SIMPLY
Current Affairs
™
By Guna Mathivanan

MONTHLY
CURRENT AFFAIRS
MAGAZINE

September 2025 (PRELIMS)

YOUR SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO CURRENT AFFAIRS

A Note to Our Readers

Dear Readers,

Welcome to **Simply Current Affairs Magazine** - your **trusted companion** in the ever-evolving journey of UPSC preparation. With UPSC preparation becoming more dynamic each year, the need for a **clear, exam-focused resource** is greater than ever. Our magazine has been designed with this very purpose – to **give you clarity from complexity**.

Each month, we present **two focused editions** – one dedicated exclusively to Prelims and the other exclusively to Mains. The content for the Prelims Magazine is carefully curated from authentic and diverse sources such as **The Hindu, Indian Express, Down To Earth, Press Information Bureau (PIB), All India Radio (AIR), DD News, and Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)**, ensuring coverage that is both relevant and reliable.

What makes this magazine stand apart is the **integration of Previous Year Questions (PYQs).** Statements highlighted in orange are those that have appeared directly in UPSC Prelims, and the related PYQs are compiled at the end of the magazine for you to attempt as a test.

Our goal is simple – to provide a **concise, self-preparation-friendly comprehensive resource** that empowers aspirants, particularly those preparing independently, to approach current affairs with confidence and clarity.

We hope this magazine serves you well in your preparation journey.

With best wishes,
Team Simply Current Affairs

Mr.Guna Mathivanan,
Founder-Director, Simply Current Affairs

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SCHEMES

1) POSHAN Abhiyan

About	• **POSHAN Abhiyaan** (erstwhile **National Nutrition Mission**) was launched in **2018** to achieve **improvement in nutritional status of Children under six years, Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers.**
Nodal Ministry	• **Ministry of Women and Child Development**
Aim	• The programme aims to **holistically address malnutrition** through **use of technology, convergence and behaviour change communication** through **Jan Andolan** (People's Movement).
Objectives	• Prevent and reduce **stunting** (low height-for-age) in **children** (0- 6 years) • Prevent and reduce **under-nutrition** (underweight prevalence) in **children** (0-6 years) • Reduce the prevalence of **anaemia** among **young children** (6-59 months) • Reduce the prevalence of **anaemia** among **women and adolescent girls** in the age group of 15-49 years • Reduce **low birth weight**. **Did you know?** • According to the **National Family Health Survey-5** (2019-21), **stunting among children under five** decreased from 38.4% to **35.5%, underweight prevalence** dropped from 35.8% to **32.1%,** and **wasting** reduced from 21.0% to **19.3%.**
Why in News?	• Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the **8th Rashtriya Poshan Maah** recently. o Rashtriya Poshan Maah, celebrated in **September** every year, is a nationwide initiative dedicated to **spreading nutrition awareness** and driving action towards **building a healthier India.** 8TH RASHTRIYA POSHAN MAAH 2025

2) Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan

About	• Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (**Drugs-Free India Campaign**), launched in **2020,** is a nationwide campaign **addressing substance abuse** through **prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.**
Nodal Ministry	• **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**
Features	• The campaign is backed by a **three-pronged strategy—supply control, demand reduction, and medical treatment**. • Initially implemented in **272 high-risk districts**, the Abhiyaan has since **expanded to encompass all districts nationwide.**
Why in News?	• The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched a national competition under the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan to commemorate its 5th anniversary. • This initiative will engage youth, students, and community members in raising awareness about the ill effects of substance abuse.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. PRASHAD Scheme

About	• PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive) Scheme was launched in **2014** for **development of tourism infrastructure at identified religious and heritage sites** across the country.
Nodal Ministry	• **Ministry of Tourism**
Features	• Under the Scheme, the Ministry provides **financial assistance to State Governments and Union Territory Administrations** for the development of tourism infrastructure to enrich the religious tourism experience.
Implementation	• The projects identified under this scheme shall be implemented through the **identified agencies** by the **respective State/ Union Territory Government.**

3.2. MPLADS

About	• The Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is a **central sector scheme** introduced in **1993.**
Nodal Ministry	• The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme.
Objective	• Enable **Members of Parliament (MPs) to recommend works of developmental nature** with emphasis on the **creation of durable community assets** like physical infrastructure for health, education, etc. based on the locally felt needs.
Features	• The scheme is **fully funded by the Government of India**. The **annual MPLADS** fund entitlement per MP constituency is **Rs. 5 crore.** • Funds under the MPLADS are **non-lapsable** (unspent balances of a particular year are utilized in the subsequent years). • **Lok Sabha Members** can recommend works within their Constituencies and **Elected Members of Rajya Sabha** can recommend works within the State of Election (with select exceptions). **Nominated Members** of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country. • The MPLADS funds can be **merged with other schemes** such as MGNREGA and Khelo India. **Allocation for SC & ST:** • MPLADS guidelines provide for the MPs to recommend works costing **at least 15 percent** of their MPLADS entitlement for the year for **areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population** and **7.5 per cent** for **areas inhabited by Scheduled Tribe population.** • In case a State **does not have ST inhabited areas**, the earmarked funds may be utilized in **SC inhabited areas** and **vice-versa.**
Implementation	• Under MPLADS, the role of the MPs is limited only upto recommendation of works. Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the **District Authority** to sanction, execute and complete the works recommended by Members of Parliament within the stipulated time. o The District Authority shall inspect at least 10% of the works under implementation every year.

3.3. PM Vishwakarma Scheme

About	• PM Vishwakarma is a **Central Sector Scheme** launched in **2023** to provide **holistic and end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople.**
Nodal Ministry	• **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**
Objective	• The prime focus of PM Vishwakarma is at **improving the quality** as well as the **reach of products and services** of artisans and craftspeople and to ensure that they are **integrated with the domestic and global value chains.**
Features	• The scheme provides support through **access to collateral free credit, skill training, modern tools, incentive for digital transactions and market linkage support.** • The scheme will provide support to artisans and craftspeople of **rural and urban areas** across India. • **Eighteen traditional crafts** will be covered under PM Vishwakarma. ○ These include (i) Carpenter; (ii) Boat Maker; (iii) Armourer; (iv) Blacksmith ; (v) Hammer and Tool Kit Maker; (vi) Locksmith; (vii) Goldsmith; (viii) Potter; (ix) Sculptor, Stone breaker; (x) Cobbler (Shoesmith/ Footwear artisan); (xi) Mason (Rajmistri); (xii) Basket/Mat/Broom Maker/Coir Weaver; (xiii) Doll & Toy Maker (Traditional); (xiv) Barber; (xv) Garland maker; (xvi) Washerman; (xvii) Tailor; and (xviii) Fishing Net Maker.
Implementation	• The scheme is being **jointly implemented** by the **Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises**, the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**, and the **Department of Financial Services** under the **Ministry of Finance**.

3.4. Samagra Shiksha

About	• Samagra Shiksha is an **integrated scheme for school education** covering the entire gamut from **pre-school to class XII.** • Launched in **2018** as a **centrally sponsored scheme,** the scheme **treats school education as a continuum** from preschool, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels. • It subsumes three Schemes: **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).**

Nodal Ministry	• **Ministry of Education** समग्र शिक्षा Samagra Shiksha

Objectives	• The major objectives of the Scheme are:
	  o Provision of **quality education** and enhancing **learning outcomes** of students;
	  o Bridging **social and gender gaps** in school education;
	  o Ensuring **equity and inclusion** at all levels of school education;
	  o Ensuring **minimum standards** in schooling provisions;
	  o Promoting **vocationalisation of education** and
	  o Support states in implementation of **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.**
	• The scheme is in accordance with **Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG-4)** to ensure inclusive and equitable, quality and holistic school education.

Funding Pattern	• The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between **Centre and States** is in the ratio of **90:10** for the **8 North-Eastern States** (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura) and **3 Himalayan States** (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand) and **60:40 for all other States and Union Territories with Legislature.** o It is **100% centrally sponsored for Union Territories without Legislature.**

3.5. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

About	• Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a **maternity benefit scheme** launched in **2017.** Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)
Nodal Ministry	• **Ministry of Women and Child development**
Features	• The PMMVY Scheme is being implemented as per provisions under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** which provides for **financial support for pregnant and lactating mothers**.

- Under PMMVY, **maternal benefit of ₹5,000/-** is provided to eligible Pregnant Women & lactating Mothers in **two instalments** (first instalment of ₹3000/- after Ante-Natal Check-up and second instalment of ₹2000/- after the childbirth and 14 weeks of universal immunization).
- Beneficiaries also receive **cash incentive under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** after institutional delivery so that on an average, a woman gets **₹6,000/-.**

> **Janani Suraksha Yojana:**
> - JSY is a **safe motherhood intervention** and **conditional cash transfer scheme for promoting institutional delivery.**
> - Launched in 2015 with the objective of **reducing maternal and neonatal mortality,** JSY promotes institutional delivery among pregnant women especially with weak socio-economic status.

Eligibility	- Under PMMVY, financial support is provided to the mother for safe delivery and immunization of her **first child.** - From **2022**, to promote positive behavioural change towards girl child, the **maternity benefit is also provided to** beneficiaries for **second child** subject to condition that the second child is a **girl.**

3.6. DAY-NRLM

About	- Launched in **2011,** Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a **flagship poverty alleviation program** aided in part through investment support by the **World Bank.**
Nodal Ministry	- **Ministry of Rural Development**
Objective	- The Mission aims to reduce poverty by enabling the poor household to **access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities** resulting in sustainable and diversified livelihood options for the poor.

Components	- DAY-NRLM seeks to promote a comprehensive livelihoods approach encompassing **four inter-related tasks:**
	  1. Mobilizing all rural, poor households into **self-help groups (SHGs) and SHG federations;**
	  2. Enhancing **access to credit and other financial, technical, and marketing services;**
	  3. **Building capacities and skills** for gainful and sustainable livelihoods;
	  4. Improving the **delivery of social and economic support services** to the poor through convergence. .

	• The Mission seeks to **reach out to around 10 crore rural poor households** and impact their livelihoods significantly. ○ It works towards **bringing at least one member (preferably a woman) from all poor families into the SHG network.**
Beneficiaries	• NRLM's priority is to reach out to the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized. It **begins with targeting women** and they are considered as representatives of their households. • In case of **extremely vulnerable persons** like Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), elders etc., NRLM mobilizes **both men and women.**
Implementation	• DAY-NRLM implementation is overseen by **State Rural Livelihood Missions (SPVs)**, with **District Mission Management Units (DMMUs)** responsible for planning and execution at the district level. • At the block level, a **Block Mission Management Unit** implements the Mission activities.

INITIATIVES

1) Adi Sanskriti
What's in the news?
- The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** has launched the beta version of **Adi Sanskriti**, a **digital platform for tribal artforms and heritage.**
  - *A beta version is a pre-release version of a product that is shared with a limited group of users for testing before the final public launch.*
- It has been envisioned as the **world's first digital university** to **preserve and promote the culture and knowledge of tribal communities.**
- The digital platform will also have an **online marketplace**, opening up a digital market for products made by tribal artisans across the country.
- The Adi Sanskriti platform consists of **three components** as of now — **Adi Vishwavidyalaya** (Digital Tribal Art Academy), **Adi Sampada** (Socio-Cultural Repository), and **Adi Haat** (digital marketplace).

2) Semicon India Program
About
- Launched in **2021**, the Semicon India Program aims at development of **semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem** in the country.
- The programme aims to provide **financial support** to companies investing in semiconductors, display manufacturing and design ecosystem.
- This initiative **supports various sectors of the semiconductor industry**, extending beyond just fabrication facilities (fabs) to include packaging, display wires, Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Testing (OSATs), sensors, and other critical components, creating a **comprehensive ecosystem.**
- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** has been set up as a dedicated institution under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** to **implement the Semicon India Programme.**

What is a semiconductor?
- A semiconductor is a **small electronic chip** that plays a crucial role in electronics.
- These chips can **store, process and transfer information.** They help devices **perform tasks** such as calling, storing data and even sensing signals.
- The chip consists of **millions (sometimes billions) of tiny parts** called **transistors.** Transistors are like **tiny switches** that allow or stop the flow of electrical signals. These work together, much like how our brain cells (neurons) and white matter work.

Global Production:
- Currently, countries like **Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, China and the US** dominate the semiconductor industry.
  - **Taiwan produces more than 60% of the world's semiconductors**, including **nearly 90% of the most advanced ones.**
- Such dependence on a single region has **exposed global supply chains to significant risks**—from pandemics and natural disasters to geopolitical tensions.

Why in News?
- India Semiconductor Mission recently organized the **Semicon India–2025,** a three-day conference that brought together participants from 48 countries and regions.
- During the conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the **country's first made-in-India semiconductor chip - Vikram-32.**

Vikram-32

- Vikram-32, officially called **VIKRAM3201**, is the **first fully indigenous 32-bit microprocessor qualified for space missions.**
- It has been built by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh,** specifically to withstand the **extreme conditions of rocket launches and space environments.**
- It is the **successor to VIKRAM1601**, a **16-bit microprocessor** that has powered ISRO's launch vehicles since 2009.
  - The Vikram-32 is built on a **32-bit architecture**, which allows it to **process larger amounts of data more efficiently.**
  - It supports **floating-point computation**, enabling it to **handle complex calculations** required in aerospace and satellite missions.

3) Gyan Bharatam Mission
What's in the news?
- The **Ministry of Culture** has launched the 'Gyan Bharatam' mission, a landmark national initiative dedicated to **reviving India's manuscript legacy.**

> **Did you know?**
> - **India** has the **world's largest collection of about one crore manuscripts.**
> - Inscribed on palm leaves, written on materials such as birch bark, handmade paper, cloth, and others, these manuscripts preserve a vast spectrum of knowledge, from Ayurveda, Astronomy, Mathematics, Medicine, and Governance to Philosophy, Poetry, Spirituality, and the Arts.

- The vision of the Gyan Bharatam is to **safeguard and revitalize India's**

Manuscript Heritage through **systematic survey and documentation, scientific conservation, digitization, and publication**, along with the creation of a **National Digital Repository (NDR)**, ensuring its accessibility for research, education, and public engagement.
- While the project will be **headquartered in New Delhi**, as part of the **Ministry of Culture, regional centres** will be set up across all states.
- Gyan Bharatam **replaces the existing National Manuscripts Mission,** which was launched in 2003, aiming to digitise all manuscripts in the country, but was moving at a slow pace.

4) Make in India
About the Programme
- The 'Make in India' initiative was launched in **2014** to **facilitate investment, foster innovation, build best in class infrastructure**, and **make India a hub for manufacturing, design, and innovation.**
- It is being led by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

Why in News?
- The 'Make in India' initiative marks 11 years of successful implementation.
- The initiative has played a pivotal role in **boosting Manufacturing FDI**, rising from $98 billion in 2004–14 to **$165 billion** in 2014–24.
- Additionally, the initiative has significantly contributed to **employment generation**, creating **13.5 million manufacturing jobs** between 2014–15 and 2024–25.

5) National Critical Mineral Mission

About

- The Government of India launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) in January 2025 to establish a **robust framework for self-reliance in the critical mineral sector.**

> **Critical Minerals:**
> - There is **no global definition** of critical minerals, but essentially, they are **mineral deposits with high economic vulnerability and high global supply chain risk.**
> - They are used in **clean energy technologies** like solar panels, wind turbines, EVs, energy storage systems and are also critical for making **semiconductors and high-end electronics manufacturing.**
> - These minerals are also used in **manufacturing fighter jets, drones, radio sets and other critical equipment,** hence it is **critical for aerospace, communications and defence industries.**
> - Globally, there is a **gap between projected supply and projected demand** for many critical minerals by the end of this decade, especially in **cobalt and lithium.**

Key Objectives

- The NCMM has been designed with the primary objectives of **securing domestic and international supply sources** and **strengthening mineral value chains** covering exploration, mining, processing, recycling, research and development, and human resource development.
- NCMM targets **1,000 patents across the critical minerals value chain by 2030**, with the creation of **7 Centres of Excellence (CoEs)** to drive breakthroughs in exploration and extraction.
- Under this mission, the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has been tasked with conducting **1,200 exploration projects** from 2024-25 to 2030-31.

