

For UPSC CSE



MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE



January 2026 (PRELIMS)

YOUR SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO CURRENT AFFAIRS



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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.

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With best wishes,
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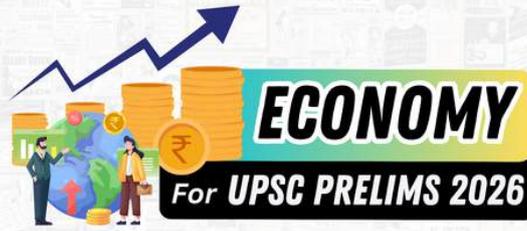


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SCHEMES

1) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

<p>About</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) ('Save the girl child, educate the girl child') scheme was launched in 2015 to help address Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of girls and women over a life cycle continuum. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Did you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scheme was launched after the Census 2011 revealed a steady decline in Child Sex Ratio (number of girls per 1,000 boys aged 0-6 years): from 976 in 1961 to 918 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011. </div>
<p>Nodal Ministry</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Education.
<p>Objectives</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the child sex ratio; Ensure gender equality and women empowerment; Prevent gender-biased, sex-selective elimination; Ensure survival and protection of the girl child; Encourage education and participation of the girl child. <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>
<p>Recent Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BBBP scheme is now integrated with Mission Shakti, a comprehensive program for women's safety and empowerment. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Mission Shakti:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the Umbrella Mission named as 'Mission Shakti' from 2024. It is an integrated women empowerment programme aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment. Mission Shakti consists of two broader sub-schemes: <p>1. Sambal: Safety and Security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission Shakti's Sambal sub-scheme ensures women's safety through One Stop Centres (provide integrated services like legal counselling, psycho-social counselling and support), Women Helpline (181), and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP). It also introduces Nari Adalat, providing an alternate grievance redressal mechanism for resolving minor issues like harassment and rights violations. </div>



	<p>2. Samarthya: Empowerment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Samarthya sub-scheme empowers women through Shakti Sadans (relief and rehabilitation homes), Sakhi Niwas (providing safe and secure place for stay for working women in the cities), and Palna-Creche (providing safe and secure place for children of working women). It also includes Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) and SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMMVY supports pregnant & lactating women, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing maternal benefits of ₹5,000 for first child. PMMVY now supports a second child if it's a girl. SANKALP: HEW works as a nodal agency at the state and district level to disseminate information regarding various schemes and policies through awareness campaigns at grassroots level.
<p>Why in News?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign has completed 11 years.

2) Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana

<p>About</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched in 2015 as part of the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) is a government-backed small savings scheme that helps parents secure the future of their girl child by offering a high interest rate. This scheme allows parents to open a Sukanya Samriddhi account for girls at any post office or designated commercial bank branch. The principal amount deposited, interest earned during the entire tenure, and maturity benefits are tax-exempt.
<p>Key Provisions</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only parents or legal guardians of the girl child can open a Sukanya Samriddhi account in the name of the girl. Each account holder is permitted to maintain only one account. Only two Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana accounts are allowed per family, i.e., one for each girl child. The girl child should be less than 10 years at the time of account opening. The account can be operational till the girl reaches the age of 21 years. The investment can start at Rs. 250 and go up to Rs. 1,50,000 annually. To meet the requirement of the child's higher education expenses, partial withdrawal of 50 per cent of the balance is allowed after she turns 18.
<p>Why in News?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 4 crore 53 lakh bank accounts have been opened under the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana.



3) SVAMITVA

<p>About</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) is a Central Sector Scheme launched in 2020. 	
<p>Nodal Ministry</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Panchayati Raj 	
<p>Aim</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of clear ownership of property in rural inhabited areas, by mapping land parcels using drone technology and providing 'Record of Rights' to village household owners. 	
<p>Features</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme facilitates monetisation of properties leading to ease of securing bank loans, reduction of property related disputes, comprehensive village level planning and providing a basis for assessment of property tax, which would accrue to the Gram Panchayats directly in States where it is devolved. 	
<p>Implementation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scheme is being implemented with the collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Survey of India, State Revenue Department, State Panchayati Raj Department and National Informatics Centre. 	
<p>Why in News?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under SVAMITVA Scheme, nearly 3.44 lakh villages are targeted to be covered. Drone survey has been completed in 3.28 lakh villages which is about 95% of the overall target. 	

4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. Research Development and Innovation Scheme

<p>About</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Science & Technology (DST) launched the Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) Scheme in 2025 to catalyze a private sector-driven R&D ecosystem. Launched with a total outlay of ₹1 lakh crore, this initiative aims to strengthen India's capabilities in strategic technologies and promote technological self-reliance.
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	<p>Did you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD) as a percentage of GDP stands at a modest 0.64 per cent, substantially below the global average. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leading economies, such as the US (3.48 per cent), China (2.43 per cent), and South Korea (4.91 per cent), invest significantly more. • Low expenditure in R&D is partly due to low investment in R&D from the business sector, which accounts for only 41 per cent of the total expenditure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is in stark contrast to countries such as China (77 per cent), United States (75 per cent), and South Korea (79 per cent), where business sector contributions to R&D are significantly higher.
<p>Objectives</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key objectives of the scheme are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage the private sector to scale up research, development, and innovation (RDI) in sunrise domains (industries with high growth potential) and in other sectors relevant for economic security, strategic purpose, and self-reliance; ○ Finance transformative projects at higher levels of technology readiness for faster translation from concept to market; ○ Support acquisition of technologies which are critical or of high strategic importance; and ○ Facilitate setting up of a Deep-Tech Fund of Funds to support deep technology (rooted in the advances of cutting-edge science & technology) start-ups. • The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), chaired by the Prime Minister, will provide an overarching strategic direction to the RDI Scheme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Refer SCA Prelims Magazine October Edition for details about ANRF.</i>
<p>Funding</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RDI Scheme aims to provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors at low or nil interest rates to spur private sector investment. • The RDI Scheme will have a two-tiered funding mechanism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At the first level, there will be a Special Purpose Fund (SPF) established within the ANRF, which will serve as the custodian of the ₹1 lakh crore corpus. ○ The fund will not directly invest in industries and startups but will channel capital to second-level fund managers, who can be Alternative Investment Funds (AIF), Development Finance Institutions (DFI), Non-banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), among others.



INITIATIVES

1) Census of India 2027

What is Census?

- A population census is the **process of collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic, social, cultural and economic data** relating to all persons in the country, in a **ten year interval**.
 - It is the **biggest source of primary data at village, town and ward level** providing **micro level data on various parameters** including Housing Condition, Amenities & Assets, Demography, Religion, SC & ST, Language, Literacy & Education, Economic Activity, Migration and Fertility.
- The **Census Act, 1948** and the **Census Rules, 1990** provide the legal framework for conduct of Census.
- The Census in India is **overseen** by the **Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India**, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.

Timeline

- India has a long and rich tradition of conducting censuses. The **earliest references of conducting census** in the country can be found in **Kautilya's 'Arthashastra'** (321-296 BC) and later in the writings of **Abdul Fazl's 'Ain-e-Akbari'** during the days of **Emperor Akbar**.
- The **first modern population census** in India was conducted between **1865 and 1872**, though it **didn't happen simultaneously** across all regions. India conducted its **first coordinated census in 1881**.
- The **First Census of Independent India** was conducted in **1951**.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the scheme for conducting the **Census of India 2027**, the **country's largest administrative and statistical exercise**.

- **Census 2027** will be the **first fully digital Census, featuring mobile-based data collection and self-enumeration options** for the public.
- The exercise will be conducted in **two phases** – the **Houselisting and Housing Census** between April and September 2026, followed by **Population Enumeration (PE)** in February 2027.
 - In Ladakh and snow-bound regions of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, PE will be carried out in September 2026.
- A newly developed **Census Management & Monitoring System (CMMS) portal** will track operations in real time.
- For the **first time since Independence, Census 2027 will include caste enumeration for all individuals**.
 - Caste except Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) has been excluded from all census operations conducted since Independence.
- Census 2027 will be the **16th Census** in the country and **8th after Independence**.
 - The last Census conducted in India was in 2011, and the Census of India 2021 was initially planned for 2020-2021 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Census-as-a-service (CaaS)** will deliver data to ministries in a clean, machine-readable and actionable format.

2) Government e-Marketplace

About

- Launched in **2016**, the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is **India's national public procurement portal** with a mission to **enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement**.
- The **fully digital, cashless platform** is a **100 percent government-owned company** set up under the aegis of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.



- The government has made **procurement of products and services available on GeM mandatory** to all the **central government ministries, departments and central government organisations**.
- In 2022, the government gave its approval for expanding the mandate of GeM to **allow procurement by Cooperatives as buyers on GeM**.
- As per existing mandate, **GeM is not available for use by private sector buyers. Suppliers (sellers) can be from across all segments: government or private.**



Efficient • Transparent • Inclusive

Womaniya Initiative

- GeM launched the **Womaniya initiative** in 2019 to **enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups [SHGs]** to sell products manufactured by women to various ministries, government departments and institutions.
 - The move aligns with the Government's **mandate to reserve 3 per cent in state procurement from women-owned and women-led enterprises.**

Why in News?

- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) marked seven years of the Womaniya initiative.

