & Toubro Limited**, with technological support from IIT Madras.
- The **3D printing, or additive manufacturing**, process involves creating three-dimensional objects from digital files by laying **down successive layers of materials** such as plastics, composites, or bio-materials.
- This method ensures precision in shape, size, rigidity, and colour.



## National Logistics Portal (marine)

- » The **Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways** recently inaugurated the National Logistics Portal (marine) in New Delhi.
- This national maritime **single-window platform** offers **end-to-end logistics solutions, facilitating seamless document exchange for exporters, importers, and service providers**.
- The NLP Marine activities include **Carrier, Cargo, Banking and Finance, and Regulatory Bodies, along with Participating Government Agencies (PGAs)**.
- It features a **"Latch On" function** for additional trade support and enables digital transactions for various clearance processes, including Port charges, CFS charges, shipping line charges, and transportation charges.

## Blockchain project

- » The Union government recently launched the Blockchain Project to **explore the potential of Web 3.0**.
- The objective of the project is to evolve the blockchain technology stack and enable **Open Application Programming Interfaces (API)** for seamless integration and offer blockchain-as-a-service (BaaS).
- An open API, is an **application programming interface made publicly available to software developers**.
- BaaS refers to **third-party cloud-based infrastructure and management** for companies. It allows Government Departments to leverage Blockchain services to build, host and use their own blockchain apps, smart contracts and functions on blockchain.

## Sodium Cyanide

- » The **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)** under the **Ministry of Commerce** is investigating the alleged dumping of the **poisonous chemical sodium cyanide** originating in or exported from China, the European Union, Japan and Korea.
- It is a **white crystalline odourless solid or powder**.
- It also releases **hydrogen cyanide gas** which is a highly toxic chemical substance that interferes with the body's ability to use oxygen.
- It is used for the **extraction of gold and silver** from their respective ores, manufacturing insecticides, dyes, pigments, and bulk drugs.



## Magnetoresistance

- » Researchers in the UK, led by **Nobel laureate Andre Geim**, have discovered that graphene displays an anomalous **giant magnetoresistance (GMR) at room temperature**.
- Magnetoresistance is a **phenomenon where the electrical resistance of a material changes in response to a magnetic field**.
- The magnetoresistance observed in the graphene-based device was **“almost 100 times higher”** than that observed in other known semimetals in this magnetic field range.
- GMR-based devices are particularly used **to sense magnetic fields**.

## Blastomycosis



- » Recently, the **fungus Blastomyces** killed at least 1 & infected nearly 100 persons in the USA.
- **Blastomycosis** is an infection caused by a fungus called Blastomyces. The fungus lives particularly in **moist soil and in decomposing matter such as wood and leaves**.
- As per latest information, the fungus are restricted to **midwestern, south-central and southeastern states of the US**.
- Blastomycosis primarily **affects the lungs due to inhalation of the spores**.
- The infection is **not contagious to people and animals** via air.

## Reusable Launch Vehicle Autonomous Landing Mission



- » Recently, ISRO successfully carried out the **Reusable Launch Vehicle Autonomous Landing Mission**.
- Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) is a type of spacecraft that is **designed to be reused multiple times for launching payloads** into space, instead of being discarded after a single launch like traditional rockets.
- The **vehicle returns to earth intact after a mission**, and most or all of the components could be reused.
- The need for mastering the RLV technology is **to achieve low cost access to space**.

## LIGO-India

- » The Government approved the construction of the **Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO)**.
- LIGO is an **international network of laboratories that detect gravitational waves** produced by the movement of large celestial objects like stars and planets.

### How LIGO works

- The observatory comprises **two 4 km long vacuum chambers**, built perpendicular to each other and **highly reflective mirrors** are placed at the end of these chambers.
- **Light rays are released simultaneously in both the vacuum chambers**. They hit the mirrors, get reflected and captured back.
- In **normal circumstances**, the **light rays in both the chambers would return simultaneously**. But when a **gravitational wave arrives**, one of the chambers gets a little elongated, while the other one gets squished a bit.
- In this case, **light rays do not return simultaneously**, which results in a **phase difference**. The **presence of a phase difference marks the detection of a gravitational wave**.
- **LIGO-India** will be located in **Hingoli district of Maharashtra** and will be built by the **Department of Atomic Energy** and the **Department of Science and Technology** with the **U.S. National Science Foundation** and several national and international research institutions.