Components of NCMM

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet approved an **Incentive Scheme under the National Critical Mineral Mission** to **boost India's recycling capacity for critical minerals from secondary sources** such as e-waste, lithium-ion battery scrap, and end-of-life vehicle parts.
- The Scheme will be applicable to **investments in new units as well as expansion of capacity and modernization and diversification of existing units.**
- The scheme will have a **tenure of six years** from FY26 to FY31.

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. Prime Minister's National Relief Fund

About

- In pursuance of an **appeal by the then Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1948**, the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) was established with **public contributions to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.**
- The resources of the PMNRF are now utilized primarily to **render immediate relief to families of those killed in natural calamities** like floods, cyclones and earthquakes, etc. and to the **victims of the major accidents and riots.**
  - PMNRF can also be utilised to provide the **expenses for medical treatment** like heart surgeries, kidney transplantation, cancer treatment, etc.
- The fund consists **entirely of public contributions and does not get any budgetary support**.
- PMNRF is **not a constituent of Parliament** and is **recognised as a Trust.**

- All contributions towards PMNRF are **exempt from Income Tax** under section 80(G).
- **Disbursements** are made with the **approval of the Prime Minister.**

6.2. DIGIPIN
About
- The **DIGIPIN (Digital Postal Index Number)** is a **nationwide geo-coded addressing system** developed by the **Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications** in collaboration with **IIT Hyderabad.**
- It **divides India** into approximately **4m x 4m grids** and assigns each grid a **unique 10-character alphanumeric code** based on latitude and longitude coordinates.
- This system **simplifies addressing** for public and private services, **improving logistics efficiency and emergency response capabilities.**

How is DIGIPIN different from a regular postal address?
- While a **regular postal address depends on locality, street, and house numbers**, DIGIPIN is a **geospatial reference using a 10-character alphanumeric code based on the exact coordinates of a location.**
  - So, while the usual **six-digit India PIN code** number covers an **entire locality or neighborhood**, DIGIPIN narrows **down to the exact location.**

> **Did you know?**
> - The **six-digit Postal Index Number (PIN) Code system**, introduced in **1972**, has served as the backbone of India's postal delivery.
> - The idea was to give a **unique identity to all physical addresses** of the country in terms of the delivery jurisdiction of the post offices.

Advantages
- DIGIPIN is an **additional digital addressing layer that complements existing systems** for **more precise location identification,** especially in areas with unstructured or changing addresses.

- It also **helps in areas where no clear address exists**, such as rural regions, forests, and oceans.
- It is a cornerstone of the Department of Posts' vision to offer **Address-as-a-Service (AaaS) —** an array of services associated with address data management to support secure and efficient interactions between users, government entities, and private sector organisations.

Is DIGIPIN applicable only within India?
- **Yes**, DIGIPIN is designed for the **geographical boundaries of India, including maritime regions**.
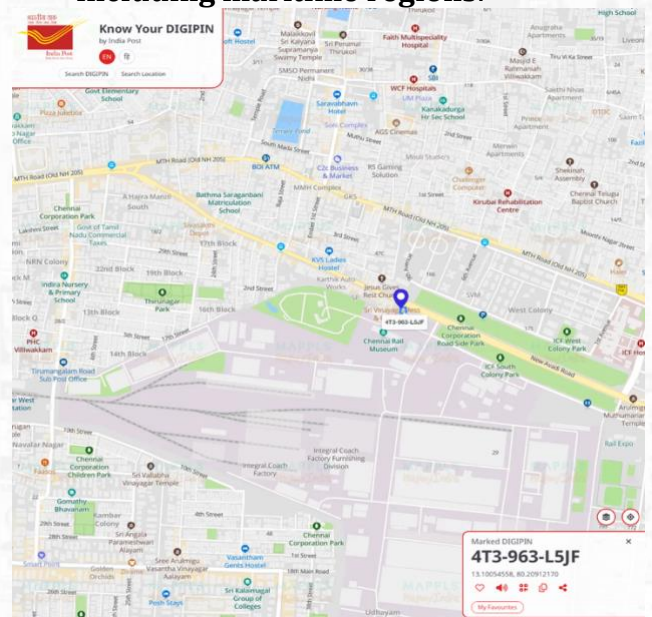
- DIGIPIN can be accessed by visiting https://dac.indiapost.gov.in/mydigipin/home.

6.3. Accessible India Campaign
About
- Accessible India Campaign (**Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan**) was launched in **2015** by the **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)** under the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** as a nation-wide Campaign for **achieving universal accessibility** for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Accessible India Campaign
Accessible India - Empowered India

- The aim of the Campaign is to create a **barrier free environment** and provide **disabled-friendly access in public facilities and places.**
- The Accessible India Campaign comprises of the following three components:
  - **Built Environment Accessibility:** To provide an accessible physical environment for everyone. Measures should be undertaken to eliminate obstacles and barriers to indoor and outdoor facilities including schools, medical facilities, and workplaces.
  - **Transportation System Accessibility:** Focuses on providing PwDs an equal right to travel and use public and private transportation infrastructure with dignity and independence.
  - **Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility:** Access to information refers to all information. This can range from actions such as being able to read price tags, to physically enter a hall, to participate in an event, to read a pamphlet with healthcare information, to understand a train timetable, or to view webpages.
- To provide full legislative cover to the Campaign and Right to accessibility, the Government enacted the **Rights for Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016**.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:
- The Act fulfills India's obligations to the **United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),** to which **India is a signatory**.

- The Act came into force in 2016.
- Its objective is to **ensure that individuals with disabilities can live with dignity, free from discrimination and with equal opportunities.**

Disabilities covered:
- The Act **expanded the scope of protection** for disabled persons, **increasing recognised categories of disability from 7 to 21** and **redefining them through social, environmental, and relational lenses** rather than solely medical terms.

Rights and entitlements:
- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of **6 and 18 years** shall have the **right to free education.**
- **All Government institutions of higher education** and those **getting aid** from the Government are required to **reserve at least 5% of seats** for persons with benchmark disabilities.
- **4% reservation** for persons with benchmark disabilities is to be provided in **posts of all Government establishments**.
- **Incentives to employers in the private sector** are to be given who provide **5% reservation** for persons with benchmark disability.
- **Special employment exchanges** for the PWD are to be set up.

Children with disabilities not to be separated from their parents:
- The Act states that no child with disability shall be separated from his or her parents on the grounds of disability except on an order of a competent court, if required, in the best interest of the child.

Establishment of Authorities:
- **Central & State Advisory Boards on Disability** are to be set up to serve as apex policy making bodies at the Central and State level.
- The **Office of Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities** has been strengthened who will now be assisted by **2 Commissioners** and an **Advisory Committee** comprising not more than 11

members drawn from experts in various disabilities.

- The **Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners** will act as **regulatory bodies** and **Grievance Redressal agencies** and also **monitor** implementation of the Act.
- **Special Courts** will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning violation of rights of PwDs.

1) UAPA

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967

- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is **anti-terrorism law** that was first introduced in **1967** to **prevent unlawful activities associations in India**.
- The act gives the **police power to detain anyone engaging in unlawful activities** like aiding and abetting terrorists, funding terrorists, inciting anti national feeling in the masses and other unlawful activities against the state.
- Offences under the Act shall be punishable with **imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years** but which may extend to **imprisonment for life**, and shall also be **liable to fine.**
- The Central Government **amended the Act in 2019.**

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019

- The amendment **empowers the central government** to **designate an individual a "terrorist"** if they are found committing, preparing for, promoting, or involved in an act of terror.
  - Prior to this amendment, **only organizations** could be designated as terrorist organizations.
- The amendment allows the **Director-General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to approve the **seizure of property connected with terrorism.**
  - This **removes the prior requirement** for the investigating officer to obtain **permission from the Director-General of Police (DGP)** of the state.
- NIA officers of the rank of Inspector or **higher** are now authorized to **investigate offenses** under the UAPA.
  - Previously, **only officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police or above** could do so.

Why in News?

- A tribunal under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act has upheld the Union Home Ministry's decision to declare two radical organisations as "unlawful associations" under UAPA.

About UAPA Tribunals

- The UAPA provides for a **tribunal** to be constituted by the government for its bans to have **long-term legal sanctity.**
- Orders to declare an organisation as **"unlawful"** are issued by the Centre under the **UAPA**. A **government order would not come into effect until the tribunal has confirmed it.**
  - However, in **exceptional circumstances**, the notification can come into effect immediately once the reasons for it are recorded in writing. The tribunal can endorse or reject it.
- The tribunal consists of **only one person**, who has to be a **High Court** judge.
- To make inquiries, the tribunal has the **same powers as vested in a civil court** under the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.**

2) Foreigners Tribunals

About

- The Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) are **quasi-judicial bodies** came into existence through the **Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964** enacted under the **Foreigners Act, 1946.**
- The 1964 order **allows local authorities** in a State to **refer a person suspected to be a foreigner to the tribunals.**
- Currently, FTs are **functional only in Assam.**

Members & Powers

- Each FT is **headed by a member drawn from judges, advocates,** and **civil servants with judicial experience.**
- An FT has the **powers of a civil court in certain matters** such as summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him or her on oath and requiring the production of any document.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has notified the **Immigration and Foreigners Order, 2025** which gives Foreigners Tribunals the

powers of a first class judicial magistrate.

- The 2025 order, which **replaces the Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964, empowers FTs to send persons to a detention centre** if they fail to produce any proof that they are "not a foreigner". This was earlier enforced through **executive orders.**
- The order has been notified under the **Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025,** which was passed by the Parliament in April.

Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025:
- The Act seeks to **regulate the immigration, entry, and stay of foreigners in India.**
- It **repeals the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000.**
- The legislation intends to **reduce overlapping of laws, enhance coordination among the concerned agencies** and **remove the complexity in management and verification** of data.

- Though the latest order is **applicable across the country, FTs are functional only in Assam.** In other States, an illegal migrant is produced before a **local court.**
- The order also **bars employing foreigners in private undertakings** that are engaged in the supply of power or water, in the petroleum sector, in the fields of defence, space technology, nuclear energy and human rights **without the Central government's nod.**

3) Scheduled Tribes Status
Who are Scheduled Tribes?
- The Constitution of India, under **Article 366 (25),** prescribes that **Scheduled Tribes** means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under **Article 342** to be Scheduled Tribes.

Did you know?
- India's Scheduled Tribe population, numbering **10.42 million** people and representing **8.6% of the total population,** spans over **more than 700**

unique groups and predominantly resides in remote regions of this country.

- Essentially, the **President is the sole authority to notify tribal communities as Scheduled Tribes** as per the Constitution of India, with the **Governor playing a recommendatory role.**
- The **Parliament is the sole authority to pass amendments** to the Constitution to modify the lists.
  - Additionally, the **state governments** play an **advisory role**, wherein the process to include tribes in the ST list starts with the recommendation of the respective State governments, which are then sent to the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, which reviews and sends them to the **Registrar General of India** for approval.
- The **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes** also monitors and approves the lists before it is sent to the Cabinet for a final go ahead.

Criteria for designating a community as a Scheduled Tribe
- The **Constitution is silent** about the criteria for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe.
- An Advisory Committee on Revision of lists of SCs & STs (**Lokur Committee**), setup in 1965, recommended the following essential characteristics for a community to be identified as a Scheduled Tribe.
  - **Indications of primitive traits,**
  - **Distinctive culture,**
  - **Shyness of contact with the community at large,**
  - **Geographical isolation, and**
  - **Backwardness.**
- The **list of Scheduled Tribes is State/UT specific** and a community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State.
- The Scheduled Tribes have been **specified in relation to all the States and Union Territories except Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Pondicherry.**

Why in News?

- Six communities in Assam are protesting across the state, seeking Scheduled Tribe status.

4) Armed Forces Special Powers Act

About

- The Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (AFSPA) gives **armed forces the power to maintain public order in "disturbed areas".**
  - According to **Section 3 of AFSPA**, the **Central Government**, or the **Governor of the State** or **administrator of the Union Territory** can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a "disturbed area".
  - The government can make this declaration if it believes the area is in a **disturbed or dangerous condition** that **necessitates the use of armed forces to assist civil authorities.**
- Once declared, armed forces have the authority to **prohibit a gathering of five or more persons** in an area, can use force or even **open fire** after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.
  - If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also **arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search a premises without a warrant;** and **ban the possession of firearms.**
- The law has been **repealed** where insurgencies have subsided, and when governments have gained confidence in managing the region using the police force.

> **Did you know?**
> - AFSPA in its original form was **promulgated by the British in response to the Quit India movement** in **1942**.
> - After Independence, the Government decided to retain the act, which was first brought in as an **ordinance** and then notified as an **act in 1958.**

Criticisms

- The AFSPA has been often criticised as a draconian law. In 2000, activist **Irom Sharmila** began a hunger strike that lasted for 16 years in opposition to the Act in Manipur.
- In 2004, the central government established a five-member committee led by former Supreme Court **Justice Jeevan Reddy.** The committee in its report **recommended the repeal of AFSPA**.
- Subsequently, the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005)**, headed by **Veeerapa Moily**, **endorsed these recommendations.**

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has **extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in parts of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland** for another six months.
- AFSPA is currently in effect in **parts of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh as well as in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.**

5) Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Act, 2016

About the Act

- The real estate (regulation and development) Act 2016 was introduced to bring **transparency and accountability to the real estate sector** in India.
- Its primary goal is to **protect the interests of homebuyers** while **regulating builders, brokers, and other stakeholders** in the industry.

Key Provisions

- The Act established the **state level regulatory authorities** called **Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA)** for **regulation and promotion of the real estate sector.**
- **Developers must register their projects with RERA before advertising or selling**, ensuring buyers get accurate project details. **Real estate agents** dealing in these projects also need to **register with RERAs.**
- On registration, the promoter must **upload details of the project on the website of the RERA**.
  - The Act **guarantees compensation for delays** in possession, protecting buyers from financial loss.

- **70% of the funds** collected from buyers must be kept in a **separate bank account** for that specific project. This reduces the risk of fund diversion.
- A promoter is responsible for **rectification of a structural defect or any other defect** in workmanship, quality or provision of services in the project for **five years** from the date of handing over possession, without further charge.
- The Act establishes state level tribunals called **Real Estate Appellate Tribunals.** Decisions of RERAs can be appealed in these tribunals.

Why in News?

- The 5th Meeting of the **Central Advisory Council** constituted under the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 was held recently in New Delhi.
  - The Central Advisory Council is a **statutory body** constituted under RERA to **advise the Central Government** on matters related to the implementation and administration of the Act.

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. Article 142

About

- Article 142 of the Indian constitution grants the Supreme Court the **extraordinary power** to **pass any order deemed necessary for 'complete justice'** in any case or matter pending before it.
  - It also makes such decree or order **enforceable throughout the territory of India.**

Did you know?
- Article 142 traces its roots back to Section 210 of the **Government of India Act, 1935**, which was passed by the British Parliament.