3) Startup India Initiative

About

- Startup India is a flagship initiative of the Government of India to **nurture innovation and catalyse the growth of startups across the country**.
- Launched in **2016**, the initiative is led by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- The Startup India initiative extends its **support to startups through a range of initiatives** aimed at fostering **capacity building, promoting outreach, and facilitating ecosystem collaboration**.

Why in News?

- The Startup India scheme has successfully completed 10 years of implementation.

Did you know?

- With over 2 lakh DPIIT-recognised startups, **India has the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world.**

What is a DPIIT-recognized startup?

- An entity shall be considered a "Startup" –
 1. If it is **up to 10 years** from the date of its incorporation/registration.
 2. If it's incorporated as **either Private Limited Company or Registered Partnership Firm or Limited Liability Partnership**. A sole proprietorship or a public limited company is not eligible as startup.
 3. If its **turnover** for any of the financial years has **not exceeded INR 100 crore**
 4. **Should not have been formed by splitting up or reconstruction** of a business already in existence.
 5. If it is **working towards innovation, development or improvement of products or processes or services**, or if it is a **scalable business model** with a high potential of employment generation or wealth creation.



RECOGNISED



Company Age

The period of existence and operations should not exceed 10 years from the date of incorporation.



Company Type

Incorporated as a Private Limited Company, a Registered Partnership Firm, or a Limited Liability Partnership



Annual Turnover

Should have an annual turnover not exceeding Rs. 100 crore for any of the financial years since its incorporation.



Original Entity

An entity should not have been formed by splitting up or reconstructing an already existing business.



Innovative & Scalable

Should work towards development or improvement of a product, process, or service and/or have a scalable business model with high potential for the creation of wealth and employment.

4) PRAGATI

About

- PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation) is an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based platform launched in **2015** by the **Prime Minister's Office (PMO)**.
- The system was designed in-house by the **PMO team** with the help of **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- At its core, PRAGATI was designed to **improve Centre-Centre and Centre-State coordination** with **three clear objectives**:
 1. **Fast-tracking critical infrastructure projects** facing bottlenecks,
 2. **Improving outcomes of flagship welfare schemes** showing sub-optimal performance, and
 3. **Resolving citizen grievances** across sectors.

- It serves as a robust system for ensuring **e-transparency and e-accountability** through real-time interaction among the key stakeholders.
- The platform operates as a **three-tier system** involving the **PMO, Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries of the States**.
- At the apex of this system, the **Prime Minister personally chairs PRAGATI review meetings**, engaging directly with officials to seamless implementation.



Why in News?

- PRAGATI has marked a significant milestone with the successful conduct of its 50th meeting.

5) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

5.1. Pravasi Bhartiya Divas

About

- The **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)**, celebrated on **9th January**, is a significant event that **honors the contributions of the Indian diaspora to their homeland**.
 - **January 9** was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was

on this day in **1915** that **Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa**.

- The **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention** was first established in **2003** by the **Ministry of External Affairs**.
 - It was conceived as a formal platform to recognise, connect with and engage the overseas Indian community.
- Since 2015, PBD has evolved into a **biennial convention** (once every two years), with **theme-based conferences held in the intervening years**.



POLITY

1) SC verdict on Prevention Of Corruption Act Section 17A

Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988

- Based on the recommendations of the **Santhanam committee (1962)**, the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (PCA, 1988)** was enacted as a comprehensive legislation to **combat corruption and promote integrity in public administration**.
- The Act provides for **punishment with respect to offences committed by public servants while performing public duties**.
 - **'Public servant'** includes any **government or local authority employee, any Judge, any person who holds an office by virtue of which he is required to perform a public duty etc.**
 - **'Public duty'** means a **duty in the discharge of which the government, the public or the community at large has an interest**.
- The **type of offences** punishable under the PCA, 1988 include **bribery, undue advantage without consideration, criminal misconduct etc.**

Section 17A of PCA

- **Section 19** of the PCA, 1988 **requires prior sanction from the appropriate government before prosecution** of a public servant in a court of law.
- However, it was felt that there needs to be a **distinction in dealing between intentional corruption and decisions taken in good-faith** that could potentially go wrong.
- In order to address this issue, the **Parliament inserted Section 17A through an amendment** of the PCA in 2018.
 - It requires that **no inquiry or investigation** can be undertaken against a public servant for **recommendations made or decisions taken in the course of official duty without prior**

sanction from the appropriate authority, which is the Union or State Government.

Why in News?

- A **two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court** has delivered a **split verdict** on the **constitutional validity of Section 17A** of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
 - While Justice BV Nagarathna said Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act is unconstitutional and needs to be struck down, Justice KV Viswanathan held the provision as constitutional while stressing on the need to protect honest officers.
- The case will now be placed before the **Chief Justice of India** for forming a **larger bench** to hear the matter for a final decision.

2) Issues surrounding Governor's address

What's in the news?

- There have been a series of issues in Opposition-ruled States with respect to the **address by the Governor to the State legislature at the commencement of the first session of the year**.
- This has raised constitutional and political questions about the Governor's role in the State legislature.

Historical Background

- **Section 63** of the **Government of India Act, 1935 (GOI Act)** provided that the **Governor may in his discretion address the Provincial legislature**.
- Starting from 1937, when **provincial autonomy** started under GOI act, the **Governor's speech was prepared in consultation with the Council of Ministers in Provinces** that laid down the legislative agenda.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 175** of the **Constitution** specifies that the **Governor may address the house(s) of the State legislature**. This is **not a mandatory address** and may be rarely used by a ruling government.



- **Article 176**, on the other hand, provides that the **Governor shall address the house(s) of the State legislature at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the Legislative Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year.**
 - This is a **mandatory address** to be prepared by the **Council of Ministers**, and delivered by the **Governor**, outlining the government's achievements in the previous year and its roadmap for the policies in the ensuing year.
- This address is also provided whenever a **new assembly is constituted** to enable a newly sworn in Council of Ministers to outline their policies to the elected representatives and through them to the citizens at large.
- The **Supreme Court in *Shamsher Singh vs State of Punjab (1974)*** had held that the **Governor is only a constitutional head who acts on the advice of Council of Ministers.**
- In ***Nabam Rebia vs Deputy Speaker (2016)***, the **Supreme Court** reiterated that the **address under Article 175 or 176 is to be performed by the Governor on the aid and advice of Council of Ministers.**

3) SHANTI Bill

What's in the news?

- President Droupadi Murmu has granted assent to the **Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025**, passed by the Parliament recently.
- The proposed legislation seeks to **repeal the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010**, and replace them with a single, comprehensive law aligned with India's present and future energy requirements.

What is Nuclear Energy?

- Nuclear energy is the **use of controlled atomic reactions to produce power.**
- At its core, it relies on **splitting atoms in a process called fission**, which releases **large amounts of heat.** This heat is then

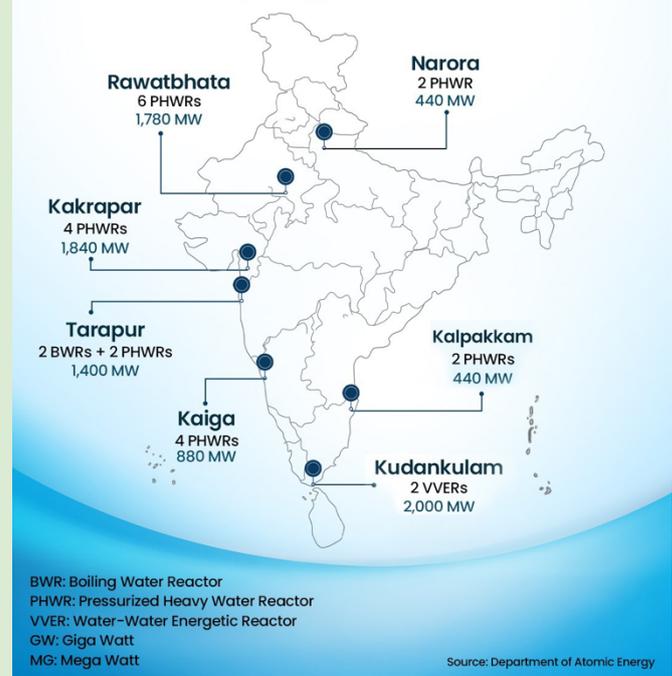
used to generate electricity without producing greenhouse gases.

- Globally, nuclear energy is valued as a **clean, dependable source that complements renewable options** like solar and wind.

Present Outlook:

- **Nuclear power** contributed only around **3% of the electricity generated** in India in 2024-25.
- The present nuclear capacity stands at **8.78 GW**. The government has set a **target to install 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047.**

India currently operates 24 reactors across 7 locations, with a total installed capacity of 8.78 GW



Nuclear Energy Mission:

- Announced in **Union Budget 2025-26**, it allocates **₹20,000 crore** to drive **design, development, and deployment of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).**
 - Refer *SCA Prelims Magazine September Edition* for details about SMRs.
- **Target: At least five indigenously designed SMRs to be operational by 2033**, strengthening India's clean energy roadmap.



Key Provisions of the Bill

Private Sector Integration:

- The Bill opens India's nuclear power sector to private and foreign participation, which was earlier entirely State-controlled and deeply regulated.
- Under the Bill, private Indian companies can seek licences to own, build, and operate nuclear power plants. It is also open for foreign supplier participation.