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## Miscellaneous

### Animal Health System Support for One Health (AHSSOH) project

- » **Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying** launched the **Animal Health System Support for One Health (AHSSOH) project** under the aegis of **National One Health Mission**.
- Animal Health System Support for One Health is a collaborative project between the **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying** and the **World Bank**.
- It aims to create an **ecosystem for a better animal health management system using the One Health approach**.
- It will be **implemented over a five-year period**: as a Central sector scheme with a financial provision of Rs. 1228.70 Cr in **5 states: Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha & Assam**.

### Amrit Sarovar Mission

- » PM Modi hails work under Mission Amrit Sarovar for infusing new energy in '**Amrit Kaal**' resolutions.
- Mission Amrit Sarovar was launched in **2022** with the resolve **to build 75 Amrit Sarovars** (water bodies) during the **75th year of independence as a part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav**.
- It aims to **overcome the water crisis in every district of rural areas of the country**.
- **Eight Central Ministries/Departments**: Dept. of Rural Development, Department of land resources, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of Water resources, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate changes, Ministry of Railway, Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways, actively contribute to the mission's execution.
- **Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N)** has been engaged as **Technical partner** for the Mission.

### Animal Pandemic Preparedness Initiative

- **Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying** launched the **Animal Pandemic Preparedness Initiative (APPI)**.
- The **Department Animal Husbandry** prepared a focused framework for **future animal pandemic and epidemics** through the Animal Pandemic Preparedness Initiative.
- The key elements include **Integrated disease surveillance & monitoring**, early warning & response, Vaccine/ diagnostics, **R&D and production**, and ecosystem coordination with **funding and regulatory framework enablers**.

### cVIGIL App

- » cVigil App of ECI helped in effective enforcement of model code of conduct in Karnataka Assembly General Elections.
- **Election Commission of India** launched the **Mobile App "cVIGIL"** to enable citizens to report on violation of election code of conduct in **2018**.
- It is a **user-friendly and easy to operate application** that empowers Citizens to report **Model Code of Conduct Violations** such as bribery, free gift, liquor distribution, playing loudspeakers beyond the permissible time during the elections.
- Every cVIGIL case is acted upon and replied back with the action taken in the **100-minute timeline**.

#### The cVIGIL app enabled voters to

- **Register Complaints**
- **Anonymous User**: The app also allows the citizen to complain anonymously, without revealing their personal details/ identity.
- **Geotagging**: The app automatically enables a geo-tagging feature when users switched on their camera in the cVIGIL to report a violation, which helps the field unit to know the precise location of the incident.
- The **app requires a smartphone** equipped with a camera, good internet connection and GPS access.

## World Earth Day and Earth Hour

- » **World Earth Day** was celebrated across the world on April 22.
- It is an annual event celebrated to raise awareness about environmental issues and promote global efforts **to protect the Earth's natural resources**.
- First held in **1970**, it is now observed in **192 countries** and coordinated by the non profit **EarthDay.Org** (Formerly Earth Day Network).
- **Earth Hour** is a worldwide movement organised by the **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)**, uniting people to take action on environmental issues and protect the planet.
- It takes place on the last Saturday of March every year and encourages people to switch off all lights for an hour from 8.30 PM to 9.30. PM local time.
- This symbolic act, known as the lights off moment, **promotes awareness of climate change challenges and energy conservation**.

## Promotion of Tribal Products from the North-Eastern Region (PTP-NER)

- » Recently, the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** launched Marketing and Logistics Development for **Promotion of Tribal Products from the North-Eastern Region (PTP-NER)**.
- It is a **Central Sector scheme** under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** and the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED)** is the **nodal agency**.
- Its objective is **to strengthen livelihood opportunities for tribal artisans** through increased efficiency in procurement, logistics and marketing of tribal products.
- It will be implemented in the States of **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim**.
- **India Post** will provide **logistics support** in order to meet the scheme's goals.
- The implementing partners include **North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHHDC), India Post and North Eastern State Government Departments**

## Exercise KAVACH

- » Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) conducted a **large-scale Joint Military Exercise KAVACH**.
- The joint exercise KAVACH involves the assets of the **Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard**.
- It aimed at **fine-tuning joint warfare capabilities** and **standard operating procedures** and **enhancing interoperability and operational synergy between the forces**.
- The exercise involved the **synergised application** of maritime surveillance assets, coordinated air and maritime strikes, air defence, submarine and landing operations.
- Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) is the **only tri-service theatre command of the Indian Armed Forces, based at Port Blair**.