- This provision has been pivotal in shaping some of India's landmark decisions like facilitating compensation for victims of the **Bhopal Gas Tragedy**, establishing **Visakha guidelines** to address sexual harassment at workplaces, etc.
- Article 142 gives the Supreme Court a unique power to **transcend the limitations of law or statute** in order to ensure justice for the parties involved.
- It enhances the Supreme Court's role as the **guardian of the constitution and the final arbiter of the law**, and as a **source of judicial activism and innovation.**

1) GST 2.0

GST Council

- The Goods & Services Tax (GST) Council is a **constitutional body** responsible for making **recommendations on issues related to the implementation of the GST** in India.
- It was constituted under **Article 279A** through the **Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016.**

Composition

- The GST Council consists of the following members:
  - **Union Finance Minister** (as **Chairman**)
  - **Union Minister of State in-charge of Revenue or Finance**
  - **Minister in charge of Finance or Taxation or any other Minister, nominated by each State Government.**

Mandate of GST Council

- The Goods and Services Tax Council shall make recommendations to the Union and the States on—
  - the **taxes, cesses and surcharges** levied by the Union, the States and the local bodies which may be subsumed in GST;
  - the **goods and services** that may be **subjected to, or exempted** from GST;
  - the **threshold limit of turnover** below which goods and services may be exempted from GST;
  - the **rates including floor rates with bands** of GST;
  - any **special rate** for a specified period, to raise additional resources during any **natural calamity or disaster;**
  - **special provision** with respect to the States of **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand;**
  - the date on which the goods and services tax be levied on **petroleum crude, high speed diesel, motor spirit (commonly known as petrol), natural gas and aviation turbine fuel;**
  - **any other matter relating to GST**, as the Council may decide.

Other Key Provisions

- The GST Council **shall meet at least once in every quarter** of the financial year.
- **One-half** of the total number of Members of the GST Council shall constitute the **quorum at its meetings.**
- **Every decision** of the GST Council shall be taken at a meeting, by a **majority of not less than three-fourths** of the weighted votes of the members present and voting, in accordance with the following principles, namely: —
  - the vote of the **Central Government** shall have a weightage of **one-third** of the total votes cast, and
  - the votes of all the **State Governments** taken together shall have a weightage of **two-thirds** of the total votes cast, in that meeting.
- **No act or proceedings** of the Goods and Services Tax Council shall be **invalid** merely by reason of—
  - **any vacancy in, or any defect** in, the **constitution** of the Council; or
  - **any defect in the appointment** of a person as a Member of the Council; or
  - **any procedural irregularity** of the Council not affecting the merits of the case.
- The Council shall establish a **mechanism to adjudicate any dispute:**
  - between the Government of India and one or more States; or
  - between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other side; or
  - between two or more States, arising out of the recommendations of the Council or implementation thereof.

Why in News?

- The 56th GST Council has announced a major overhaul to India's GST regime, aimed at easing prices for consumers across the country.

Key Highlights

- The updated framework **replaced the previous four-slab system** (5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%) with a **broad two-slab structure:** a **5% rate for essential goods** and an **18% standard rate** for most goods and services, with a **few selected items** (sin and demerit goods such as pan masala, tobacco and cigarettes) **attracting a higher rate of 40%.**
- **All individual health insurance policies**, including family floater policies and policies for senior citizens and reinsurance, have been **exempted from GST.**
- While the government estimates a **net annualised fiscal impact of about ₹48,000 crore** (0.13 per cent of GDP) due to these rate cuts, the move is expected to give a **strong boost to consumption** in sectors such as automobiles, consumer discretionary goods and staples.

2) NPCI Announces New UPI P2M Transaction Limit

About UPI

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a **real-time payment system** that enables **instant money transfers between bank accounts** through a **mobile application**, using a **single identifier** (like a mobile number or a virtual payment address) **without needing to enter bank account details.**
- It is built on the **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) infrastructure.**

Immediate Payment Service:

- IMPS is an **instant payment system** developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India** that enables **real-time interbank fund transfers.**
- It is available **24/7, including weekends and public holidays**, allowing users to send and receive money instantly across India.
- The **per transaction limit** on IMPS is **Rs. 5 lakh**.

- UPI brings **multiple bank accounts into a single app** and **supports various features** such as **fund transfers, merchant payments, and peer-to-peer payment requests.**
- UPI was developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** in 2016.

National Payments Corporation of India:

- NPCI is an **umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems** in India.
- It was established in **2008** as a **"Not for Profit" Company** under the **Companies Act 1956** (now **Companies Act 2013**).
- NPCI is an **initiative of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA)** under the provisions of the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**, for creating a robust Payment & Settlement Infrastructure and promoting financial inclusion in India.

How is it unique?

- **Immediate money transfer** through mobile device **round the clock 24*7 and 365 days.**
- **Single Click 2 Factor Authentication.**
- **Virtual address of the customer** for Pull & Push provides for incremental security with the customer **not required to enter the details** such as Card no, Account number; IFSC etc.
- UPI facilitates **both peer-to-peer (P2P) and peer-to-merchant (P2M) payments.**
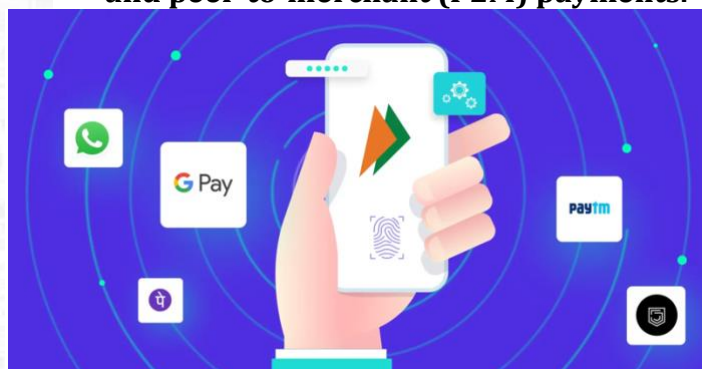
Did you know?

- India's UPI is now the **world's number one real-time payment system.** It has surpassed Visa to take the lead in processing daily transactions.

UPI in Other Countries

- UPI is making its presence felt across borders. It is **live in seven countries**, including the **UAE, Singapore**, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, **France** and Mauritius.

Why in News?

- The National Payments Corporation of India has **raised the single transaction limit** for **Person-to-Merchant (P2M) UPI transactions** to **5 lakh rupees** in specified categories while the **daily aggregate limit** has been increased to **10 lakh rupees**.
- However, the **limit for Person-to-Person (P2P) transfers** remains **unchanged at 1 lakh rupees per day.**

3) GST Appellate Tribunal

What's in the news?

- Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman has formally launched the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) in New Delhi.

About GSTAT

- GSTAT is a **Statutory Appellate Authority** established under the **Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017** to **hear appeals against orders passed by the GST Appellate Authorities.**

> **Background:**
> - The GST Act provided for a **three-tier appeal structure**: the first appeal before the **Appellate Authority** (made to tax officers), the second before the **GSTAT**, and further appeals before the **High Court and Supreme Court**.
> - While the **first and third layers functioned, GSTAT**—though envisaged in law—**remained non-operational** for eight years owing to legal challenges over appointments and centre-state differences.
> - The absence of a functional GSTAT has forced taxpayers to seek relief from High Courts, escalating costs and delays.

- GSTAT is also the **first common forum** to **resolve disputes between the centre and the states.**
- The Tribunal will function through a **Principal Bench** in **New Delhi** and **31 State Benches** across 45 locations in India.

Composition

- The **Principal Bench** in New Delhi will have a **President, one Judicial Member, one Technical Member from the Centre**, and **one Technical Member from a state.**
  - The **President** must be a **Supreme Court judge** or have **served the High Court as the Chief Justice**.
- **Each State Bench** will have **two Judicial Members, one Technical Member from the Centre,** and **one from the state.**

Powers

- The Tribunal is **not bound by the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908,** but follows the **principles of natural justice** and has the authority to regulate its own procedure.
- The Tribunal possesses **powers similar to a civil court** under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, for matters such as summoning individuals, demanding document production, and receiving evidence on affidavits.
- **Orders** issued by the Tribunal can be **enforced as if they were court decrees.**

4) Liberalized Remittance Scheme

About

- The Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), introduced by the **Reserve Bank of India** in **2004** enables **Indian residents** (including minors) **to freely remit funds abroad for various approved purposes** such as overseas business trip, education, medical treatment, investments in shares, buying immovable properties, etc.
- As per current LRS regulations, Indian residents can remit up to **USD 2,50,000 per Financial Year**.
  - These funds can be used for **any permissible current or capital account transaction, or a combination of both.**

Objective

- The primary objective of LRS is to **liberalize the existing foreign exchange regulations** and **facilitate the smooth transfer of funds abroad** by Indian residents.
- The scheme also aims at **promoting international trade and investment,** as well as for **facilitating capital flows into and out of India.**

Who can avail the benefits under this scheme?

- In order to avail the benefit of the LRS, the individual must be an **Indian resident** as defined under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). It **cannot be used by corporations, partnership firms, Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), trusts, etc.**
  - Under FEMA, a person is treated as a resident if he has been in India for **more than 182 days** in the preceding year.
- He/she must also have a **valid PAN card, a bank account in India, and a valid passport.**

Limitations

- The maximum amount that can be remitted in a financial year is **USD 2,50,000.** Any amount **exceeding this limit** requires **prior permission from RBI.**
- Remittances under the scheme are **not permitted for certain activities** such as **purchase of lottery tickets, margin trading, and speculation in foreign exchange markets.**

Why in News?

- Outward remittances by resident individuals under the RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme were almost 11% lower year on year in July at $2453 million on the back of a decline towards travel as well as studies abroad.

5) Ways and Means Advances

About

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** gives **temporary loans** to the **central, state governments and Union Territories** as a banker to the government. This facility is called **Ways and Means Advances (WMA)**. It was introduced in **1997.**
- Thus, WMA is a **temporary liquidity arrangement** that helps **meet mismatches in receipts and payments of the government.**
- Under this scheme, Centre and states can avail themselves of immediate cash from the RBI. But it has to return the amount within **90 days**. Interest is charged at the **existing repo rate.**

- The governments are, however, allowed to draw amounts in **excess of their WMA limits.** The interest on such overdraft is usually **above the repo rate** (currently 2% above the repo rate)**.**
- The limits for WMA are decided by the government and RBI mutually and revised periodically.

Why in News?

- Reserve Bank of India, in consultation with the Government of India, has set the limit for Ways and Means Advances at Rs 1,50,000 crore for the first half of the financial year 2025-26 (April to September 2025).

6) Index of Eight Core Industries

About ICI

- The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is a crucial gauge of the **performance of key infrastructure sectors** in the Indian economy. It is published on a **monthly basis.**
- ICI measures **combined and individual performance of production of eight core industries** viz. **Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity.**
- The Eight Core Industries comprise **40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).**

Index of Industrial Production:

- IIP measures the **short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products** during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- **Manufacturing** (weightage: 77.6%), **mining** (14.4%), and **electricity** (8%) are the three broad sectors in which IIP constituents fall.
- It is **published every month** by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.**
- The base year of IIP is **2011-2012.**

- **Industry Weightage (in percentage):**
  - Petroleum & Refinery production - 28.04
  - Electricity generation - 19.85
  - Steel production - 17.92

- Coal production - 10.33
    - Crude Oil production - 8.98
    - Natural Gas production - 6.88
    - Cement production - 5.37
    - Fertilizers production - 2.63.
- ICI is released by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- The **base year** of the ICI is **2011-12.**

Why in News?
- The combined Index of Eight Core Industries increased by 6.3 per cent in August, 2025 as compared to the Index in August, 2024.

7) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

7.1. HSN Codes
About
- The Harmonized System of Nomenclature (HSN) system has been introduced for the **systematic classification of goods all over the world**.
- It was developed by the **World Customs Organization (WCO)** and it came into effect from 1988.

> **World Customs Organization:**
> - WCO is an **intergovernmental body** whose mission is to **enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.**
> - Established in **1952**, WCO represents 186 Customs administrations across the globe (including **India**) that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.

- HSN code is a **6-digit uniform code** that classifies 5000+ products, arranged in a legal and logical structure and is **accepted worldwide**.
- HSN code is used by customs authorities, statistical agencies, and other government regulatory bodies, to **monitor and control the import and export of commodities.**

7.2. Payments Banks
About
- Payment banks are **specialized financial institutions** designed to provide **basic banking services to the underbanked and unbanked population** such as deposits, withdrawals, remittances, and payments, primarily through digital channels.
- They offer a **limited range of products and services**, focusing on **promoting financial inclusion.**
- A payments bank provides following services to its customers:
    - Accept demand deposits (restricted upto **Rs.2 lakhs**)
    - Remittance services
    - Mobile banking
    - Debit card and associated services
    - Sell third-party financial products like insurance and mutual funds
- However, payments banks cannot undertake the following activities:
    - They **cannot issue loans or credit cards.**
    - They **cannot set up subsidiaries to undertake non-banking financial services activities.**
    - They are **not eligible to accept NRI deposits.**

Eligible Promoters
- Existing non-bank Pre-paid Payment Instrument (PPI) issuers authorised under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- Other entities such as individuals / professionals; Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), corporate Business Correspondents (BCs), mobile telephone companies, supermarket chains, companies, real sector cooperatives; that are owned and controlled by residents; and public sector entities may apply to set up payments banks.

Regulations
- Payments banks are registered as a **public limited company** under the **Companies Act, 2013,** and licensed under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949.**
- Deposits mobilised by the payments bank are covered under the **deposit insurance scheme of the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (DICGC).**
- Apart from amounts maintained as **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)** with RBI on its outside demand and time liabilities, Payments banks are required to invest **minimum 75% of their demand deposit balances** in

Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) eligible Government securities/treasury bills.
- o They have to maintain a **maximum of 25% in current and time deposits with other scheduled commercial banks** for its operations and also for the management of liquidity.
- The **minimum paid-up equity capital** of the payments bank shall be **Rs. 100 crore.**
- The payments bank shall be required to maintain a **minimum capital adequacy ratio of 15 percent of its risk weighted assets (RWA).**
- The **foreign shareholding** in the payments bank would be **as per the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy for private sector banks** as amended from time to time.
  - o At present, the FDI in private sector banks is **capped at 74%.**

7.3. GIFT City
About
- Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) is the **first operational International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** in India.

> **International Financial Services Centre:**
> - An International Financial Services Centre is a jurisdiction that provides **world class financial services to non-residents and residents** in a **currency other than the domestic currency** (Indian Rupee) **of the location where the IFSC is located.**
> - Such centres deal with **flows of finance, financial products and services across borders.**
>   - o **London, New York** and **Singapore** can be counted as global financial centres.

> **Services provided by an IFSC:**
> - o Fund-raising services for individuals, corporations and governments
> - o Asset management and global portfolio diversification undertaken by pension funds, insurance companies and mutual funds
> - o Wealth management
> - o Merger and acquisition activities among trans-national corporations, etc.

- Designed to be a **global financial and IT hub**, GIFT City was **operationalized in 2015.**
- Located between **Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar** along the **Sabarmati River**, it is intended to provide **Indian corporates with easier access to global financial markets,** and to complement and promote the **further development of financial markets** in India.
- The **International Financial Services Centers Authority (IFSCA)** is the regulatory body for the GIFT IFSC.

> **International Financial Services Centers Authority:**
> - IFSCA is a **statutory body** established in 2020 under the **International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019.**
> - It acts as a **unified authority for the development and regulations of IFSCs** in India.
> - IFSCA is **headquartered at GIFT City, Gujarat.**

ENVIRONMENT

1) Aflatoxins
About
- Aflatoxins are **toxic compounds** that are **naturally produced by certain types of mould** (microscopic fungi that live on plant or animal matter).
- These toxins develop under **warm and humid conditions**, **contaminating a wide range of food and feed commodities** including maize, groundnuts, spices, cottonseed, and tree nuts.
- Consumption of contaminated food poses **severe health risks**: acute exposure can cause **fatal liver damage (aflatoxicosis)**, while chronic intake is linked to **liver cancer, DNA damage,** and **immune suppression**.
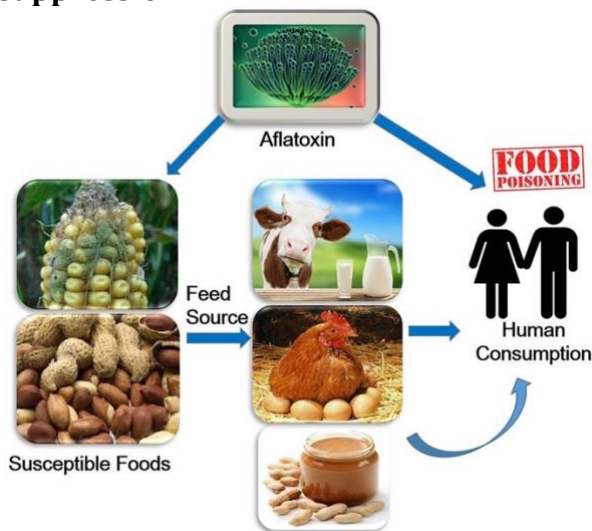
Why in News?
- Indonesia has halted imports of groundnuts from India due to repeated instances of excess aflatoxin levels in consignments.

2) Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve in World Network of Biosphere Reserves
Biosphere Reserves
- It is an **international designation** by **UNESCO** for **representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes** extending over a large area of terrestrial or marine ecosystems or a combination of both.
- A Biosphere reserve tries to **balance economic and social development** and **maintenance of associated cultural values along with the preservation of nature**.
- The **idea of designation** of Biosphere Reserves was initiated by **UNESCO** in **1973-74** under its **Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme.**
  - The MAB Programme is an **intergovernmental scientific programme** that aims to establish a scientific basis for **enhancing the relationship between people and their environments.**
- Biosphere reserves are **nominated by national governments** and **remain under the sovereign jurisdiction** of the states where they are located.

Zones of BRs
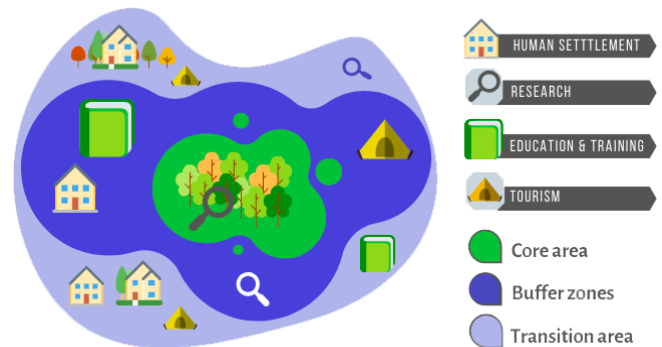
- Biosphere reserves have three **interrelated zones:**
1. **Core area:**
   - The core area comprises a **strictly protected ecosystem** that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.
2. **Buffer zone:**
   - The buffer zone surrounds or adjoins the core areas, and is **used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices** that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.
3. **Transition area:**
   - The transition area is where communities foster **socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities.**

Status in India

- There are **18 biosphere reserves** in India. **Nilgiri** was the first biosphere reserve of India, established in **1986.**

Biosphere Reserve	Designated	Inclusion Year in WNBR	State
Nilgiri	1986	2000	Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka
Nanda Devi	1988	2004	Uttarakhand
Nokrek	1988	2009	Meghalaya
Gulf of Mannar	1989	2001	Tamil Nadu
Sunderbans	1989	2001	West Bengal
Manas	1989		Assam
Great Nicobar	1989	2013	Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Simlipal	1994	2009	Odisha
Dibru-Saikhowa	1997		Assam
Dehang-Dibang	1998		Arunachal Pradesh
Panchmarhi	1999	2009	Madhya Pradesh
Khangchendzonga	2000	2018	Sikkim
Agasthyamalai	2001	2016	Kerala, Tamil Nadu
Achanakmar-Amarkantak	2005	2012	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh
Great Rann of Kutch	2008		Gujarat
Cold Desert	2009	2025	Himachal Pradesh
Seshaschalam	2010		Andhra Pradesh
Panna	2011	2020	Madhya Pradesh

Why in News?

- UNESCO has designated the **Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve** in **Himachal Pradesh** as one of the biosphere reserves of its **World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).**
- India has a total of **18 biosphere reserves**, of which **13 are now in the UNESCO's world network**.

World Network of Biosphere Reserves:
- WNBR is a **repertoire of vital ecological and social systems** in which **interdisciplinary approaches to sustainable development are implemented and refined.**
- Hosted by the **Man and the Biosphere Programme** of UNESCO, the Network comprises 785 sites in 142 countries.
- It promotes **North-South, South-South and South-North-South collaboration** and represents a unique tool for **international cooperation** through the exchange of experiences and know-how, capacity-building and the promotion of best practices among Biosphere Reserves.

Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve

- Established in 2009, the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve spans approximately 7,770 sq. km. across the landscapes of Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul-Spiti district.
- **Altitudes** in this reserve **range from 3,300 to 6,600 m**, covering the **Pin Valley National Park and Kibber and Chandratal Wildlife Sanctuaries**.
- This fragile cold desert ecosystem supports **hardy alpine grasses, medicinal herbs,** and rare stands of **Willow-leaved sea-buckthorn, Himalayan birch** and **Persian juniper.**
- Iconic fauna include the **snow leopard, Himalayan ibex, blue sheep, Himalayan wolf,** and **rich bird life** such as the **Himalayan snowcock and golden eagle.**
- This is **India's first high-altitude cold desert biosphere reserve** and **one of the coldest and driest ecosystems** in the UNESCO's world network of biosphere reserves.

3) Sustainable Aviation Fuel

About

- A Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is a **sustainable, non-conventional, alternative to fossil-based jet fuel.**
- SAF can be produced from a **variety of sustainable resources** (feedstocks). This includes forestry and agricultural waste, corn grain, wastewater treatment sludge, wood mill waste, used cooking oil, carbon captured from the air, and green hydrogen.
- The **chemical and physical characteristics** of SAF are **almost identical** to those of **conventional jet fuel** and they can be **safely mixed** with the latter to varying degrees, use the same supply infrastructure and **do not require the adaptation** of aircraft or engines.
  - Fuels with these properties are called **"drop-in fuels"** (i.e. fuels that can be automatically incorporated into existing airport fueling systems).
- SAF significantly **reduces carbon emissions** (up to 80%) and **particulate**

27

emissions compared to traditional aviation fuel.

Why in News?

- The Central Government conducted a feasibility study to assess the potential for producing and utilizing drop-in Sustainable Aviation Fuel in India.

India's Potential

- India is well positioned to become a **global leader in SAF**, because of its **large agricultural base, availability of surplus biomass and strong refining capacity.**
- SAF production will not only **reduce crude imports** and **cut emissions by 20-25 million tonnes annually**, but also **boost farmers' incomes** by creating a strong value chain for agricultural residue and biomass.
- Estimates suggest India could produce **8-10 million tonnes of SAF annually by 2040,** more than domestic demand, **opening export opportunities** and creating up to **1.4 million green jobs.**
- The government has set **phased blending targets - 1% of total fuel for international flights by 2027, 2% by 2028, and 5% by 2030.**

Did you know?
- India's first commercial passenger flight using indigenously produced Sustainable Aviation Fuel blend was successfully flown in 2023.

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4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. Green Credit Programme
About

- The Green Credit Program (GCP) was introduced in **2023** by the **Ministry of** **Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** as an **innovative market-based mechanism** designed to **incentivize voluntary environmental actions** across diverse sectors.
  - GCP was launched as a part of Government of India's **Mission LiFE** ('Lifestyle for Environment), an India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment.

- At its core, the GCP seeks **voluntary participation of individuals, companies, industries, and other entities** across **different activities** — such as tree plantation, waste management, and water conservation — that will lead to **improvements in the environment.**

- This participation will be **incentivised by generating "green credits",** which can then be **traded on a domestic market platform to potential buyers** looking to meet sustainability targets, or existing legal obligations.
- The **Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE),** an autonomous body under the MoEFCC, serves as the **GCP Administrator,** responsible for program implementation, management, monitoring, and operation.

28

SPECIES IN NEWS

1) Indus River Dolphin

About

- The Indus River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica minor*) is a **freshwater dolphin** found in the lower parts of the **Indus River** in Pakistan and in **River Beas**, a tributary of the Indus River in Punjab, India.
- They have adapted to life in the muddy river and are **functionally blind**. They rely on **echolocation** to navigate, communicate, and hunt prey.
  - *Echolocation is a technique used by animals, such as bats and dolphins, to determine the location of different objects in the world around them using sound waves.*
- Like other freshwater dolphins, the Indus river dolphin is an **important indicator of the health of a river.**
- They are also considered **living fossils**, being among the **most ancient dolphin species still alive.**
- Since the 1870s, its **habitat reportedly shrunk by 80%** due to the habitat degradation, entanglement, chemical contaminants, construction of irrigation barrages, with only around 2,000 recorded individuals today.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List: **Endangered;**
- Wildlife Protection Act (2022): **Schedule I.**

Why in News?

- A recent study has found the intestines of Indus river dolphins to be **heavily contaminated with microplastics**, leading to serious health risks for the endangered species.

Microplastics:

- Microplastics are **plastics less than 5 mm in length.**
  - An estimated **10 to 40 million metric tons** of these particles are released into the environment every year, and if current trends continue, that **number could double by 2040.**
- They consist of **carbon and hydrogen atoms** bound together in **polymer chains**. Other chemicals, such as **phthalates, polybrominated diphenyl ethers** and **tetrabromobisphenol A**, are also present in microplastics.
- There are two categories of microplastics: **Primary** and **Secondary**.
  - **Primary microplastics** are **tiny particles designed for commercial use,** such as cosmetics, microfibers shed from clothing, fishing nets.
  - **Secondary microplastics** are particles that **result from the breakdown of larger plastic items**, such as water bottles.

Impacts:

- Microplastics are of particular concern in the environment because their small size means they can be **transported over long distances.**
  - They may **carry chemical and biological agents**, such as toxic additives, persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals, with **associated negative effects on the environment and human health.**
- Studies in animals and human cells suggest microplastics exposure could be **linked to cancer, heart attacks, reproductive problems and other health issues**.

2) Dugong

About

- Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) are the **largest herbivorous marine mammal** in the world.
- They are found throughout the **warm latitudes of the Indian and western Pacific Oceans.**
- As Dugongs diets consist **almost entirely of seagrass**, they are referred to as **'sea cows'.**
- They can grow upto 3 meters long, weigh about 300 kilograms and come to the surface to breathe.
- In **India,** dugongs are seen in the **Gulf of Mannar, Gulf of Kutch, Palk Bay, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.**

Threats:

- **Loss of seagrass habitats, water pollution, and degradation of the coastal ecosystem** due to developmental activities, along with **accidental entanglement** in fishing nets.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red list: **Vulnerable**;
- Wildlife Protection Act, 2022 : **Schedule I;**
- CITES: **Appendix I**

Why in News ?

- The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** has formally adopted a motion recognising **India's first dugong conservation reserve in Tamil Nadu's Palk Bay** as a **global model for marine biodiversity conservation.**

International Union for Conservation of Nature:

- IUCN is a **membership union of government and civil society organisations** established in **1948.**
- It is the **global authority on the status of the natural world** and the **measures needed to safeguard it**.
- Headquarters: **Switzerland**.

IUCN Red List:

- IUCN compiles and publishes the **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**, which is the world's most comprehensive information source on the **global extinction risk status of animal, fungus and plant species.**
- Species are **classified into one of nine Red List Categories:** Extinct, Extinct in the Wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable, Near Threatened, Least Concern, Data Deficient and Not Evaluated.
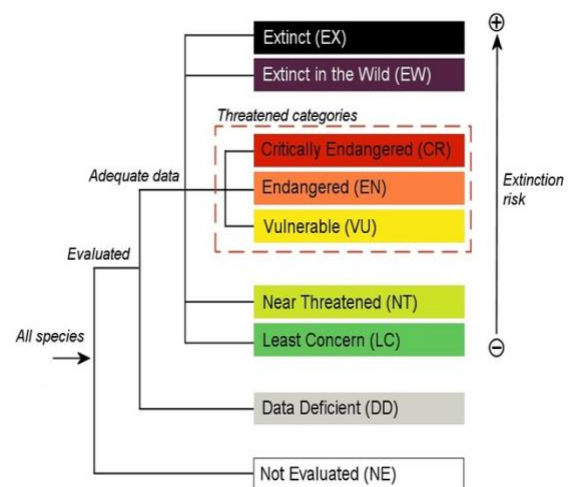
- Species are assessed against **five criteria** based on **geographic range, population size and population decline/increase, in addition to extinction probability analyses.** These criteria determine which category is most appropriate for the species.

CRITERIA | THREATENED CATEGORIES

A — Population reduction
B — Restricted geographic range
C — Small population size & decline
D — Very small or restricted population
E — Extinction probability analysis

Numerical thresholds →

Critically Endangered (CR)
Endangered (EN)
Vulnerable (VU)

- The IUCN Red List also includes the **IUCN Green Status of Species**, which assesses the recovery of species' populations and measures their conservation success.

- IUCN members highlighted the **innovative restoration techniques** pioneered in the reserve, including the **use of bamboo and coconut rope frames** to rehabilitate seagrass meadows.
  - The initiative was praised for **integrating scientific methods with community participation**, setting a model for conservation across South Asia.

Dugong Conservation Reserve

- Established in **2022**, by the **Tamil Nadu government** under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972,** the Dugong Conservation Reserve covers about 450 sq. km. in northern Palk Bay.
- The region is home to over 12,250 hectares of **seagrass meadows**, vital feeding grounds for dugongs.

TAMIL NADU — Thanjavur — Tiruvarur

PALK BAY

Community Reserve
Intertidal Zone (1 km from shore)

- Seagrasses also **support a host of other marine species**, making the reserve **ecologically significant.**

3) Vultures
About
- Vultures are **large, magnificent raptors** that **scavenge on carrion** (animal carcasses).
- They are widely known as "**cleaners of the ecosystem"** because by feeding on dead and decaying animals, they **help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.**
- Vultures are **found in all continents, except Australia and Antarctica.**
- There are **23 species of vultures** in the world, categorised into **New World vulture species** (found across the Americas and Caribbean) and **Old World vulture species** (which are found typically in Africa, Asia, and also Europe).
- **India** is home to **9 vulture species, 4 of which are under severe threat:**
  - **Indian Vulture** (*Gyps indicus*)- Critically Endangered
  - **Indian White-rumped Vulture** (*Gyps bengalensis*)- Critically Endangered
  - **Red-headed Vulture** (*Sarcogyps calvus*)- Critically Endangered
  - **Slender-billed Vulture** (*Gyps tenuirostris*)- Critically Endangered.
- Other species of vultures found in India include **Egyptian Vulture** *(Neophron percnopterus*), **Cincerous Vulture** (*Aegypius monachus*), **Bearded Vulture** (*Gypaetus barbatus)*, **Griffon Vulture** (*Gyps fulvus*) and **Himalayan Vulture** (*Gyps himalayansis*).

Diclofenac and Vulture
- The use of the **veterinary drug diclofenac** in livestock led to a **drastic decline in vulture populations** in India.
- Vultures died after feeding on the carcasses of livestock that had been treated with diclofenac, suffering kidney failure due to the drug's toxicity. This crisis prompted a **ban on diclofenac in 2006.**

Why in News ?
- An Assam-based foundation (We Foundation India) working on vulture conservation has developed a portal in collaboration with Gauhati University to build a network of individuals engaged in saving the large scavenger birds.

- The portal (http://www.thevulturenetwork.org) aims to serve as a comprehensive knowledge and awareness platform on vultures of India.