Activities Under Exclusive Central Government Purview:

- The Bill allows up to 49% private participation, while maintaining 51% government control over sensitive activities such as nuclear fuel production, heavy water manufacturing, radioactive waste management, safety mechanisms, licensing, and strategic oversight.

Graded Liability Structure:

- In contrast to existing laws that impose a single statutory cap on operator liability, the SHANTI Bill establishes a graded liability framework (liability limit ranging from Rs 100 crore to Rs 3,000 crore based on power capacity).
 - The central government will bear liability beyond the operator's cap, with additional support from a dedicated nuclear liability fund.
- Earlier, operators could hold suppliers liable for defective parts, faulty equipment, design inefficiency, and deliberate acts causing damage. The current Bill removes supplier liability completely.

Regulation of Non-Power Applications:

- Provides a regulatory framework for the use of nuclear and radiation technologies in health care, agriculture, industry, research, and other peaceful applications.

Exemption for Certain Activities:

- Allows exemption from a license for limited activities like research, development, and innovation-related work.

Statutory Body:

- The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), constituted in 1983 under the Atomic Energy Act, has now been given statutory status and is answerable to

Parliament rather than solely to the executive.

- The AERB is responsible for ensuring nuclear safety, radiation protection, emergency preparedness, and quality assurance across civilian nuclear installations.

Dispute Redressal Mechanism:

- Establishes an Atomic Energy Redressal Advisory Council to facilitate the redressal of disputes.

Appellate Tribunal Provision:

- The Appellate Tribunal for Electricity, set up under the Electricity Act, 2003, will serve as the appellate authority, empowered to hear appeals under provisions of the bill and any additional matters as notified by the Central Government.

Claims Commissioner Appointment:

- Empowers the Central Government to appoint Claims Commissioners for adjudicating compensation claims related to nuclear damage.

Nuclear Damage Claims Commission:

- Provides for a dedicated Commission to handle cases involving severe nuclear damage and ensure timely adjudication.

Territorial jurisdiction for claims:

- Under the 2010 Act, compensation may be claimed for damages within India's territory or its jurisdiction.
- The Bill extends the coverage to nuclear damage in the territory of a foreign state from incidents in India, subject to certain conditions.

4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. National Integration Council

About

- The then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, convened the National Integration Conference in 1961 to find ways and means to combat the evils of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism and narrow-mindedness, and to formulate definite conclusions in order to give a lead to the country.
- This Conference decided to set up a National Integration Council (NIC) to



review all matters pertaining to national integration and to make recommendations thereon.

- The NIC was constituted accordingly and held its **first meeting in 1962.**
- The National Integration Council has held 16 meetings so far, with the **last meeting held in 2013.**



ECONOMY

1) India-EU FTA

What's in the news?

- Negotiations on the **India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** — dubbed the **'mother of all deals'** by leaders on both sides — officially concluded recently.
 - At present, **India and the EU together** account for nearly **one-fifth of global trade** and about **25% of the world's population**.

European Union:

- The European Union (EU) is an **economic and political union** of **27 European countries**.
- Originally confined to **western Europe**, the EU undertook a robust expansion into **central and eastern Europe** in the early 21st century.
 - **Note:** The **United Kingdom**, which had been a founding member of the EU, left the organization in 2020.



- The EU was created by the **Maastricht Treaty**, which entered into force in 1993. The treaty was designed to **enhance European political and economic integration** by creating a single currency (the **euro**), a unified foreign and security policy, and common citizenship rights and

by advancing cooperation in the areas of immigration, asylum, and judicial affairs.

- Later the treaty was amended by the **Treaty of Lisbon (2009)**, which gave the EU more powers.
- The **five main institutions** of the EU are the **European Parliament**, the **European Council**, the **European Commission**, the **Court of Justice** and the **Court of Auditors**.
- EU's headquarters is currently located in **Brussels, Belgium**.

Highlights of the FTA

- The **European Union** has committed to **eliminating duties on about 70.4% of tariff lines immediately**, covering nearly **90.7% of India's export value**, while **another 20.3% of products will see phased tariff elimination** over time, covering **more than 99% of trade value**.
- **India**, in turn, will **liberalise 30% of its market** once the agreement comes into force, followed by **phased openings** at three, five, seven and ten years, eventually **removing duties on 96% of goods by trade value**.
- India managed to **keep out sensitive agricultural sectors** such as beef, poultry, dairy products, fish and seafood, cereals, especially rice and wheat, fruits and vegetables, nuts, edible oils, tea, coffee, spices, and tobacco.
- For **Indian consumers**, the FTA is set to **translate into lower prices** for products such as chocolates, olives, premium cars priced above Rs 25 lakh, as well as wine, vodka and beer.
- While the **services sector** has not seen as wide an opening up as merchandise, the EU has offered **"broader and deeper commitments"** across **144 service sub-sectors**, including IT/ITeS, professional services, education, and other business services. **India** offered access to **102 subsectors**, covering the bloc's priorities such as professional, business, telecoms, maritime, financial, and environmental services.



- The FTA made **limited progress** on resolving concerns related to the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**, a **tariff framework** introduced by the European Union to account for the **embedded carbon emissions of exporting countries and firms**.
 - The EU maintained that CBAM is applied uniformly across all trading partners and does not permit country-specific exemptions.
 - However, India has obtained an **assurance** that any future concessions granted by the EU under CBAM to another country will be extended to India.

Bilateral Trade

- **Bilateral merchandise trade** between India and the EU stood at **\$136.54 billion** in 2024-25, with **Indian exports** accounting for about **\$75.85 billion** of this, making **the EU India's largest goods trading partner**.
 - The **India-EU trade in services** touched **\$83.10 billion** in 2024.
- The **EU market** accounts for about **17 per cent of India's total exports**.
- **Major exports** are **petroleum products, electronics, textiles, machinery and computers, organic chemicals, iron and steel, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, and auto parts**.
- **Main imports** are **machinery, computers, electronics, aircraft, medical devices, scientific instruments, rough diamonds, organic chemicals, plastics, iron and steel, cars, and auto parts**.

2) Variable Rate Repo

About

- The Variable Rate Repo (VRR) mechanism allows **banks to borrow short-term funds from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) against government securities as collateral**.
 - It is a **short-term liquidity adjustment tool** employed by the RBI to **supply funds to the banking system**.
- Unlike the **Fixed Rate Repo**, where the **interest rate is predetermined by the**

RBI, VRR uses **competitive bidding to determine rates**.

Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India has announced that it will conduct a **90-day variable rate repo (VRR) operation** for an amount of ₹25,000 crore, allowing banks to borrow funds at market-determined rates against collateral.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. Sovereign Gold Bonds

About

- Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) are bonds that are **issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on behalf of the Government** on payment of rupees but **denominated in grams of gold**.
- The **value of these bonds is tied to the value of gold**. On redemption, the investor gets interest income and the prevailing price of gold.
- It seeks to **encourage people to buy gold bonds instead of actual gold**, thereby helping to **reduce the annual demand for gold imports**.

Features of SGBs

Eligibility:

- Restricted to **resident individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), Trusts, Universities and Charitable Institutions**.

Denomination:

- SGBs are **denominated in multiples of gram(s) of gold**.

Minimum Permissible Investment:

- **One gram of gold**.

Maximum Limit:

- **4 Kg for individuals, 4 Kg for HUF and 20 Kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal year**.

Tenor:

- SGBs are issued with a **maturity period of 8 years**. Investors are allowed **early redemption after 5 years**.

Interest Rate:

- **2.50 per cent per annum**. Interest will be **credited semi-annually**.

Sales Channel:

- SGBs are sold through **Scheduled Commercial Banks** (except Small Finance



Banks, Payment Banks and Regional Rural Banks), **Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL), designated post offices and recognised stock exchanges viz., National Stock Exchange of India Limited and Bombay Stock Exchange Limited.**

Other Key Features:

- The investment in SGBs will be eligible for **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)** compliance by banks.
- These bonds can also be used as **collateral for loans.**

- The **interest** on SGBs shall be **taxable** as per the provision of Income Tax Act, 1961.
- The **capital gains tax** arising on redemption of SGB to an **individual** has been **exempted.**



ENVIRONMENT

1) Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project

What's in the news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project, involving four-laning of the Kaliabor–Numaligarh section of National Highway 715.
- The project will feature a 35 km Elevated Wildlife Corridor that will pass through **Kaziranga National Park**.

Kaziranga National Park:

- Kaziranga National Park, located in **Assam**, is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** formed in 1908 on the recommendation of **Mary Curzon**, the wife of the then viceroy of India, Lord Curzon.
 - It harbours the **world's largest population of the endangered one-horned rhinoceros** and serves as a vital habitat for **tigers, elephants, panthers, wild buffaloes, and sloth bears**.
 - Due to the difference in altitude between the eastern and western areas of the park, one can see **four types of vegetation** in the park: **alluvial inundated grasslands, alluvial savanna woodlands, tropical moist mixed deciduous forests, and tropical semi-evergreen forests**.
 - **River Brahmaputra** flows adjacent to the park.
- The project aims to **improve regional connectivity** while **ensuring protection of the park's rich biodiversity**.

2) Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026

What's in the news?

- The **Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has notified the **Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026**, superseding the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016**.
- The rules have been notified under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** and will come into full effect from **April 1, 2026**.