## One Indian Audit & Accounts Department One System (OIOS)

- » The **Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)** recently launched the **One Indian Audit & Accounts Department One System (OIOS)**.
- It is a **web-enabled IT application** with support for multiple languages with offline access, and it also provides a mobile app.
- **All new audit work in offices** under the CAG will now take place through OIOS.
- **Offices will not have to go through files physically**, and records
- **Defence Audit will not be included** due security concerns.
- Auditing is an official examination and verification of an entity's financial records.

## Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (FINE)

- Recently, the President inaugurated the **Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (FINE)- 2023** at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre in Delhi.
- FINE is a **unique initiative of the Office of the President of India** to recognise, respect and reward grassroots innovations and foster a supportive ecosystem.

- It was organised by the **National Innovation foundation**, an autonomous institute of the **Department of Science and Technology**.
- A **Grassroots Innovations Accelerator program** has been announced at FINE 2023, to help grassroots innovators in farming with support for entrepreneurial, product, and market development.

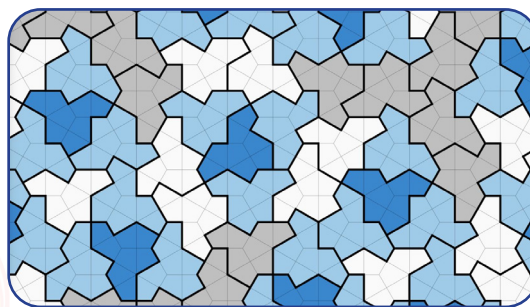
### Bharat Gaurav Scheme

- » Indian Railways, in partnership with Coimbatore-based South Star Rail, has initiated **Bharat Gaurav trains from Coimbatore to the Kashmir Valley**.
- Launched in **2021** by the **Ministry of Railways**, Bharat Gaurav trains form the **third segment for tourism** under the scheme, alongside passenger and goods segments.
- **Operated by both private players and IRCTC**, these **theme-based tourist circuit trains** aim to showcase **India's rich cultural heritage and historical sites, fostering tourism potential**.
- Notably, the Bharat Gaurav Trains plan relies on a **revenue-generating mechanism** and does not receive funds.

### Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)

- » Recently, more players were included under the scheme.
- TOPS was launched in **2014** by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
- Its primary objective is to **improve India's performance at the Olympics and Paralympics**.
- It was revamped in **2018** to include a **technical support** team to manage the TOPS athletes and offer **comprehensive assistance**.
- The **Ministry selects the beneficiaries**, with an emphasis on high-priority sports such as Archery, Badminton, Boxing, Hockey, Shooting, and Wrestling.
- The sports persons are selected under two categories; **Core Group and Development Group**.
- **Mission Olympic Cell** was created to provide assistance to athletes
- The cell operates under the **Director General of the Sports Authority of India**.

### The Hat



- » Recently, Mathematicians discovered a **13-sided shape** called "**the hat**" that can perfectly tile a wall without ever repeating.
- It is the **first ever Einstein tile** ( 'no relation to Albert Einstein' ) to have been found: a shape that **can cover a plane without overlapping, leaving gaps, or repeating patterns**.
- These types of shapes are called **aperiodic tile sets**.
- **Aperiodic Tile** - A set of tile-types (or prototiles) is considered to be aperiodic if copies of these tiles can only form patterns without repetition.

### Food Safety and Compliance System (FOSCOS)

- » **Food Safety and Compliance System (FOSCOS) web application of FSSAI** was recently made available in regional languages
- Food Safety and Compliance System (FOSCOS) is an enhanced version of the **Food Licensing and Registration System (FLRS)** launched in 2012 for the issuance of pan-India FSSAI Licence and Registration.
- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is a **statutory body** established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act)
- It is a comprehensive system for registration and licensing for **Food Business Operators (FBOs)**.
- It is a **one-point stop for FBOs** for their interface with the **food safety regulator** for all types of compliances.