Vultures of India

This poster depicts the nine species of Vultures reported from India and their identification features along with their IUCN RedList Status

Slender-billed Vulture
Gyps tenuirostris — CR

White-rumped Vulture
Gyps bengalensis — CR

Indian Vulture
Gyps indicus — CR

Bearded Vulture
Gypaetus barbatus — NT

Red-headed Vulture
Sarcogyps calvus — CR

Egyptian Vulture
Neophron percnopterus — EN

Cinereous Vulture
Aegypius monachus — NT

Griffon Vulture
Gyps fulvus — LC

Himalayan Griffon
Gyps himalayensis — NT

Slender-billed Vulture by Suvrashis Sarkar	Red-headed Vulture by Sankara Narayanan	Griffon Vulture by Ashley Chiu
White-rumped Vulture by Devvratsinh Mori	Bearded Vulture by Tulsi Subedi	Egyptian Vulture by Sankara Narayanan
Indian Vulture by Sunil Singhal	Cinereous Vulture by Nandkishor Dudhe	Himalayan Griffon by Devvratsinh Mori

CR = Critically endangered
EN = Endangered
NT = Near threatened
LC = Least concern

ORGANISATIONS

1) National Centre for Good Governance

About

- The National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) is an **autonomous institution** registered as a **Society** under the Societies Registration Act 1860, under the aegis of the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.**
- Constituted in **2014**, NCGG serves as a **think tank for governance and policy reforms**.

- NCGG plays a pivotal role in advancing research for good governance, e-Governance, and fostering innovation within the public sector by conducting policy-relevant research, preparing case studies, curating training programmes for civil servants, and offering a platform for knowledge sharing at both national and international levels.
- The affairs of the NCGG are managed under the overall superintendence and direction of the **Governing Body**, which is **headed by the Cabinet Secretary.**
- Its head office is in **New Delhi.**

Why in News?

- The National Centre for Good Governance conducted its first Special Capacity Building Programme for Mid-Career Civil Servants of **Mauritius**.

2) International Civil Aviation Organisation

About

- The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** that works with its member states to support the **safe, secure, sustainable and efficient operation of international civil aviation.**
- It was established in **1944** by the **Convention on International Civil Aviation** (also known as **Chicago Convention**).
- ICAO has 193 member states (including **India**).
- ICAO headquarters are located in **Montreal, Canada.**

Structure

- The **ICAO Assembly**, convened **every three years**, is the **organization's sovereign body,** comprising **all 193 signatory States to the Chicago Convention.**
- The **36-member ICAO Council**, elected by the 193 Member States during the Assembly, serves as the **governing body** for a **three-year term.**
  - Members of the ICAO Council are **divided into three parts: Part I** includes states of chief importance in air transport; **Part II** includes states that make the largest contribution to international civil air navigation facilities; and **Part III** ensures geographic representation.

Why in News?

- India has been re-elected to the **Part II of the Council of International Civil Aviation Organization.**

3) NCERT
About

- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an **autonomous organisation** under the **Ministry of Education**.
- It was set up in **1961** to **assist and advise the Central and State Governments** on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.
- The **major objectives** of NCERT are to **undertake, promote and coordinate research** in areas related to **school education**; prepare and publish **model textbooks, supplementary material, newsletters, journals** and develop **educational kits, multimedia digital materials,** etc.

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NCERT

- In addition to **research, development, training, extension, publication and dissemination activities**, NCERT is an **implementation agency for bilateral cultural exchange programmes with other countries** in the field of **school education**.
- The council **headquarter** is located in **New Delhi**.

Why in News?

- The 65th Foundation Day of NCERT was celebrated recently.

4) International Seabed Authority
About

- The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is an **autonomous international organization** established under the **1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).**

> **UNCLOS:**
> - The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also known as the **Law of the Sea Treaty**, is an international treaty which was adopted and signed in **1982**.
> - The Convention was formed to **ensure freedom of shipping navigation at the sea.**
> - The Convention has created three new institutions on the international scene:
>   - **the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea,**
>   - **the International Seabed Authority,**
>   - **the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.**
> - **India** is a party to UNCLOS.

- ISA is the organization through which States Parties to UNCLOS organize and control all mineral-resources-related activities in the international seabed area for the benefit of humankind as a whole.
  - *The international seabed area is defined as the **seabed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.** It represents around*

50 per cent of the total area of the world's oceans.

- In so doing, ISA has the **mandate to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment** from harmful effects that may arise from deep-seabed-related activities.

- Established in **1994,** the Authority has its **headquarters in Kingston, Jamaica**.
- **All States Parties to UNCLOS are *ipso facto*** (by the fact itself) **members of ISA.** ISA has more than **160 Members** (including **India**).

Why in News?

- **India** has signed a new 15-year contract with the **International Seabed Authority** for **exclusive rights to explore Polymetallic Sulphides (PMS)** in the allotted 10,000 sq km area of the **Carlsberg Ridge in the Indian Ocean.**
- With this, India has become the **first country** in the world to **hold two contracts with ISA for PMS exploration,** reaffirming its pioneering role in deep-sea resource exploration and its strategic presence in the Indian Ocean.
  - The earlier contract is in the **Central Indian Ridge and Southwest Indian Ridge,** signed in 2016.
- The **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)** will carry out the PMS exploration in 2026, starting with

geophysical and hydrographic surveys in the licensed area.

National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research:
- NCPOR is India's premier R&D institution responsible for the country's **research activities in the Polar and Southern Ocean realms.**
- Established in **1998** as an autonomous Research and Development Institution of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences,** it is headquartered in **Goa.**

What is PMS and why is it important for India?

- Polymetallic Sulphides are **deposits on the ocean floor, rich in strategic and critical metals** such as **copper, zinc, lead, gold, and silver**, along with **trace amounts of rare and precious elements.**
- Since land resources containing these minerals are very limited for India, exploring PMS in the deep ocean could **enhance resource security.**
- These metals are **essential for high-technology applications, renewable energy systems, and green technologies.**
- PMS deposits are **generally found near hydrothermal vents,** which are like hot springs on the ocean floor.
  - The ocean seabed has cracks. Through these cracks, the cold seawater interacts with the magma under the earth's crust, and is expelled back in a hot gush. This expelled water is rich in minerals, which are then deposited on the ocean floor as solids.

What is the significance of the Carlsberg Ridge?

- The Carlsberg Ridge is a major segment of the **mid-ocean ridge system in the Indian Ocean, formed by seafloor spreading between the Indian Plate and the Somali Plate.**
- The ridge is known to **host hydrothermal vent systems, potential sites of PMS deposits**.

5) APEDA's BHARATI

About

- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is a **statutory body** established under the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985.**
  - The Authority **replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPC).**
- APEDA functions under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- The Authority has its headquarters in **New Delhi.**

Functions of APEDA

- **Development of industries** relating to the scheduled products for **export;**
- **Registration of persons as exporters** of the scheduled products;

- **Fixing of standards and specifications** for the scheduled products for the purpose of exports;
- **Carrying out inspection** of meat and meat products in slaughterhouses, processing plants, storage premises, conveyances or other places for the purpose of **ensuring the quality** of such products;
- **Improving of packaging** of the Scheduled products;
- **Improving of marketing** of the Scheduled products outside India;
- **Promotion of export oriented production and development** of the Scheduled products.

Products Monitored

- APEDA is mandated with the responsibility of **export promotion and development** of the following **scheduled products:**
  - Fruits, Vegetables and their Products.
  - Meat and Meat Products.
  - Poultry and Poultry Products.
  - Dairy Products.
  - Confectionery, Biscuits and Bakery Products.
  - Honey, Jaggery and Sugar Products.
  - Cocoa and its products, chocolates of all kinds.
  - Alcoholic and Non-Alcoholic Beverages.
  - Cereal and Cereal Products.
  - Groundnuts, Peanuts and Walnuts.
  - Pickles, Papads and Chutneys.
  - Guar Gum.
  - Floriculture and Floriculture Products.
  - Herbal and Medicinal Plants.
  - De –oiled rice bran.
  - Green pepper in brine.
  - Cashew Nuts and Its Products.
- **Basmati Rice** has been included in the **Second Schedule** of APEDA Act.
  - The Second Schedule of the APEDA Act was introduced by the **APEDA (Amendment) Act, 2009** to list products for which **APEDA is mandated to protect intellectual property rights** and **facilitate**

registration, both **within and outside India.**

- In addition to this, APEDA has been entrusted with the responsibility to **monitor import of sugar.**
- APEDA also functions as the **Secretariat to the National Accreditation Board (NAB)** for the implementation of accreditation of the Certification Bodies under **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) for Organic exports.**

> **National Programme for Organic Production:**
> - NPOP was launched in **2001** by the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry** for **exports of Organic products.**
> - **APEDA** acts as the Secretariat for the implementation of the NPOP.

Why in News?

- APEDA has launched its new initiative **BHARATI (Bharat's Hub for Agritech, Resilience, Advancement and Incubation for Export Enablement)** to empower 100 agri-food and agri-tech startups, accelerate their journey, promote innovation and create new export opportunities for young entrepreneurs.
- Conceived as APEDA's vision to **achieve $50 billion in agri-food exports for its Scheduled Products by 2030,** the initiative marks a significant step to strengthen India's agricultural and processed food exports.

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board

About

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is a **statutory body** constituted under the **PNGRB Act, 2006** to **protect the interests of consumers and entities** engaged in specified activities relating to **petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas** and to **promote competitive markets.**
- The board has also been mandated to **regulate** the refining, processing, storage,

transportation, distribution, marketing and sale of **petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas excluding production of crude oil and natural gas.**

- Accordingly, PNGRB **authorizes the City Gas Distribution (CGD) networks, natural gas and petroleum product pipelines, determines tariff, lays down the technical and safety standards** etc.

- The **Board's orders are enforceable** as the powers vested are the same as in a **civil court** under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.
- The appeals against the decisions of the Board go before the **Appellate Tribunal** established under the **Electricity Act, 2003.**
- The Board has its seat in **Delhi.**

6.2. Central Pollution Control Board

About

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is a **statutory organisation** under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).**
- CPCB was constituted in **1974** under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.** Further, CPCB was entrusted with the **powers and functions** under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**
- It is the **apex organisation** in the country in the **field of pollution control,** as a technical wing of MoEFCC.

- **Principal functions** of the CPCB, as spelt out in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981:
  - (i) to **promote cleanliness of streams and wells** in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of **water pollution**, and
  - (ii) to **improve the quality of air** and to prevent, control or abate **air pollution** in the country.
- CPCB **advises the Central Government** on any matter concerning **prevention and control of water and air pollution** and **improvement of the quality of air.**
- The headquarters of CPCB is situated in **New Delhi.**

6.3. Directorate of Revenue Intelligence
About
- Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) is the **premier intelligence and enforcement agency of the Government of India on anti-smuggling matters**.
- DRI functions under the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.** It was constituted in **1957.**
- DRI enforces the provisions of the **Customs Act, 1962 and over fifty other allied Acts** including the Arms Act, Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPSA), Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities (COFEPOSA) Act, Wildlife Act, Antiquities Act etc.
- DRI undertakes **collection, collation, analysis and dissemination of intelligence** relating to **smuggling**, carries out **investigations, adjudication of cases and prosecution** of the arrested persons.

6.4. Geological Survey of India
About
- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) was set up in **1851** under the **Ministry of**

Mines primarily to **find coal deposits for the Railways.**

> **Did you know?**
> - GSI is one of the oldest of such organisations in the world and the **second oldest survey in India after Survey of India** (founded in 1767).

- Over the years, GSI has grown into a **repository of geo-science information** required in various fields in the country.

- Its main functions relate to **creating and updating of national geoscientific information and mineral resource assessment.**
- GSI also emphasises on **systematic documentation** of all geological processes, both surface and subsurface, of India and its offshore areas.
- GSI, headquartered in **Kolkata**, has **six regional offices** located in Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong and Kolkata.

6.5. Khadi and Village Industries Commission
About
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a **statutory organisation** under the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.**
- It was established in **1957** under an **Act of Parliament**.
- KVIC is engaged in **promoting and developing Khadi and Village industries**

(KVI) for providing employment opportunities in the rural areas.

- KVIC functions with its Central Office in **Mumbai.**

6.6. Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology

About

- The Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE) is a **premier research institution** under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences.**
- Established in **1998**, it is dedicated to **studying and sustainably managing marine living resources** in India.
- CMLRE is based in **Cochin, Kerala**.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1) Two Factor Authentication

About

- Two-factor authentication (2FA) is an **identity and access management security method** that requires users to **provide two distinct forms of identification** to verify their identity and to access resources and data.

There are generally three recognized types of authentication factors:

- **Type 1 – Something You Know:** This is a piece of secret information that only the user should know.
  - Examples: A password, a PIN, or the answer to a security question.
- **Type 2 – Something You Have**: This includes all items that are physical objects in the user's possession.
  - Examples: keys, smart phones, smart cards, USB drives, etc.
- **Type 3 – Something You Are**: This is a biological or physical characteristic unique to the user.
  - Examples: fingerprints, palm scanning, facial recognition, retina scans, iris scans, and voice verification.

- The key rule of 2FA is that the **two factors used must come from two different categories.**
- **Example:** BHIM app uses two factor authentication - mobile phone and a UPI Pin.

Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India, to further secure digital payments transactions, has mandated introduction of **additional risk-based checks beyond the minimum two-factor authentication** by leveraging upon technological advancements.
- Currently **all digital payment transactions in India** are required to meet the norm of **two factors of authentication.** While no specific factor was mandated for authentication, the digital payments ecosystem has primarily adopted **SMS-based One Time Password (OTP) as the additional factor.**

2) KAVACH

About

- KAVACH is an **indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system** by the **Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO)** in collaboration with the Indian industry.
  - *RDSO is a **research and development organization** under the **Ministry of Railways.***
- It is an advanced electronic system designed at **Safety Integrity Level 4 (SIL 4),** the **highest level of safety design.**
  - This indicates that there is a 10,000-year chance of only one Kavach mistake.
- Development of Kavach started in **2015**. Currently in version 4 (**Kavach 4.0**), the technology is being implemented in a phased manner.

How does the Kavach safety system work?

- Kavach operates by **automatically applying brakes** to trains if the driver does not respond promptly.
- It uses **RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tags** placed along tracks and in station yards to determine track positions and train directions. When activated, **trains within a 5-km radius stop** to ensure the safe passage of nearby trains.
- The **On Board Display of Signal Aspect (OBDSA)** enables train operators to **monitor signals in adverse visibility conditions,** thereby decreasing reliance on manual visual inspections.

Why in News?

- The Indian Railways has invited bids for about 15,000 km for implementing the Kavach version 4.0.

3) Hanle Dark Sky Reserve

About

- The Hanle Dark Sky Reserve (HDSR) in **eastern Ladakh** is **India's first Dark Sky Reserve.**
  - *A Dark Sky Reserve is public or private land with a **distinguished nocturnal environment and starry nights** that has been **developed responsibly to prevent light pollution.***
- Notified in 2022, the reserve aims to **preserve the darkness of the night sky** through various measures to curb light pollution and **promote astro-tourism** benefiting local communities.
- It is centred around the **Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO)** and hosts many professional telescopes due to its dark skies and dry weather.
- The Reserve is located within the **Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Indian Astronomical Observatory:
- The IAO is situated at an altitude of 4500 metres above mean sea level, **atop Mt. Saraswati in Ladakh**.
- The IAO provides **multiple vantage points to observe a range of cosmic phenomena and investigate the mysteries of the universe**.
- It is operated by the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics**, an autonomous institution under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science & Technology.
- IAO houses the **Major Atmospheric Cherenkov Experiment Telescope (MACE),** the **largest imaging Cherenkov telescope in Asia.**
  - An Imaging Cherenkov Observatory is a facility designed to detect and observe **Cherenkov radiation produced by high-energy cosmic particles,** such as **gamma rays or cosmic rays**, **when they interact with Earth's atmosphere.**

Why in News?

- Astronomy enthusiasts across India converged at the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve for the third edition of the HDSR Star Party. The event showcased astronomy and astrophotography activities.