Key Provisions of the 2026 Rules

Four-stream Segregation:

- **Four-stream segregation of solid waste at source** has been made **mandatory** under the SWM Rules, 2026.
 - Waste is required to be segregated into **wet waste, dry waste, sanitary waste and special care waste** (paint cans, bulbs, mercury thermometers and medicines, etc.).

Did you know?

- About 1.85 lakh tonnes/day solid waste is generated in the country, of which 1.79 lakh tonnes/day is collected, 1.14 lakh tonnes/day is processed or treated and 39,629 tonnes/day is landfilled, as per Central Pollution Control Board's 2023-24 data.

Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility:

- The new rules **introduce Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR)**, under which **Bulk Waste Generators are made accountable for the solid waste generated by them**.
 - Bulk Waste Generators include **entities with a floor area of 20,000 square metres or more, or water consumption of 40,000 litres per day or more, or solid waste generation of 100 kg per day or more**.
 - These include **central and state government departments, local bodies, public sector undertakings, institutions, commercial establishments and residential societies**, among others.
 - Bulk Waste Generators account for **nearly 30 per cent of total solid waste generation**.
- Bulk Waste Generators **must ensure that the waste generated by them is collected, transported and processed in an environmentally sound manner**.
- This provision is expected to significantly **reduce the burden on urban local bodies**.



and **promote decentralised waste management.**

Online Monitoring:

- The rules provide for the development of a **Centralised Online Portal to track all stages of solid waste management**, including waste generation, collection, transportation, processing and disposal.
- The rules **mandate audits of all waste processing facilities.** Audit reports are **required to be uploaded** on the centralised online portal.

Duties of Local Bodies:

- Under the revised rules, **local bodies are responsible for the collection, segregation and transportation** of solid waste.

Use of Refuse Derived Fuel by Industries:

- The new rules **define Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) as fuel produced by shredding and dehydrating municipal solid waste with high calorific value**, primarily consisting of non-recyclable plastic, paper and textiles.
- **Industrial units**, including cement plants and waste-to-energy plants that currently use solid fuel, have been **mandated to replace it with RDF.**
 - The **fuel substitution rate** will increase from the current 5 per cent to **15 per cent** over a six-year period.

Restrictions on Landfilling and Remediation of Legacy Waste Dumpsites:

- The focus of the new framework is on a **'waste hierarchy'** which **prioritizes prevention and reduction**, followed by **reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal**, with prevention being the most preferred option.
- In effect, **landfills** will only take in **non-recyclable, non-energy recoverable waste and inert material**, with **higher landfill fees** prescribed for **local bodies** for **sending unsegregated waste to landfills.**
- The rules mandate **mapping and assessment** of all legacy waste dumpsites and provide for time-bound **biomining and bioremediation**, with quarterly progress reporting through the online portal.

- **Biomining** is the **process of using microorganisms (microbes) to extract metals of economic interest** from rock ores or mine waste. Biomining techniques may also be used to **clean up sites that have been polluted with metals.**
- **Bioremediation** is the **process of treating and detoxifying environmental contaminants in soil, water or other environments** by **taking advantage of natural biological processes.**
 - It can be done using **plants** (phytoremediation), **microbes** (biostimulation), **fungi** (mycoremediation) or **even animals** such as fish (biomanipulation).

Solid Waste Management in Hilly Areas and Islands:

- **Special provisions** have been introduced for solid waste management in **hilly areas and islands.**
- These include the **levy of user fees on tourists and regulation of tourist inflow** by local bodies based on available waste management facilities. **Hotels and restaurants** will undertake **decentralised processing of wet waste.**

Levy based on the 'Polluter Pays' Principle:

- The rules provide for the **levy of environmental compensation based on the 'Polluter Pays' principle for non-compliance**, including cases of operating without registration, false reporting, submission of forged documents or improper solid waste management practices.

Central and State-level Committees:

- The rules also provide for the establishment of **Central and State-level Committees for Effective Implementation.**
 - At the State level or Union Territory level, a **committee chaired by the Chief Secretary of the State or Head of Union Territory Administration** shall recommend measures to the Central Pollution Control Board for effective implementation of the rules.



3) Central Zoo Authority

About

- The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) was established as a **statutory body** under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** in 1992.
- The main objective of this Authority is to complement and strengthen the national effort in **conservation of rich biodiversity of the country, particularly the fauna.**
- Other objectives of this Authority include **enforcing minimum standards and norms for upkeep and healthcare of animals in Indian zoos** and to **control mushrooming of unplanned and ill-conceived zoos.**
- The Authority functions under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** and consists of a **Chairman (Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change), ten members and a Member Secretary.**



CENTRAL ZOO AUTHORITY

Functions of CZA

- **Every zoo in the country is required to obtain recognition** from the Authority for its operation.
- The Authority's role is **more of a facilitator than a regulator.** It therefore provides **technical and financial assistance** to such zoos which have the potential to attain the desired standard in animal management.
- Apart from the primary function of grant of recognition, the Central Zoo Authority also **regulates the exchange of animals of endangered category** listed under Schedule- I and II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 among zoos.
- **Exchange of animals between Indian and foreign zoos** is also approved by the Authority.

Why in News?

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav chaired the 43rd meeting of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) in New Delhi.

4) MISHTI

About

- The 'Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI)' was launched by the Government of India in **2023 to revive mangroves across the country.**
- The objective of the scheme is to **increase the mangrove cover along the coastline and on saltpan lands.**
- Under the scheme, the government provides **financial assistance to local communities** to undertake mangrove plantation activities.
- **Implementation** of MISHTI is carried out by **coastal State/UT governments**, with **financial support** through convergence and gap funding from the **National Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA).**

CAF Act & CAMPA:

- The **Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act, 2016** was enacted in 2016 to **compensate the loss of ecosystem and forest land due to diversion of forests for non-forest use** through compensatory afforestation, restoration of degraded forest, improvement of wildlife habitats, enrichment of biodiversity, etc.
- The Act provides for establishment of **non-lapsable funds** under the **Public Accounts of India** ("National Compensatory Afforestation Fund") and **Public Accounts of each State** ("State Compensatory Afforestation Fund") for depositing of the **compensatory levies** in lieu of diversion of forest land for non-forestry purpose.
- The CAF Act also paved the way for **establishment of the National CAMPA** at the center and **State CAMPA** in respective States/UTs for the **management of the compensatory afforestation fund.**



Mangroves:

- Mangroves are **among the most productive marine ecosystems** in the world, ranking **second** in net primary productivity (NPP), **after coral reefs**.
- Mangroves are **salt-tolerant plant communities** found in **tropical and subtropical intertidal regions**.
- These ecosystems thrive in **high-rainfall areas (1,000–3,000 mm)** with **temperatures ranging from 26°C to 35°C**.
- Mangrove species are **adapted to survive in waterlogged soils, high salinity, and frequent tidal surges**.



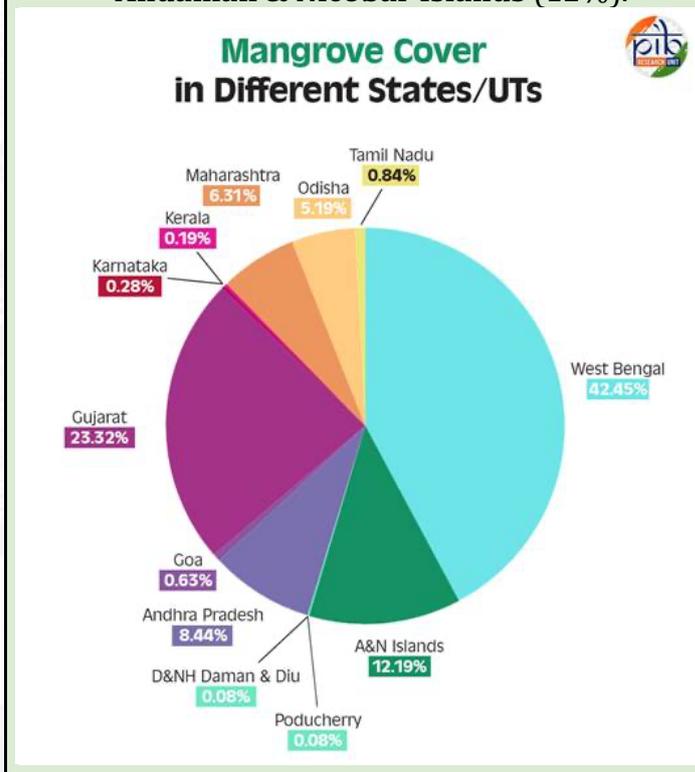
Significance:

- Mangroves serve a multitude of purposes in their ecosystem, including **coastal protection, filtration of water, and disaster risk reduction**.
- Mangrove forests **stabilize coastlines, reduce erosion, encourage biodiversity growth, and shield coastal communities from sea-level rise, and natural disasters like hurricanes and cyclones**.
- The mangrove trees **do not get uprooted by storms and tides** because of their **extensive roots**.
- Mangroves also **store 7.5–10 times more carbon per acre than tropical forests**.

Distribution in India:

- The total mangrove cover in the country stands at 4,991 sq. km out of which **West Bengal (Sundarbans)** alone accounts **42% of the mangrove cover** in the country.

- **Gujarat** holds the second highest mangrove cover (23%), followed by **Andaman & Nicobar Islands** (12%).



Why in News?

- A national-level workshop on MISHTI was recently held in Andhra Pradesh.

5) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

5.1. Namami Gange Programme

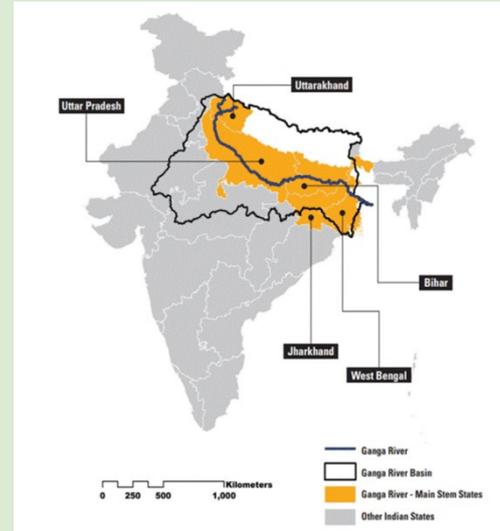
About

- Namami Gange Programme is an **Integrated Conservation Mission** approved by the Union Government in **2014** to accomplish the **twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga**.
- Namami Gange is premised on the **five important pillars** of –
 - **Nirmal Ganga** (unpolluted river),
 - **Aviral Ganga** (unrestricted flow),
 - **Jan Ganga** (people's participation),
 - **Gyan Ganga** (knowledge and research based interventions) and
 - **Arth Ganga** (people-river connect through the bridge of economy).
- The program is spearheaded by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**.



National Mission for Clean Ganga:

- NMCG is a **registered society** under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- NMCG aims to **ensure effective abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of the river Ganga** by adopting a **river basin approach** to promote inter-sectoral co-ordination for comprehensive planning and management.
- It also aims to **maintain minimum ecological flows** in the river Ganga with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally sustainable development.
 - *Minimum ecological flows is the limit of the living conditions under which the river ecosystem will not degenerate or the aquatic organisms can endure under the natural state.*



- The **Ganga River basin is the largest in India, spanning over 11 states** encompassing **27% of the country's land mass** and supporting about **47% of its population**.

River Ganga:

- Ganga (or the Ganges) is **among the largest rivers in Asia**. It rises in the **Gangotri glacier in Uttarakhand**. At its source, the river is called **Bhagirathi**.
- It descends down the valley upto **Devprayag** where after joining another hill stream **Alaknanda**, it is called **Ganga**.
- Important tributaries:
 - **Right Bank tributaries:** Yamuna, Chambal, Banas, Betwa, Ken, Sind, Son.
 - **Left Bank Tributaries:** Ghagra, Kosi, Gandak, Kali, Ramganga.
- **Empties into: Bay of Bengal.**



SPECIES IN NEWS

1) Olive Ridley Turtles

About

- The olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) is **one of the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles** found in the world, inhabiting **warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans**.
- These turtles are best known for their **unique mass nesting** called **Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
 - This behaviour has been observed in **Odisha (Gahirmatha, Devi River mouth, and Rushikulya), Mexico, Costa Rica and Nicaragua**.
 - **Gahirmatha beach** located in the **Bhirtarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary** supports the **largest known nesting ground of olive ridley turtles** in the world.

turtles particularly at Gahirmatha Beach and surrounding coastal areas of Odisha.



Conservation Status:

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

Why in News?

- Lakhs of Olive Ridley turtles have begun congregating off the Odisha coast for the annual mass nesting, along the Bay of Bengal.

Did you know?

- Scientists have found that **sea turtles can detect subtle differences in the planet's magnetism and use these signals like coordinates on a map**.
- When Olive Ridley hatchlings emerge from their nests and make their first dash to the sea, they imprint this magnetic information. Years later, as fully grown adults, they rely on this internal map to navigate back to the same region, even after spending long periods in distant feeding grounds.

Threats:

- The Olive Ridley's face serious threats due to **human activities** such as turtle unfriendly fishing practices, development and exploitation of nesting beaches for ports, tourist centres and poaching.
- The **Indian Coast Guard** undertakes '**Operation Olivia**' every year to **ensure safe nesting grounds** for Olive Ridley



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative

About

- The Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) was **launched by India** in **2019** at the **East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok**.

East Asia Summit:

- The East Asia Summit, established in **2005**, is the **Indo-Pacific's leading platform for strategic dialogue**, bringing together the Heads of State/Government from **19 key Indo-Pacific countries** in an annual meeting.
- The EAS addresses political, security, and economic challenges in the region, fostering closer regional cooperation.

Membership:

- The EAS has **19 members** - the **11 ASEAN countries** (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam) along with **Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States**.

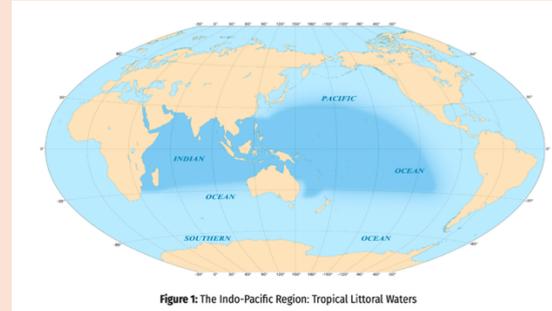
- IPOI's objective was to **promote cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific** and the **rules-based regional order**, which will contribute towards strengthening safety, stability and development in the maritime domain.
- As a **non-treaty-based voluntary arrangement**, it aims to achieve **greater cohesion and integration** through common understanding and actions related to shared interests.
- The **seven pillars** of the IPOI are :
 - Maritime Security;
 - Maritime Ecology;
 - Maritime Resources;
 - Capacity Building and Resource Sharing;
 - Disaster Risk Reduction and Management;
 - Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; and

(g) Trade, Connectivity and Maritime Transport.

- Key lead partners of IPOI include **Australia, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, France, the UK, Singapore, Greece, Germany, Bangladesh, Italy, and the US**.

What is the Indo-Pacific?

- The Indo-Pacific has been key in shaping global politics in the current times and India is seen as a pivotal player in this region.
- India's definition of the "Indo-Pacific" stretches from the **Eastern coast of Africa to the islands of the South Pacific**.



Why in News?

- India has welcomed **Spain joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**.

2) New START

About the Treaty

- The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was signed in **2010** by **then U.S. President Barack Obama and Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev**, and entered into force in 2011.
 - New START replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired in 2009, and superseded the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT).





- The treaty **sets limits on strategic nuclear weapons** – the kind that each side would use to strike the opponent’s vital political, military and industrial centres in the event of a nuclear war.
 - It caps the number of deployed strategic warheads at 1,550 on each side, with no more than 700 deployed ground- or submarine-launched missiles and bomber planes, and 800 launchers.
- The Treaty also allows for **verification inspections and information-sharing**.

Why in News?

- The **New START treaty**, the last of the nuclear arms control treaties between the United States and Russia, **expired recently**.

Did you know?

- **The US and Russia are the two biggest nuclear powers** in the world in terms of the number of warheads they possess. Together, the US and Russia possess about **90 percent of all nuclear warheads in the world**.
- In 2025, Russia officially ended its commitment to the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, 1987**.
 - The arms control deal had **banned ground-launched missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometres**.
 - Moscow said the treaty’s conditions had disappeared and confirmed it will no longer follow restrictions on missile deployments.

3) Pax Silica

What’s in the news?

- **The U.S.** recently convened the inaugural **Pax Silica Summit to secure the supply chain of critical minerals and build advanced manufacturing and logistics capabilities** critical to new frontier technologies such as semiconductors and AI.
 - **‘Pax’** in Latin means **‘peace’** and **‘Silica’** is a **key compound used in chip manufacturing** — taken together they suggest that the **supply chain for new technologies should promote peace and prosperity**.
- The strategic initiative is seen as a **counter to China’s grip on the global manufacturing supply chain**.
- The **Pax Silica Declaration** noted that the initiative seeks to **reduce coercive dependencies, secure global tech/AI supply chains, and build trusted digital infrastructure**.



Membership

- Pax Silica currently includes **the U.S., Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Israel, the UAE, and Australia**.
- Recently, **Qatar and the UAE** have also been invited to join.
- **India was not invited** to the inaugural meeting of Pax Silica. However, the U.S. later announced that India will be invited to join the Pax Silica.



4) High Seas Treaty Enters Into Force

About High Seas Treaty

- The **High Seas Treaty**, officially named the **Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)**, is an international treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for long-term protection of marine biodiversity in the high seas.
- The treaty was finalised in **2023** after 15 years of negotiations.

UNCLOS:

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also known as the **Law of the Sea Treaty**, is a **comprehensive international treaty adopted in 1982** that establishes the legal framework for all ocean and maritime activities.
- The Convention **defines rights, responsibilities, and rules for navigation, resource management, and environmental protection.**
- 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.

What are the High Seas?

- **Parts of the sea that are not included in the territorial waters or the internal waters of a country** are known as the **high seas**, according to the **1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas.**
- It is the **area beyond a country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which extends up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline and till where a nation has jurisdiction over living and non-living resources.**
- UNCLOS declares that the **high seas are open to all States**, granting countries rights such as the freedom to navigate, fish and conduct scientific research.