4) Primary amoebic meningoencephalitis

About

- Primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) is a rare disease caused by infection with *Naegleria fowleri*, a microscopic amoeba commonly called a **"brain-eating amoeba."**
- This infection **destroys brain tissue**, causing severe brain swelling and death in most cases.

Transmission

- PAM typically occurs when people **swim in bodies of warm freshwater** (such as lakes, rivers, poorly maintained swimming pools) where *Naegleria fowleri* is present.
  - *Naegleria fowleri* infects people when water containing the amoeba enters the body through the nose.
- The infection **does not spread from person to person** and is **not caused by drinking contaminated water.**

Symptoms

- Early symptoms of PAM include **headache, fever, nausea,** and **vomiting.**
- The disease **quickly worsens**, causing symptoms like a stiff neck, confusion, lack of focus, loss of balance, and hallucinations. It often **leads to coma and death.**
- These infections, **though rare, are fatal** and **97% of the patients don't survive.**

Treatment

- There are **no standard treatment methods** available to treat PAM.
- Miltefosine, a broad-spectrum antimicrobial drug, Azithromycin and Amphotericin B are some of the medicines currently being utilized to treat the infection.

Why in News?

- Kerala has reported multiple cases of Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis recently.
- Officials said that **rising pollution of waterbodies** and **increase in ambient temperature** could potentially be leading to increased amoebic concentration in waterbodies and the growing incidence of PAM in the State.

5) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

5.1. Small Modular Reactors

About

- Small modular reactors (SMRs) are **small nuclear reactors** with a **maximum output of 300 Megawatt electric (MWe),** which is about one-third of the generating capacity of traditional nuclear power reactors.
- They are:
  - **Small** – physically a fraction of the size of a conventional nuclear power reactor.
  - **Modular** – making it possible for systems and components to be factory-assembled and transported as a unit to a location for installation.
  - **Reactors** – harnessing nuclear fission to generate heat to produce energy.
- They all use **nuclear fission reactions** to generate heat that can be used directly or for generating electricity.

LARGE, CONVENTIONAL REACTOR 700+ MW(e)

SMALL MODULAR REACTOR Up to 300 MW(e)
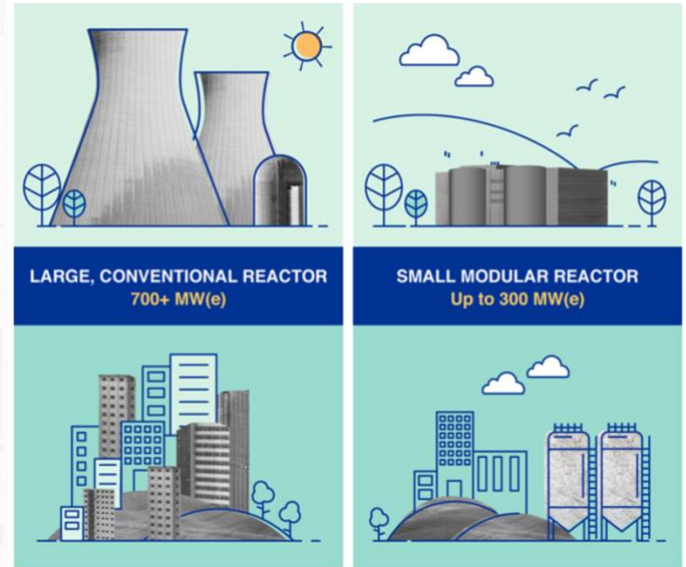
Advantages of SMRs

- SMRs are designed with a **smaller core damage frequency** (the likelihood that an accident will damage the nuclear fuel) and **source term** (a measure of radioactive contamination) compared to conventional Nuclear Power Plants (NPPs).
- SMR designs are also simpler than those of conventional NPPs and include **several passive safety features**, resulting in a **lower potential for the uncontrolled release of radioactive materials** into the environment.
- As they are **smaller in size, power output and capacity**, they **need less space and less cooling water**, offering **greater flexibility for site selection** than large nuclear plants.
- Most land-based SMR designs **require low-enriched uranium,** which can be supplied by all countries that possess uranium mines.
- They are **modular and can be produced in series**, which allows for **production cost efficiency through economies of scale.**

Global Status

- Globally, there are more than 80 SMR designs at different stages of development across 18 countries.
- While countries such as the U.S., UK, Canada, Japan, and South Korea are actively developing their own designs,

Russia and China connected their first SMRs to the grid in 2019 and 2021, respectively.

Status in India

- In the Union Budget 2025-2026, the Government announced that a **Nuclear Energy Mission for research & development of Small Modular Reactors (SMR)** will be set up and at least **5 indigenously developed SMRs** will be operationalized by **2033.**

5.2. RADAR

About

- RADAR, which stands for **RAdio Detection And Ranging,** is an **electronic system** that **uses radio waves to detect and determine the direction, distance (range), and speed (velocity) of target objects.**
- It works by emitting radio waves from a **transmitter**, which then bounce off objects in their path and return to a **receiver**. By **measuring the time** it takes for the radio waves to return, radar systems can calculate the distance to the object.
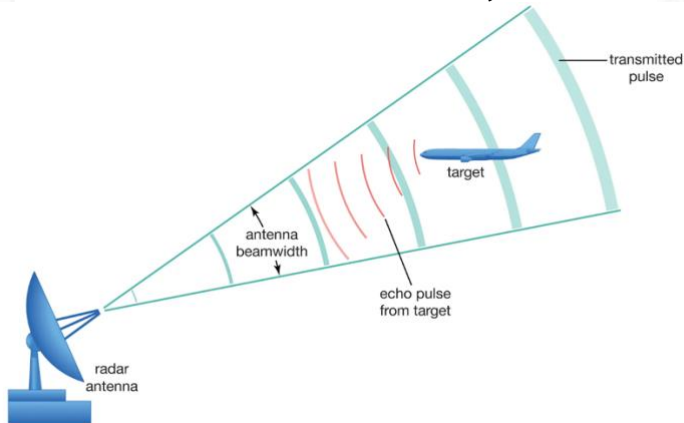
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Applications

- **Air Traffic Control:** Monitors aircraft positions and movements to ensure safe distances and prevent collisions.
- **Weather Forecasting:** Tracks precipitation and severe weather systems like storms and hurricanes in real-time, enabling accurate forecasts and early public warnings.
- **Military Surveillance:** Provides early warning and tracking of aircraft, missiles, and ships for national defence, and guides weapon systems for targeting.
- **Marine Navigation:** Enables ships to detect other vessels, obstacles, and navigational hazards in poor visibility, ensuring safe passage and aiding in collision avoidance.
- **Automotive Safety:** Powers collision avoidance systems, adaptive cruise control, and autonomous driving features by detecting vehicles, pedestrians, and obstacles on the road.
- **Wildlife Monitoring:** Tracks animal movements, such as bird migrations and mammal habitats, supporting conservation efforts and ecological research.

REPORTS & INDICES

1) CAG Report on State Finance

Office of CAG

- The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) is a **Constitutional Authority** entrusted with the responsibility of **audit of accounts of the Union and the States.**
- Established under **Article 148** of the Constitution of India, the CAG **ensures accountability and transparency in the financial administration** of the country.
- The CAG is **appointed by the President** by warrant under his hand and seal and provided with **tenure of 6 years or 65 years of age**, whichever is earlier.

Independence

- He/She can be **removed from office** in like manner and on the like grounds as a **Judge of the Supreme Court.**
- The **administrative expenses** of the office of the CAG, including salaries, allowances and pensions, shall be **charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.**
- The CAG **shall not be eligible for further office** either under the Government of India or under the Government of any State after he has ceased to hold his office.

Functions

- The **primary role** of the CAG is to **audit all expenditures from the Consolidated Fund of India, the State Consolidated Funds, and the Union Territories**.
- Additionally, the CAG **audits accounts of government-owned corporations and autonomous bodies.**
- The CAG is also the **head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department,** the affairs of which are managed by officers of Indian Audit and Accounts Service.
- The reports of CAG relating to the accounts of the **Union** shall be submitted to the **President,** who shall cause them to be **laid before each House of Parliament.**
  - The reports of CAG relating to the accounts of a **State** shall be submitted to the **Governor** of the State, who shall cause them to be laid before the Legislature of the State.

Why in News?

- The Comptroller and Auditor General of India has published a first-of-its-kind report providing a **decadal analysis on fiscal health of states.**

Highlights of the Report

- The **total public debt** (internal debt and loans and advances from the Centre) **of all 28 states combined increased by 3 times in 10 years** — from Rs 17.57 lakh crore in 2013-14 to **Rs 59.60 lakh crore** in 2022-23 (**22.96 per cent of their combined Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)**).

> The **Public Debt** of states includes loans raised from open market through securities, treasury bills, bonds, etc.; loans from State Bank of India and other banks; Ways and Means Advances (WMA) from Reserve Bank of India, besides loans from financial institutions such as Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

- The report stated that **16 states recorded a revenue surplus** while **12 reported a revenue deficit in 2022-23.**
  - **Uttar Pradesh** posted the **highest revenue surplus** (₹37,000 crore), **Andhra Pradesh** recorded the **largest revenue deficit** (₹43,488 crore).
- At the end of 2022-23, the **highest debt-to-GSDP ratio** of 40.35 per cent was recorded in **Punjab,** followed by **Nagaland** (37.15 per cent). The **lowest ratio** was recorded in **Odisha** (8.45 per cent).
- On an average, **public debt of the states** has been about **150 per cent of their revenue receipts/total non-debt receipts**.
- Observing that the "**golden rule of borrowing**" suggests that the government should **borrow only to invest or capitalise and not to meet its operating**

cost/ current spending, the report highlighted that **11 states used borrowed money to finance their current expenditures.**

2) National Annual Report and Index on Women's Safety 2025

About NCW

- The National Commission for Women (NCW) is a **statutory body** formed in **1992** under the **National Commission for Women Act, 1990** to
  - **Review** the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women;
  - **Recommend** remedial legislative measures,
  - **Facilitate** redressal of grievances and **advise** the Government on all policy matters affecting women.
- The commission has the powers that are vested upon with a **civil court**.

Powers

- Powers of NCW:
  1. Provide consultation on all major policy matters that affect women,
  2. Issuing summons for the examination of documents and the witnesses,
  3. It has the power to make any public record,
  4. Receiving evidence on affidavits,
  5. Discovery and production of documents,
  6. Summoning and enforcement.

Composition

- The commission consists of a **chairperson, a member secretary and five other members** who are **nominated by the Central Government**.

Why in News?

- The National Commission for Women has released its National Annual Report and Index on Women's Safety (NARI) 2025.

About the Report

- The NARI 2025 report is a **nationwide safety index** that surveyed 12,770 women across **31 cities**, assessing safety based on **infrastructure, harassment incidence and reporting, workplace security, trust in authorities, and day versus night safety perceptions.**

Highlights of the Report

- The index set **India's national safety score** at **65 per cent**, **rating cities** as **"much above", "above", "below" or "much below" the benchmark.**
- **Kohima, Visakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, Aizawl, Gangtok, Itanagar** and **Mumbai** emerged as the **safest cities** for women, while **Patna, Jaipur, Faridabad, Delhi, Kolkata, Srinagar and Ranchi** were ranked at the bottom.
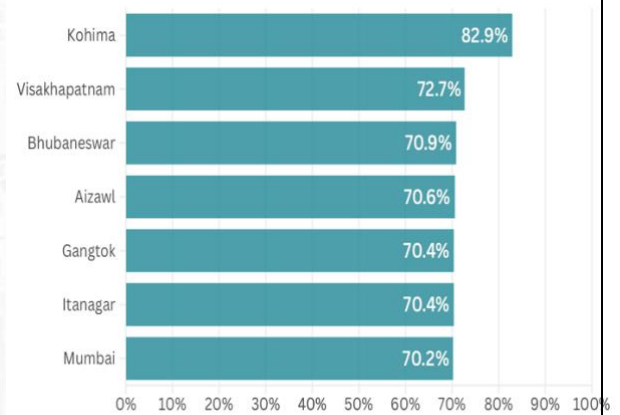
Source: NARI 2025

- Overall, only **six in ten women** said they **felt safe** in their city.

- **Safer cities** were linked with **better policing, civic participation, gender equity and infrastructure**, while **weaker scores** were tied to **poor urban planning, patriarchal norms and limited institutional responsiveness.**

3) National Institutional Ranking Framework

About

- The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) was established by the **Ministry of Education** in **2015**.
- It outlines a **methodology to rank institutions across the country.**
- The parameters broadly cover **"Teaching, Learning and Resources," "Research and Professional Practices," "Graduation Outcomes," "Outreach and Inclusivity,"** and **"Perception".**

Sl. No.	Parameter	Marks	Weightage
1	Teaching, Learning & Resources	100	0.30
2	Research and Professional Practice	100	0.30
3	Graduation Outcome	100	0.20
4	Outreach and Inclusivity	100	0.10
5	Perception	100	0.10

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Education has released the **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) India Rankings 2025.**
- The rankings in the **Overall Category** were topped by **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras** for the seventh consecutive year, followed by **Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru** and **Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.**

4) Global Innovation Index 2025

About

- The Global Innovation Index (GII) **ranks world economies according to their innovation capabilities**.
- It is **published annually** by the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO),** a **specialized agency of the United Nations.**
- Consisting of **80+ indicators,** the GII highlights **global innovation trends** based on **investment patterns, technological progress, adoption rates, and socioeconomic impacts.**

Why in News?

- The World Intellectual Property Organisation has published its Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025.

Highlights of the Index

- **Switzerland** is the world's most innovative country, followed by **Sweden** and **the United States**.
- **Europe** leads the chart with **15 countries** from the region making it to the **top 25** of the Index.
- **India** has climbed to the **38th position among 139 economies,** 10 ranks higher than last where it was in 2020 (48).
  - India performs best in **Knowledge & Technology Outputs** (#22) and **Market Sophistication** (#38), while its weakest rankings are in **Business Sophistication** (#64), **Infrastructure** (#61), and **Institutions** (#58).
- **India** holds the **top spot among lower-middle-income economies** and in the **Central and Southern Asia region**.
- Notably, **China is positioned at 10 overall** while it stands at rank 2 in R&D expenditure.
- The report has pointed to the **declining trend of research and development** amid rapid increase in technologies in AI and quantum computing.

Global leaders in innovation, 2025

Top three innovation economies by region

Latin America and the Caribbean
1 Chile ↑
2 Brazil ↓
3 Mexico

Sub-Saharan Africa*
1 South Africa
2 Botswana
3 Senegal

Northern Africa and Western Asia*
1 Israel
2 United Arab Emirates
3 Türkiye

South East Asia, East Asia, and Oceania
1 Republic of Korea ↑
2 Singapore ↓
3 China

Northern America
1 United States
2 Canada

Europe
1 Switzerland
2 Sweden
3 United Kingdom

Central and Southern Asia
1 India
2 Iran (Islamic Republic of)
3 Uzbekistan⁺

Top three innovation economies by income group

High-income
1 Switzerland
2 Sweden
3 United States

Upper middle-income
1 China
2 Malaysia
3 Türkiye

Lower middle-income
1 India
2 Viet Nam
3 Philippines

Low-income ∧
1 Rwanda
2 Togo
3 Uganda

ART & CULTURE

1) 7 Indian sites in UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage

What is UNESCO's World Heritage List?
- UNESCO's World Heritage List **designates and protects sites of "outstanding universal value"** – **culturally or naturally significant places** deemed important to all humanity.
- Inscribed under the **1972 World Heritage Convention,** these sites, managed by the **UNESCO World Heritage Centre,** aim to preserve irreplaceable heritage for future generations, transcending national borders.

> **UNESCO:**
> - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations (UN)** which works to **build the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples**, based upon respect for commonly shared values.
> - Its purpose is to **contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration** through education, science, and culture.
> - UNESCO has more than 190 member countries (including **India**) and it pursues its objectives through **five major programs:** education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information.