How important are the high seas?

- The high seas account for **more than 60% of the world's ocean area** and cover about **half of the Earth's surface**, which makes them a **hub of marine life.**
- They are home to around 2.7 lakh known species, many of which are yet to be discovered. The high seas are **fundamental to human survival and well-being.**
- Despite this, the **high seas remain as one of the least-protected areas, with only about 1% of it under protection.**

Four Major Pillars

- The High Seas Treaty rests on **four major pillars** designed to safeguard marine ecosystems:
 1. **Conservation and protection of marine ecology** through demarcation of **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs);**
 2. Establishment of the practice of **mandatory environmental impact assessments (EIA)** for any activity that is potentially polluting or damaging to the marine ecosystem;



3. **Fair and equitable sharing of benefits** from marine genetic resources; and
4. **Capacity building and technology transfer**, which demands that developing countries receive support so they can participate fully in protecting the ocean.

How is it different from UNCLOS?

- The **1982 UN Convention on Laws of the Seas** is a **comprehensive international law** under which coastal states manage waters **up to 200 nautical miles** from their shorelines. However, **international waters beyond this zone lacked strong protection**.
- The **High Seas Treaty fills this governance gap** by giving the international community a **binding framework** to conserve biodiversity in international waters.
- **BBNJ would serve as one of the implementing agreements under the UNCLOS**.

Why in News?

- The **High Seas Treaty has come into effect**, after it reached the threshold of ratification by 60 countries in September last year.
 - The number of ratifications has since risen to 81, with **China, Brazil and Japan** adding their names to the list.
- It is the **first legally binding ocean instrument** to provide for **inclusive ocean governance** and make vital contributions to addressing the “**triple planetary crisis**” of **climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution**.

What does ‘entry into force’ mean?

- After the entry into force, it becomes **legally binding for the 81 nations that have ratified it so far**, meaning that they agree to put it into effect at the national level.
 - The countries that have so far ratified the BBNJ include several major economies, notably **China**,

Germany, Japan, France and Brazil.

- Though **India signed the agreement in 2024, formal ratification is pending**.

What is Ratification?

- **Ratification** is the process by which a **country agrees to be legally bound to the provisions of an international law**.
- This is **separate from a mere signing on to an international law**.
 - Signing indicates that a country agrees with the provisions of the international law concerned, and is willing to abide by it. But till it ratifies it, the process for which varies from country to country, it is not legally bound to follow that law.
 - It is possible for a country to **sign on to but not ratify a treaty**. In that case, it is **not considered a party to the treaty**.

5) Davos Summit

About

- The Davos Summit is the **annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF)** held **every January** in the **Alpine resort town of Davos, Switzerland**.

World Economic Forum:

- The World Economic Forum is the **International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation**.
- It was founded by **economist Klaus Schwab** in **1971** as a **not-for-profit foundation**.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- The Forum engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- The Forum is **mostly funded by its 1,000 member companies** - typically global enterprises with more than \$5 billion in turnover – as well as **public subsidies**.



- **Important reports published by WEF: Global Gender Gap Index, Global Competitiveness Index.**

- The summit is designed to be a **platform for public-private cooperation** and one of the world's most influential gatherings of global leaders.
 - Davos is attended by heads of state, government ministers, civil society organisations, CEOs of multinational companies, economists, academics, and the media.
- The **first summit** held in Davos in **1971** was a **gathering of business executives**. However, over the years, it has **expanded in scope**, discussing issues as diverse as economic disparity, climate change, technology and global cooperation.



Why in News?

- The 56th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum was recently held in Davos, Switzerland.

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. Chagos Islands Dispute

About

- The Chagos Archipelago consists of over 600 islands situated in the **central Indian Ocean, strategically positioned between Africa and Southeast Asia**.
- Originally part of the **British colony of Mauritius**, the UK separated the archipelago in 1965 to form the **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**.

- When Mauritius gained **independence** in 1968, **the UK retained control** of the islands, citing strategic defence needs.
- At the heart of this dispute is **Diego Garcia**, the largest island in the archipelago, where **the US and the UK operate a large military base**.



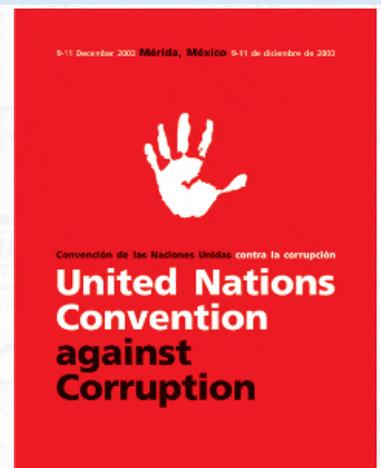
Diplomatic Resolution

- In May 2025, the United Kingdom and Mauritius reached a historic agreement to **recognize Mauritian sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia**, while ensuring the continued operation of the U.K.-U.S. military base there.

6.2. United Nations Convention against Corruption

About

- The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the **only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument**.
- It was adopted by the **United Nations General Assembly in 2003** and entered into force in **2005**.
- UNCAC **obliges the States to prevent and criminalize** different corrupt practices, **promote international cooperation**,



cooperate for the recovery of stolen assets and enhance technical assistance and information exchange.

- **The Conference of the States Parties to UNCAC, also known as COSP, is the main decision-making body of the Convention.**
- **Parties to UNCAC: 192.**
 - **India ratified** the Convention in 2011.



ORGANISATIONS

1) Arab League

About

- The Arab League, officially known as the **League of Arab States (LAS)**, is a **regional multi-national organization of Arabic-speaking countries** in the **Middle East and North Africa**.
- It was established in **Cairo (Egypt)** in **1945**, following the adoption of the **Alexandria Protocol**.
- Currently it includes **22 Arab countries**: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.
- There are **four nations** that were conferred **observer status** by the League: Brazil, Eritrea, **India**, and Venezuela.



- The Arab League aims to **promote the independence, sovereignty, affairs, and interests** of its member countries and observers.

Why in News?

- Ministers and delegates of the 22-member Arab League gathered in Delhi for the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting held recently.

2) Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth

About

- The Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) is

a **high-level parliamentary forum of the Commonwealth of Nations, bringing together Speakers and Presiding Officers of 53 national parliaments of sovereign states of the Commonwealth.**

- CSPOC was created in **1969** as an **initiative of then Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada**, the Honourable Lucien Lamoureux.
 - Since its inception, **Canada** has provided CSPOC with a **secretariat** to support its activities.

Commonwealth of Nations:

- The Commonwealth is a **voluntary association** of more than **50 independent and equal countries** (including **India**) in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific.



- The member governments have agreed to **shared goals like development, democracy and peace**.
- The Commonwealth's roots go back to the **British Empire**. But today **any country can join the modern Commonwealth**. The last two countries to join the Commonwealth were **Gabon** and **Togo** in 2022.
- Leaders of the Commonwealth countries meet **every two years** at the **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)**.
- The **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)** brings together parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth to support and strengthen parliamentary democracy.



- The **Commonwealth Secretariat** is headquartered in **London, United Kingdom**.
- CSPOC is **convened biennially** and provides a structured **platform for dialogue among presiding officers** representing diverse constitutional, legal, and parliamentary traditions.
- **Note:** CSPOC is an **independent group with no formal affiliation** with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Commonwealth Secretariat or the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM). However, its **membership is the same as that of CPA**.

Why in News?

- **India** recently hosted the **28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC)** in **New Delhi**.
 - This was the **fourth time** that India hosted the CSPOC having previously hosted in 1971, 1986, and 2010.



3) Central Silk Board

About

- The Central Silk Board (CSB) is a **statutory body** under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Textiles**.
- It was established in **1949** with the primary mandate to foster the **development of India's silk industry through research, development, and quality control**.

Indian Silk:

- **India** is the **second largest producer of silk** (after **China**) and also the **largest consumer of silk** in the world.
- Raw silk is of two kinds: **Mulberry** and **Non-Mulberry** (Tasar, Eri and Muga varieties).
 - **Mulberry silk** comes from **silkworms that eat only mulberry leaves**. It is **soft, smooth, and shiny with a bright glow**, making it perfect for luxury sarees and high-end fabrics. **Over 70% of the country's total raw silk production comes from mulberry**.
 - **Non-mulberry silk** (also known as **Vanya silk**) comes from **wild silkworms that feed on leaves from trees like oak, castor and arjun**. This silk has a **natural, earthy feel with less shine but is strong, durable, and eco-friendly**.
- In India, **mulberry silk** is produced mainly in the states of **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir** and **West Bengal**, while the **non-mulberry silks** are produced in **Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa** and **north-eastern states**.
- The **Silk Samagra Scheme** is a **Central Sector Scheme** by the Government of India to **improve the sericulture industry** across India. Its objective is to **scale up production by improving the quality and productivity and to empower downtrodden, poor & backward families** through various activities of sericulture in the country.
 - **Silk Samagra-2** is an extension of this effort to **improve the entire silk production process**, from raising silkworms to producing quality silk fabrics.

Why in News?

- The Central Silk Board has set an ambitious target of doubling the country's



silk value chain, currently pegged at ₹55,000 crore, by 2030.