World Heritage Sites in India
Cultural sites (36)
- Agra Fort (1983)
- Ajanta Caves (1983)
- Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda, Bihar (2016)
- Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989)
- Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park (2004)
- Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004)
- Churches and Convents of Goa (1986)
- Dholavira: a Harappan City (2021)
- Elephanta Caves (1987)
- Ellora Caves (1983)
- Fatehpur Sikri (1986)
- Great Living Chola Temples (1987, 2004)
- Group of Monuments at Hampi (1986)
- Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1984)
- Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (1987)
- Hill Forts of Rajasthan (2013)
- Historic City of Ahmadabad (2017)
- Humayun's Tomb, Delhi (1993)
- Jaipur City, Rajasthan (2019)
- Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple, Telangana (2021)
- Khajuraho Group of Monuments (1986)
- Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya (2002)
- Mountain Railways of India (1999, 2005, 2008)
- Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi (1993)
- Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell) at Patan, Gujarat (2014)
- Red Fort Complex (2007)
- Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka (2003)
- Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas (2023)
- Santiniketan (2023)
- Sun Temple, Konârak (1984)
- Taj Mahal (1983)
- The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier (2016)
- The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur (2010)
- Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai (2018)
- Moidams of Charaideo in Assam (2024)
- Maratha Military Landscapes (2025)

Natural sites (7)
- Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (2014)
- Kaziranga National Park (1985)
- Keoladeo National Park (1985)
- Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (1985)
- Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988, 2005)
- Sundarbans National Park (1987)

- Western Ghats (2012)

Mixed site (1)
- Khangchendzonga National Park (2016)

Tentative List of World Heritage
- The Tentative List is an **inventory of natural and cultural heritage sites** within its territory which a **country believes meet the selection criteria** and which it **intends to nominate** for the UNESCO World Heritage status.
- **Inclusion in the Tentative List is a prerequisite** for any site to be nominated for the prestigious World Heritage List.

Why in News?
- **Seven natural heritage sites from across India** have been included in UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites.
- With this inclusion, India now has a **total of 69 sites** under consideration by UNESCO, comprising 49 cultural, 17 natural, and 3 mixed heritage properties.
- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI),** the **nodal agency for the World Heritage Convention on behalf of India**, has played a crucial role in compiling and submitting the nominations.

> **Archaeological Survey of India:**
> - ASI is the premier organization for the **archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage** of the nation.
> - It is an attached office under the **Ministry of Culture.**
> - **Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance** is the prime concern of the ASI.
> - Besides, it regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**. It also regulates the **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.**

Newly Added Sites
1. **Deccan Traps at Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra**
2. **Geological Heritage of St. Mary's Island Cluster, Karnataka**
3. **Meghalayan Age Caves, Meghalaya**
4. **Naga Hill Ophiolite, Nagaland**
5. **Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Hills), Andhra Pradesh**
6. **Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills, Andhra Pradesh**
7. **Varkala Cliffs, Kerala.**

2) Dadasaheb Phalke Award
About
- Considered **India's highest award in the field of cinema**, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award recognises recipients for their **'outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema'.**
- Instituted in **1969**, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award was introduced by the Government of India to **commemorate Dadasaheb Phalke's contribution to Indian cinema** who **directed India's first full-length feature film, Raja Harishchandra** in 1913.

> **Did you know?**
> - The first recipient of this award was **Devika Rani.**

- It is presented annually at the **National Film Awards** ceremony by the **Directorate of Film Festivals,** an organization set up by the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.**
- The award comprises a **Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion, a shawl, and a cash prize of ₹10 lakh.**

Why in News?
- Veteran Malayalam actor **Mohanlal** was conferred with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award by the President Droupadi Murmu at the 71st National Awards ceremony.

1) India successfully tests Agni-P Missile from Rail based launcher

Agni-P

- Agni-Prime (Agni-P) is a **new generation nuclear-capable medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM)** developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).**
- It is a **two-stage canisterised solid propellant missile** with a **range up to 2000 km.**
  - *A canisterised missile is a missile that is stored and transported in a sealed launch tube called a canister. This allows the missile to remain mated with its warhead and ready to fire at short notice.*

Why in News?

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation has successfully tested the **Agni-Prime Missile from a rail-based mobile launcher**, marking a significant milestone in India's strategic capabilities.

- Essentially, this means the Indian military can now launch the Agni Prime missile (and other suitable projectiles) from the **remotest parts of the country, even without road support.**
  - This unique system allows rapid deployment, short-reaction launches, and enhanced concealment, reducing visibility and increasing survivability during conflict scenarios.
- The latest test **places India in a group of select nations** that have developed rail-based mobile missile systems such as Russia, USA, China and North Korea.

2) Border Roads Organisation

About

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is a **road construction executive force** in India that provides **support to Indian Armed Forces.**
- It was set up in **1960** to **secure India's borders and develop road infrastructure in remote areas** of the **north and north-east states** of the country.
- BRO also develops and maintains road networks in **India's friendly neighbouring countries** such as **Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka.**

Why in News?

- Project Vijayak of the Border Roads Organisation celebrated its 15th Raising Day recently.
  - Raised in 2010, Project Vijayak was entrusted with the task of **linking Ladakh's remote valleys and forward areas with the national mainstream** while **fulfilling operational requirements of the Armed Forces.**

3) Chief of Defence Staff

About

- The post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) was created in **2019** as **part of reforms in higher defence management** in India.
  - The creation of a CDS was suggested in 1999 by the **Kargil Review Committee (KRC)** headed by **K Subrahmanyam** to provide single-point professional military advice to the political leadership.
- The CDS holds the **rank of a four-star General**, with **salary and perks equivalent to those of a Service Chief**.

- The CDS is the **Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister on all tri-Services matters** and **Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC)** which has the three service chiefs as members.
- The CDS also **heads the Department of Military Affairs (DMA),** established within the **Ministry of Defence**, and functions as its **Secretary.**

Mandate

- The broad mandate of the CDS includes **bringing about jointness** in operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance of the three Services.
- The CDS is also meant to bring about **synergy and optimise procurements, training and logistics** and **facilitate restructuring of military commands** for optimal utilisation of resources.
- The CDS **do not exercise any military command**, including over the three Service Chiefs.

Why in News?

- The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** has approved the extension of service of General Anil Chauhan as Chief of Defence Staff up to 30th May 2026, or until further orders.

> **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet:**
> - The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet is a high-level committee that **oversees the appointment of senior officials to key positions** in the **central government** as well as **public sector bodies.**
> - It is headed by the **Prime Minister.**

- According to the **terms of engagement for the CDS**—initially established in 2019 and revised in 2022—**three-star officers under the age of 62,** whether **serving or retired within the last two years,** are **eligible for appointment,** with a **fixed term of three years or until the age of 65,** whichever comes first.

4) MiG-21 Retirement

What's in the news?

- **India's first supersonic fighter aircraft MiG-21** was formally retired in a decommissioning ceremony at Chandigarh Air Base.
  - *A supersonic fighter is a military jet aircraft that can **fly faster than the speed of sound (Mach 1)**.*

About MiG-21

- The MiG-21 was designed by the **Soviet Union's Mikoyan-Gurevich Design Bureau** in the 1950s and inducted into the **Indian Air Force** in **1963.**
- Known for its blistering speed, the jet can reach up to **Mach 2.**

- Over the years, it proved its combat worth in multiple wars, from the 1965 and 1971 wars, to the 1999 Kargil war and the 2019 Balakot strikes.
- However, its use beyond its intended service life, combined with design limitations and maintenance challenges, led to **frequent malfunctions**, with some even labelling it a **"flying coffin".**

> **Did you know?**
> - The MiG-21 is the **most-produced supersonic jet aircraft** in aviation history, with 60 countries having built or flown 11,500 of these aircraft.

5) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

5.1. iDEX

About

- The iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) framework was launched in **2018** by the **Ministry of Defence** to **make the country self-reliant and self-sufficient in matters of Defence.**
- The objective of the framework is to **foster innovation, entrepreneurship and technology development in the Defence and Aerospace sector** by collaborating with startups, innovators, MSMEs, incubators, and academia.
- iDEX offers **grants and support for R&D** with significant potential for future adoption in Indian defence and aerospace.

Implementation

- iDEX is being implemented by the **Defence Innovation Organization (DIO),** a **special purpose vehicle** under the aegis of the **Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence**.
- DIO has been formed as a **'not for profit' company** as per the Companies Act 2013 by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), both Defence Public Sector Undertakings.
- DIO acts as a **bridge** between the requirements of the Armed Forces and the solution providers.

PLACES IN NEWS

1) Ethiopia
About
- Ethiopia is a **landlocked country** located in the **north-eastern part of Africa** commonly known as the **Horn of Africa.**
- Ethiopia is bounded by **Eritrea** to the north, **Djibouti** to the northeast, **Somalia** to the east, **Kenya** to the south, and **South Sudan and Sudan** to the west.
- Capital: **Addis Ababa.**

Did you know?
- Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world.

Why in News?
- Ethiopia has inaugurated **Africa's largest hydroelectric project,** the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).**
- Towering 170 m and stretching nearly 2 km across the **Sudanese border**, the dam is built on the **Blue Nile**.
  - The Blue Nile provides up to **85 percent of the water that forms the River Nile,** combining with the **White Nile** before heading through **Sudan and Egypt.**
- The inauguration has escalated a long-standing conflict with **Egypt,** which views the dam as an "existential issue" as it relies almost entirely on the river for its water and fears that the dam could mean that the flow of the river is disrupted.
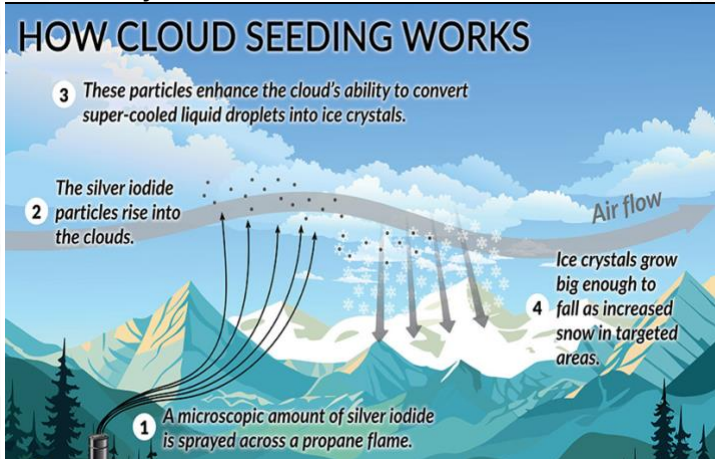
MISCELLANEOUS

1) Cloud Seeding
About

- Cloud seeding is a **weather modification technique** that aims to **change the amount or type of precipitation.**
- It involves **introducing substances,** such as silver iodide, potassium iodide **or dry ice**, **into clouds**. These substances **act as nuclei** for water droplets or ice crystals to form.
- By increasing the number of nuclei, cloud seeding can **encourage the formation of larger droplets or ice crystals,** which may then **fall as rain or snow**.

HOW CLOUD SEEDING WORKS
3 These particles enhance the cloud's ability to convert super-cooled liquid droplets into ice crystals.
2 The silver iodide particles rise into the clouds.
Air flow
Ice crystals grow big enough to fall as increased snow in targeted areas.
4
1 A microscopic amount of silver iodide is sprayed across a propane flame.

2) Blood Moon
About

- A blood moon is an **astronomical phenomenon during a total lunar eclipse** where the **moon appears reddish or ruddy brown.**

- This effect occurs because during a total lunar eclipse, the earth comes between the sun and the moon, blocking direct sunlight from striking the lunar surface.
- But not all of the sunlight is blocked. Sunlight passing through Earth's atmosphere is refracted (bent) towards the Moon. However, **shorter wavelengths** (blue light) are **scattered away by our atmosphere**, while the **longer wavelengths** (red light) **pass through more effectively**, giving the Moon a characteristic **coppery-red colour.**

SUN   EARTH   MOON
Sunrays   Shadow
Earth's atmosphere scatters blue light
Red light passes through and falls onto the Moon
© timeanddate.com
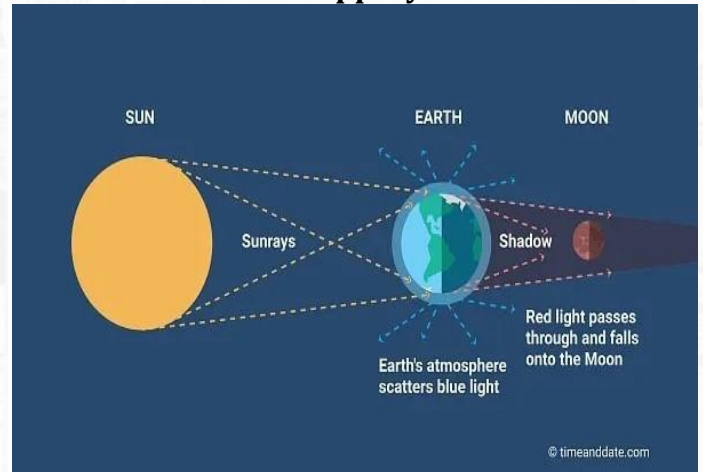
- This is based on the **principle of Rayleigh scattering** as explained by **John William Strutt** (**Lord Rayleigh**).

Why in News?

- A Blood Moon was observed recently in India.

Rayleigh Scattering:

- Rayleigh scattering is a phenomenon that describes how **light is scattered by small molecules** in the atmosphere. This scattering effect is **primarily responsible for the blue color of the sky**, as **shorter wavelengths** of light, such as blue and violet, are **scattered more efficiently than longer wavelengths** like red.
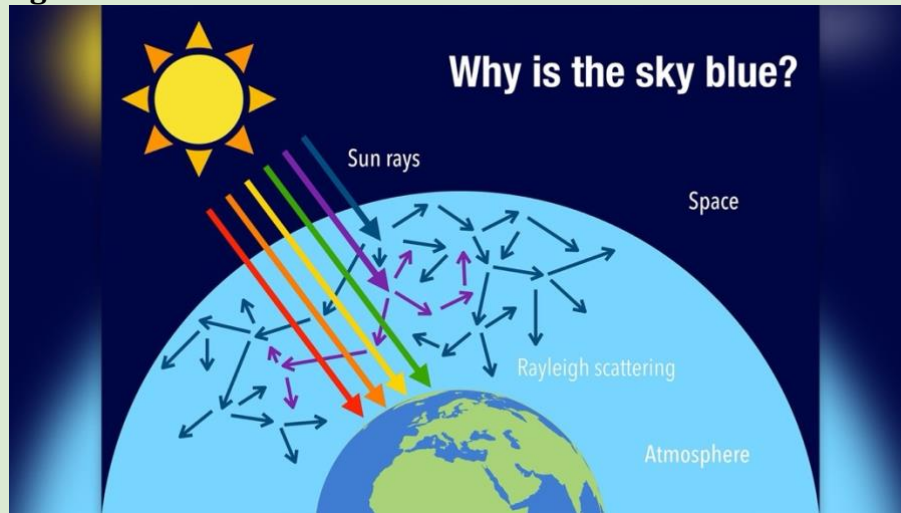
Why does the sky appear red during sunrise & sunset?

- At sunrise and sunset, however, the Sun is very low in the sky, which means that the **sunlight** we see has travelled through a **much thicker amount of atmosphere**. Because **blue light** is scattered more strongly by the atmosphere, it tends to be scattered several times and **deflected away** in other directions before it gets to us. This means that there is relatively **more yellow and red light** left for us to see.
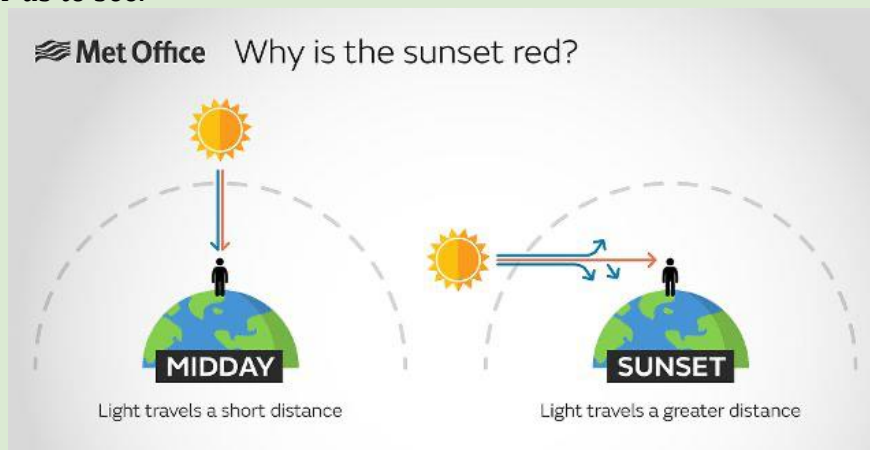
HIGHLIGHTS FROM OTHER ARTICLES

1) ZAPAD 2025
About
- India participated in the **multilateral joint military exercise ZAPAD 2025** held recently in **Russia**.

2) Exercise Pacific Reach 2025
News:
- The Indian Navy recently participated in the **multinational Exercise Pacific Reach 2025** (XPR 25) **hosted by Singapore.**
- It is a **biennial exercise** which saw participation of more than 40 nations.

3) Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2025
News:
- The Indian Army contingent recently participated in the 21st edition of the **India–USA Joint Military Exercise Yudh Abhyas** held in **the USA.**

4) Exercise Bright Star 2025
News:
- Indian armed forces recently participated in **Exercise Bright Star 2025**, a **major multilateral drill hosted by Egypt**.
- Exercise Bright Star, **conducted under the aegis of U.S. Central Command,** brings together air, land, and maritime forces to enhance interoperability, strengthen regional security, and address hybrid threat scenarios.

5) Vaishali Rameshbabu wins FIDE Women's Grand Swiss 2025
News:
- Indian Chess Grandmaster **Vaishali Rameshbabu** scripted history by becoming the **first Indian to defend the FIDE Women's Grand Swiss title successfully.**
  - The FIDE Grand Swiss is a major, **biennial chess tournament** held by the **World Chess Federation (FIDE)**.

6) India's first overseas defence facility in Morocco
News:
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Moroccan counterpart recently inaugurated **Tata Advanced Systems Limited's (TASL) defence manufacturing facility** in **Morocco**. This is the **first such overseas plant by an Indian firm.**
- The facility will produce the indigenously developed Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP) 8x8, jointly designed by TASL and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

7) Global cocoa supply risks
News:
- Recent reports have warned that the **world could lose up to one-third of its cocoa supply** if urgent action is not taken against climate change and crop disease.
- **West Africa**, which **produces 60% of the world's cocoa,** may see losses of 500,000 tons to disease alone.

8) Tea Production
News:
- **India** is the **second-largest producer and consumer of tea** and the **third-largest exporter.**
- **China** is the largest tea-producing country, followed by India and **Kenya.**

9) Surging Financial Assets
News:
- According to a report by the German financial powerhouse Allianz Group, over the **past two decades**, the **real per capita financial assets of households in India have surged fivefold**.
- Meanwhile, **wealth inequality remains stark** despite rapid growth. In **2004**, the **richest 10% controlled 58% of the country's wealth. Two decades later, their share has climbed to 65%,**

highlighting the growing concentration of wealth.

10) NCRB Report on Cybercrime
News:
- **Cybercrime in India** saw a **sharp surge of 31.2% in 2023**, with **fraud, extortion and sexual exploitation** accounting for the majority of cases, according to the latest data released by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).**
- The number of cases registered under the cybercrimes category rose to 86,420 in 2023 from 65,893 cases recorded in 2022.

## 11) WHO Model List of Essential Medicines
About
- Essential medicines are those that **effectively and safely treat the priority healthcare needs of the population.** They are selected by taking into consideration public health relevance, evidence of benefits and harms, and with consideration of costs, affordability and other relevant factors.
- **Every 2 years since 1977**, the **World Health Organization** publishes the **WHO Model List of Essential Medicines** (also known as the **Essential Medicines List or EML**).
- Over 150 countries including **India** have adopted **National Lists of Essential Medicines based on the WHO Model List.**

12) Coral microatolls
About
- Microatolls are **disk shaped coral colonies** comprising **living outer margins but with flat, dead upper surfaces.**
- These coral grow upwards, but only as long as it is covered by water. When the lowest tides of the year occur, the top of the coral is exposed to air, and upward growth is halted.
- Microatolls can be used to **reconstruct past sea levels with high precision**, **past sea surface temperatures and climate variations**, such as El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events, and understand tectonic events like earthquakes.
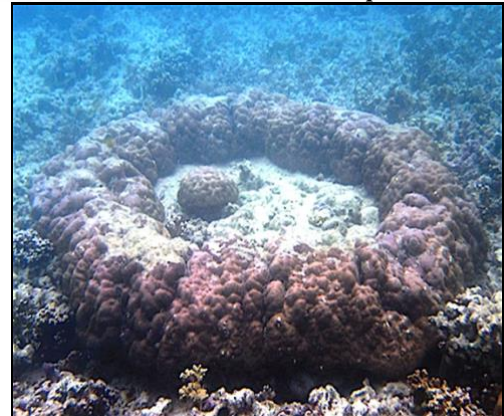
PRACTICE WITH PYQS

1. How does the National Rural Livelihood Mission seek to improve livelihood options of rural poor? (2012)
   1. By setting up a large number of new manufacturing industries and agribusiness centres in rural areas
   2. By strengthening 'self-help groups' and providing skill development
   3. By supplying seeds, fertilizers, diesel pump-sets and micro-irrigation equipment free of cost to farmers

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   2 only
C.   1 and 3 only
D.   1, 2 and 3

2. In the 'Index of Eight Core Industries', which one of the following is given the highest weight? (2015)
A.   Coal production
B.   Electricity generation
C.   Fertilizer production
D.   Steel production

3. In India, in the overall Index of Industrial Production, the Indices of Eight Core Industries have a combined weight of 37.90%. Which of the following are among those Eight Core Industries? (2012)
   1. Cement
   2. Fertilizers
   3. Natural gas
   4. Refinery products
   5. Textiles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
A.   1 and 5 only
B.   2, 3 and 4 only
C.   1, 2, 3 and 4 only
D.   1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

4. With references to organic farming in India, consider the following statements: (2018)
   1. The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) is operated under the guidelines and directions of the Union Ministry of Rural Development.
   2. The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) functions as the Secretariat for the implementation of NPOP.
   3. Sikkim has become India's first fully organic State.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   2 and 3 only
C.   3 only

D.   1, 2 and 3

5. Consider the following materials: (2024)
1. Agricultural residues
2. Corn grain
3. Wastewater treatment sludge
4. Wood mill waste

Which of the above can be used as feedstock for producing Sustainable Aviation Fuel?
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   3 and 4 only
C.   1, 2, 3 and 4
D.   1,3 and 4 only

6. What are the duties of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as Head of the Department of Military Affairs? (2024)
1. Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee
2. Exercise military command over the three Service Chiefs
3. Principal Military Advisor to Defence Minister on all tri-Service matters

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
A.   1, 2 and 3
B.   1 and 2 only
C.   2 and 3 only
D.   1 and 3 only

7. Consider the following statements in relation to Janani Suraksha Yojana: (2024)
1. It is a safe motherhood intervention of the State Health Departments.
2. Its objective is to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality among poor pregnant women.
3. It aims to promote institutional delivery among poor pregnant women.
4. Its objective includes providing public health facilities to sick infants up to one year of age.

How many of the statements given above are correct?
A.   Only one
B.   Only two
C.   Only three
D.   All four

8. Consider the following statements: (2021)
1. The Global Ocean Commission grants licenses for seabed exploration and mining in international waters.
2. India has received licenses for seabed mineral exploration in international waters.
3. 'Rare earth minerals' are present on the seafloor in international waters.

Which of the statements given above are correct?
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   2 and 3 only
C.   1 and 3 only
D.   1, 2 and 3

9. The establishment of 'Payment Banks' is being allowed in India to promote financial inclusion. Which of the following statements is/are correct in this context? (2016)
1. Mobile telephone companies and supermarket chains that are owned and controlled by residents are eligible to be promoters of Payment Banks.
2. Payment Banks can issue both credit cards and debit cards.
3. Payment Banks cannot undertake lending activities.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   1 and 3 only
C.   2 only
D.   1, 2 and 3

10. Consider the following properties included in the World Heritage List released by UNESCO: (2024)
1. Shantiniketan
2. Rani-ki-Vav
3. Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas
4. Mahabodhi Bodhgaya Temple Complex at Bodhgaya

How many of the above properties were included in 2023?
A.   Only one
B.   Only two
C.   Only three
D.   All four

11. Consider the following sites /monuments : (2005)
1. Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park
2. Chhatrapati Shivaji Railway Station, Mumbai
3. Mamallapuram
4. Sun Temple (Konark Temple)

Which of the above are included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO?
A.   1, 2 and 3
B.   1, 3 and 4
C.   2 and 4
D.   1, 2, 3 and 4

12. How is the National Green Tribunal (NGT) different from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)? (2018)
1. The NGT has been established by an Act whereas the CPCB has been created by an executive order of the Government.
2. The NGT provides environmental justice and helps reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts whereas the CPCB promotes cleanliness of streams and wells, and aims to improve the quality of air in the country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
A.   1 only
B.   2 only

C.   Both 1 and 2
D.   Neither 1 nor 2

13. With reference to the Constitution of India, prohibitions or limitations or provisions contained in ordinary laws cannot act as prohibitions or limitations on the constitutional powers under Article 142. It could mean which one of the following? (2019)
A.   The decisions taken by the Election Commission of India while discharging its duties cannot be challenged in any court of law.
B.   The Supreme Court of India is not constrained in the exercise of its powers by laws made by the Parliament.
C.   In the event of a grave financial crisis in the country, the President of India can declare a Financial Emergency without the counsel from the Cabinet.
D.   State Legislatures cannot make laws on certain matters without the concurrence of the Union Legislature.

14. Consider the following statements: (2019)
1. Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is the first regulatory body set up by the Government of India.
2. One of the tasks of PNGRB is to ensure competitive markets for gas.
3. Appeals against the decisions of PNGRB go before the Appellate Tribunals for Electricity.

Which of the statements given above are correct?
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   2 and 3 only
C.   1 and 3 only
D.   1, 2 and 3

15. Consider the following activities: (2025)
1. Production of crude oil
2. Refining, storage and distribution of petroleum
3. Marketing and sale of petroleum products
4. Production of natural gas

How many of the above activities are regulated by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board in our country?
A.   Only one
B.   Only two
C.   Only three
D.   All the four

16. With reference to the funds under Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), which of the following statements are correct? (2020)
1. MPLADS funds must be used to create durable assets like physical infrastructure for health, education, etc.
2. A specified portion of each MP's fund must benefit SC/ST populations.
3. MPLADS funds are sanctioned on a yearly basis and the unused funds cannot be carried forward to the next year.
4. The district authority must inspect at least 10% of all works under implementation every year.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   3 and 4 only
C.   1, 2 and 3 only
D.   1, 2 and 4 only

17. Consider the following statements: (2024)
1.   It is the Governor of the State who recognizes and declares any community of that State as a Scheduled Tribe.
2.   A community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
A.   1 only
B.   2 only
C.   Both 1 and 2
D.   Neither 1 nor 2

18. Which of the following are the objectives of 'National Nutrition Mission'? (2017)
1.   To create awareness relating to malnutrition among pregnant women and lactating mothers.
2.   To reduce the incidence of anemia among young children, adolescent girls and women.
3.   To promote the consumption of millets, coarse cereals and unpolished rice.
4.   To promote the consumption of poultry eggs.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   1, 2 and 3 only
C.   1, 2 and 4 only
D.   3 and 4 only

19. Consider the following statements: (2017)
1. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) helps in promoting financial inclusion in the country.
2. NPCI has launched RuPay, a card payment scheme.

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?
A.   1 only
B.   2 only
C.   Both 1 and 2
D.   Neither 1 nor 2

20. Which of the following is a most likely consequence of implementing the 'Unified Payments Interface (UPI)'? (2017)
A.   Mobile wallets will not be necessary for online payments.
B.   Digital currency will totally replace physical currency in about two decades.
C.   FDI inflows will drastically increase.
D.   Direct transfer of subsidies to poor people will become very effective.

21. Consider the following countries: (2025)
1.   United Arab Emirates
2.   France

3. Germany
4. Singapore
5. Bangladesh

How many countries amongst the above are there other than India where international merchant payments are accepted under UPI?
A.   Only two
B.   Only three
C.   Only four
D.   All the five

22. Consider the following statements: (2010)
1. The boundaries of a National Park are defined by legislation.
2. A Biosphere Reserve is declared to conserve a few specific species of flora and fauna.
3. In a Wildlife Sanctuary, limited biotic interference is permitted.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
A.   1 only
B.   2 and 3 only
C.   1 and 3 only
D.   1, 2 and 3

23. The most important strategy for the conservation of biodiversity together with traditional human life is the establishment of (2014)
A.   biosphere reserves
B.   botanical gardens
C.   national parks
D.   wildlife sanctuaries

24. With reference to digital payments, consider the following statements: (2018)
1. BHIM app allows the user to transfer money to anyone with a UPI-enabled bank account.
2. While a chip-pin debit card has four factors of authentication, BHIM app has only two factors of authentication.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
A.   1 only
B.   2 only
C.   Both 1 and 2
D.   Neither 1 nor 2

25. Consider the following activities: (2024)
1. Identification of narcotics on passengers at airports or in aircraft
2. Monitoring of precipitation
3. Tracking the migration of animals

In how many of the above activities can the radars be used?
A.   Only one
B.   Only two
C.   All three

D.   None

26. Artificial way of causing rainfall to reduce air pollution makes use of (2025)
A.   silver iodide and potassium iodide
B.   silver nitrate and potassium iodide
C.   silver iodide and potassium nitrate
D.   silver nitrate and potassium chloride

27. With reference to 'dugong', a mammal found in India, which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)
1. It is a herbivorous marine animal.
2. It is found along the entire coast of India.
3. It is given legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act; 1972.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.
A.   1 and 2 only
B.   2 and 3 only
C.   1 and 3 only
D.   1, 2 and 3

28. With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)
1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments.
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.
A.   1 only
B.   2 and 3 only
C.   1 and 3 only
D.   1, 2 and 3

29. Vultures which used to be very common in the Indian countryside some years ago are rarely seen nowadays. This is attributed to (2012)
A.   the destruction of their nesting sites by new invasive species
B.   a drug used by cattle owners for treating their diseased cattle
C.   scarcity of food available to them
D.   a widespread, persistent and fatal disease among them.

30. With reference to the Government of India, consider the following information: (2025)

Organization	Some of its functions	It works under
I. Directorate of Enforcement	Enforcement of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018	Internal Security Division-I, Ministry of Home Affairs

II. Directorate of Revenue Intelligence	Enforces the provisions of the Customs Act, 1962	Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance
III. Directorate General of Systems and Data Management	Carrying out big data analytics to assist tax officers for better policy and nabbing tax evaders	Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance

In how many of the above rows is the information correctly matched?
A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Answers:
1. B
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. C
6. D
7. B
8. B
9. B
10. B
11. D
12. B
13. B
14. B
15. B
16. D
17. B
18. A
19. C
20. A
21. B
22. C
23. A
24. A
25. B
26. A
27. C
28. B
29. B
30. A