4) Ayush Export Promotion Council

About

- Ayush Export Promotion Council (AYUSHEXCIL) is a newly formed Export Promotion Council set up by the **Ministry of Ayush** and supported by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- Registered as a **Section 8 company** (non-profit organization) under the Companies Act, 2013, the Council was launched during the **Global AYUSH Investment and Innovation Summit** held in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat** in **2022**.



- It is aimed to **oversee exports of products of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, Homeopathy, and other Indian traditional healthcare systems** and **address trade issues** pertaining to these sectors.

Ayurveda:

- Ayurveda is an **indigenous ancient medical science of India** which is **more than 5000 years old**. The philosophy of Ayurveda is based on the **theory of Pancha bhootas (five element theory)** of which all the objects and living bodies are composed of.

Yoga and Naturopathy:

- Yoga is about the **union of a person's own consciousness and the universal consciousness**. Naturopathy is a **cost effective drugless, non-invasive therapy** involving the **use of natural materials** for health care and healthy living.

Unani:

- Unani system of medicine is a **comprehensive medical system**, which provides **preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative health care**.
- The system is **holistic** in nature and **takes into account the whole personality of an individual** rather than taking a reductionist approach towards disease.

Siddha:

- The Siddha system of medicine is an **ancient healing tradition** in India, credited to **eighteen Siddhars** including figures like Agasthiyar, Thirumoolar, Bogar, and Patanjali.
- This system, **recorded in the Tamil language**, has evolved systematically with an **emphasis on individualized treatment**, considering factors such as patient characteristics, environment, age, sex, race, habits, mental framework, physical condition, and physiological constitution during diagnosis.

Sowa-Rigpa:

- "Sowa-Rigpa," commonly known as **Amchi medicine** (practitioners are referred to as Amchis), stands as the **traditional medicinal system** in various **Himalayan regions**. Sowa-Rigpa traces its origins to **Bhagwan Buddha** in India.
- Functioning as a **science, art, and philosophy**, Sowa-Rigpa adopts a **holistic approach to healthcare**, emphasizing harmony and understanding between human beings and the universe or the environment.

Homeopathy:

- 'Homoeopathy' was introduced as a scientific system of drug therapeutics by a **German Physician, Dr. Christian Frederick Samuel Hahnemann** in **1805**.



- The principle of Homoeopathy is **Similia Similibus Curentur** i.e. **let likes be treated by likes**. This means a substance capable of producing specific symptoms in a healthy individual can, in minute doses, treat a sick person exhibiting similar symptoms.

Why in News?

- AYUSHEXCIL observed its 4th establishment Anniversary in New Delhi.

5) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

5.1. UNRWA

About

- The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a **United Nations agency** established by the **General Assembly** in **1949**.
- It is mandated to **provide aid to about 700,000 Palestinians** who were forced to leave their homes in what is now Israel during the **1948 Arab-Israeli war**.



UNRWA
الاونروا

- The UN agency operates in **Gaza** and the **Israeli-occupied West Bank**, as well as **Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan** — countries where the refugees took shelter after their expulsion.
- UNRWA runs education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance programmes inside

and outside refugee camps based in the aforementioned areas.

- UNRWA is **funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions** by donor states. It also gets a **limited subsidy from the UN**.
- UNRWA was initially created as a **temporary agency**. However, in the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the **General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate**.

5.2. Press Council of India

About

- The Press Council of India is a **statutory quasi-judicial autonomous authority** established in **1979** under the **Press Council Act, 1978** with the **twin objectives of preserving the freedom of the press by maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and the news agencies in India**.



- The Council comprises a **Chairman** and **28 members**.
 - The **Chairman** has, by convention, been a **retired judge of the Supreme Court of India** who is **nominated by a Committee** consisting of a Chairman of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), Speaker of the House of People (Lok Sabha) and a person elected amongst themselves by the 28 members of the Council.
- The **Chairman and other members** shall hold office for a **period of three years**.



Did you know?

- The idea for the Council was first proposed by the **First Press Commission in 1956**, which emphasized the need to protect press freedom and promote ethical reporting.
 - The **Norms of Journalistic Conduct** issued by the Council serve as the **guiding framework for ethical reporting in the print media.**
- Newspapers are required to adhere to these norms, which, among other provisions, discourage the publication of fake, defamatory or misleading news.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

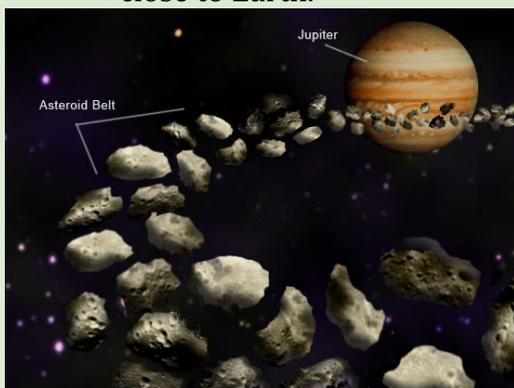
1) OSIRIS-REx & Asteroid Benu

OSIRIS-REx

- **OSIRIS-REx (Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification and Security-Regolith Explorer)** is a U.S. mission launched in 2016 by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to collect and return samples from an asteroid.
- In 2020, it collected surface samples from the **near-Earth asteroid Benu** and returned them to Earth in 2023.

Asteroids:

- Asteroids are **rocky minor planets orbiting the Sun** and are **remnants of solar system formation** about 4.6 billion years ago. NASA estimates that nearly **one million asteroids** have been identified so far.
- They are classified as:
 - **Main Belt asteroids:** Those located between Mars and Jupiter;
 - **Trojans;** Those that share orbit with larger planets such as Jupiter, Neptune, Mars;
 - **Near-Earth Asteroids (NEAs):** Those that have orbits that pass close to Earth.



- Since then, scientists from the US and Japan have been **analysing the samples to understand the early solar system and the origins of life on Earth.**
- After delivering the sample, the spacecraft was renamed **OSIRIS-APEX** and redirected

to study near-Earth asteroid Apophis in 2029.

Asteroid Benu:

- Benu is a **small, carbon-rich near-Earth asteroid** that passes **relatively close to Earth about every six years.** It is located at a distance of about **200 million miles away from the Earth.**
- It formed near the dawn of the solar system around 4.6 billion years ago and is considered an **ancient relic preserving primitive solar system material.**
- It likely **originated in the Main Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter** and later **drifted into near-Earth space due to gravitational interactions and the Yarkovsky effect.**
 - *The Yarkovsky effect is a phenomenon in which a rotating asteroid absorbs sunlight and re-emits it as heat, creating a small thrust that gradually alters its trajectory over time. Though tiny, this cumulative effect can significantly change an asteroid's orbit, complicating impact predictions and potentially influencing Earth-collision risks.*
- Today, the asteroid Benu **orbits the sun** between the orbits of the earth and Mars.

Why in News?

- Recent studies reveal that **Benu contains amino acids, all five nucleobases found in DNA and RNA,** and for the first time, **large sugar molecules such as ribose** (a key component of RNA) and **glucose.**
- The presence of these molecules **strengthens the RNA world hypothesis,** which suggests that **early life may have relied on RNA before DNA and proteins evolved.**
- Researchers also discovered **nitrogen- and oxygen-rich polymer materials** and these nitrogen-rich compounds are significant because **nitrogen is essential**



for RNA formation, thereby strengthening the theory that life's building blocks may have been delivered to Earth through asteroids.

2) Notifiable Disease

About

- A notifiable disease is **any disease that is required by law to be reported to government authorities.**
- Diseases that have the **potential to cause outbreaks, high mortality, or require urgent public health intervention** (such as cholera, diphtheria, encephalitis, COVID-19) are typically declared notifiable.
- The list of notifiable diseases **varies across states, as state governments are responsible for issuing notifications** and implementing reporting requirements.
- The **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** provides the **legal framework for notifying** and controlling epidemic diseases in India, while the **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) monitors and tracks** such diseases for early outbreak detection and response.
 - **Failure to report** a notifiable disease is a **criminal offence.**

Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897:

- It was enacted to **combat the bubonic plague in Bombay** and grants **special powers to authorities to implement measures for preventing and controlling the spread of epidemic diseases.**

Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme:

- IDSP was launched in **2004** by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** with **World Bank assistance** to **strengthen surveillance of epidemic-prone diseases and enable early detection and rapid response to outbreaks.**
- Its objective is to build a **decentralized, IT-enabled, laboratory-based surveillance system** with trained Rapid Response Teams (RRTs), strengthened

laboratories, skilled human resources, and inter-sectoral coordination, especially for zoonotic diseases (those that spread from animals to humans).

Why in News?

- The Delhi government has decided to declare human rabies a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act.

Rabies

- Rabies is a **vaccine-preventable, zoonotic, viral disease** caused by the **rabies virus (Rhabdoviridae family)** that affects the **central nervous system.**

Transmission:

- It spreads through the **saliva of infected animals—mainly dogs** (responsible for about 99% of human cases) via bites, scratches, or contact with broken skin or mucosa.
- **Rabies infects mammals**, including dogs, cats, livestock and wildlife.

Symptoms:

- The incubation period of rabies is typically 2–3 months; after which symptoms such as **fever, hydrophobia** (irrational fear of water), **hallucinations, and paralysis** develop.

Prevention:

- **Rabies vaccination** is given **post-exposure** or sometimes as **pre-exposure prophylaxis** for high-risk groups (veterinarians, forest workers, laboratory personnel).
- **Vaccinating dogs** through mass dog vaccination programs is the most cost-effective strategy for preventing rabies in people because it stops the transmission at its source.

Treatment:

- There is **no effective treatment** for rabies once symptoms appear; the disease is **almost 100% fatal.**
- The only way to prevent death is by receiving prompt **post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)** (immediate wound washing, vaccination, and rabies immunoglobulin) immediately after



exposure to the virus, before clinical symptoms develop.

Did you know?

- **India** accounts for around **one-third of global rabies deaths**—about 20,000 annually, mostly from dog bites.

3) Heaviest communication satellite: GSAT-7R

What's in the news?

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched the **Indian Navy's GSAT-7R (CMS-03) communication satellite** using its most powerful launch vehicle, the **LVM3** from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- The **indigenously designed and developed satellite** is **India's heaviest communication satellite** till date, weighing approximately **4,400 kg**.
- The satellite was first injected into **Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)** and will eventually be placed in **Geostationary Orbit**.



LVM3:

- LVM3 (earlier known as **Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle Mark 3** or **GSLV Mk III**) is **India's heaviest operational launch vehicle**.
- It comprises **three stages — solid, liquid, and cryogenic** and is capable of

placing about **4,000 kg payload into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)** and up to **8,000 kg payload in low earth orbit (LEO)**.

Did you know?

- The previous mission of LVM-3 rocket was the successful launch of **Chandrayaan-3 mission**, wherein, **India became the first country to land successfully near the lunar South pole** in 2023.

Geostationary Orbit:

- A geostationary orbit (GEO) is a **circular orbit** located about **35,786 kilometres above the Earth's equator**, where a **satellite moves at the same speed as the Earth's rotation**.
- Because of this synchronized motion, the **satellite appears stationary over a fixed point on the Earth's surface**.
- This unique feature makes geostationary orbit ideal for **communication, television broadcasting, weather monitoring, and strategic surveillance**, as it provides continuous coverage over a specific region.

Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit:

- A Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) is a **highly elliptical, intermediate, geocentric orbit** used by space agencies to **move satellites from Low Earth Orbit (LEO) toward their final, high-altitude operational orbit**.

About GSAT- 7R

- GSAT-7R is part of India's **GSAT-7 series of defence communication satellites**.
- It provides **multi-band telecommunication services** including voice, data, and video communication across the **Indian Ocean Region including the Indian landmass**.
- The satellite **strengthens secure communication links** among Indian Navy



ships, submarines, aircraft, and Maritime Operations Centres.

- It has a **lifespan of 15 years** and is a replacement for the multi-band communication satellite GSAT-7/INSAT-4F, named Rukmini.

4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. Deep Ocean Mission

About

- India's Deep Ocean Mission, launched by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** in 2021, aims to **develop technologies for exploring and sustainably utilising the deep ocean's living and non-living wealth.**
- The **MoES leads this multi-agency mission** that also aims to **enhance understanding of deep-sea ecosystems**, contributing to sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation.
- The **entire initiative** is based on **indigenous technology, developed and manufactured entirely in India**, showcasing the nation's self-reliance in cutting-edge science.

Mission Components:

1. **Development of Technologies for Deep Sea Mining, and Manned Submersible:**
 - a. **India's first manned submersible vehicle 'MATSYA 6000'** (capable of

transporting three individuals to depths of up to 6,000 meters beneath the ocean surface) is being developed as part of the **Samudrayaan Project** under Deep Ocean Mission.



2. **Development of Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services**
3. **Technological innovations for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity**
4. **Deep Ocean Survey and Exploration**
5. **Energy and freshwater from the Ocean**
6. **Advanced Marine Station for Ocean Biology.**



REPORTS & INDICES

1) World Economic Outlook

About

- The World Economic Outlook (WEO) is a flagship report published by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** that provides **comprehensive analysis and forecasts of global economic developments**.
- It is **usually published twice a year**, with updates in between.
- It is a critical tool used by policymakers, investors, and businesses to anticipate shifts in the global economy.

International Monetary Fund:

- IMF is an **intergovernmental financial institution** conceived in **1944** (following the **Great Depression** of the 1930s) at the **United Nations Bretton Woods Conference** in New Hampshire, United States.
 - The IMF and the World Bank are known as the “**Bretton Woods twins**”.
- The IMF **fosters economic growth and employment** by providing **temporary financial assistance to countries to help ease balance of payments adjustment and technical assistance**.
- The IMF is comprised of 191 countries (**India is a founder member**) and is based in **Washington, D.C.**
- The IMF is a **permanent observer** at the **United Nations**.

Why in News?

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its January 2026 World Economic Outlook update, has revised India’s GDP growth forecast for the current financial year (2025-26) upward to 7.3% from its previous projection of 6.6%.

2) Export Preparedness Index 2024

What's in the news?

- The **NITI Aayog** has released the **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024**, a **comprehensive assessment of export readiness across India’s States and Union Territories (UTs)**.
 - The **first edition** of the EPI was published in **2020** and this is the 4th edition.

NITI Aayog:

- The **National Institution for Transforming India**, also called **NITI Aayog**, was formed via a **resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015**.
 - It replaced the **Planning Commission** instituted in 1950.
- NITI Aayog serves as the **apex public policy think tank of the Government of India**, and the **nodal agency** tasked with **catalysing economic development and fostering cooperative federalism**.
- NITI Aayog’s entire gamut of activities can be divided into four main heads:
 - **Policy and Programme Framework**
 - **Cooperative Federalism**
 - **Monitoring and Evaluation**
 - **Think Tank, and Knowledge and Innovation Hub**.

Governing Council of NITI Aayog

- The Governing Council of NITI Aayog is **chaired by the Prime Minister** and comprises Chief Ministers of all the States and Union Territories with legislatures; Lt Governors of other Union Territories; Ex-Officio Members; Vice Chairperson, NITI Aayog; Full-time Members, NITI Aayog and Special Invitees.
- The Governing Council presents a platform to **discuss inter-sectoral, inter-departmental and federal issues**



to accelerate the implementation of the national development agenda.

About the Index

- Aligned with **India's objective** of achieving **USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030**, the Export Preparedness Index 2024 is structured around **four pillars**:
 - **Export Infrastructure**
 - **Business Ecosystem**
 - **Policy and Governance**, and
 - **Export Performance**.
- These pillars are further broken down into **13 sub-pillars and 70 indicators**.

Pillars	Weightage	Sub-Pillars
Export infrastructure	20%	Utilities
		Logistics
Business ecosystem	40%	Macroeconomy
		Cost competitiveness
		Human capital
		Finance and credit accessibility
		MSME ecosystem
		Industrial and innovation environment
Policy and governance	20%	State level policy support and governance
		Regulatory environment and compliance
Export performance	20%	State level exports and trends
		Export promotion and facilitation
		Export portfolio and market access

- For comparative assessment and peer learning, **States and UTs have been categorised into two categories: Large States and Small States, North Eastern States and Union Territories**.
 - Within each category, they are **further classified as Leaders, Challengers and Aspirers**, based

on their level of export preparedness.

Highlights of the Index

- The latest edition ranks **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat** as the **top three Large States**.
- **Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Goa** are listed as **leading performers in the category of Small States, North Eastern States and Union Territories**.
- Calling **exports the fourth driver of the economy**, the report noted that India should aim to build a **\$8-10 trillion export economy by 2047**.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. RBI's Financial Inclusion Index

About

- The Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index), launched by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** in **2021**, is an **annual index** that **measures financial inclusion across banking, investment, insurance, postal, and pension sectors** through **97 indicators**.
- The index **captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion** in a **single value ranging between 0 and 100**, where **0 represents complete financial exclusion**, and **100 indicates full financial inclusion**.
- The FI-Index comprises **three broad parameters** (weights indicated in brackets), namely **Access (35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%)**, each consisting of various dimensions that are computed based on a number of indicators.
- The FI-Index has been constructed **without any base year**, and as such it reflects cumulative efforts of all stakeholders over the years towards financial inclusion.



Latest Data

- According to the **2025 FI-Index**, **financial inclusion** across the country **improved to 67** in 2025, up from 64.2 in March 2024, showing steady gains across the dimensions of access, usage, and quality.



ART & CULTURE

1) Gallantry Awards

About

- Medals for gallantry are awarded to members of the **armed forces, paramilitary forces, and civilians** for **bravery and heroic action**.
- **Post-independence, first three gallantry awards** namely **Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra** and **Vir Chakra** were instituted by the Government of India in 1950.
 - These are **wartime awards** awarded for acts of bravery in the face of the enemy, and are **primarily for armed forces personnel**.
- Thereafter, **other three gallantry awards** i.e. **Ashoka Chakra Class-I, Ashoka Chakra Class-II** and **Ashoka Chakra Class-III** were instituted by the Government of India in 1952.
 - These awards were **renamed as Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra** and **Shaurya Chakra** respectively in 1967.
 - These are **honours in peacetime** and can be awarded to **armed forces, paramilitary forces, police, or civilians**.
- These gallantry awards are **announced twice in a year** - first on the occasion of the **Republic Day** and then on the occasion of the **Independence Day**.
- **Order of precedence** of these awards is the **Param Vir Chakra, the Ashoka Chakra, the Mahavir Chakra, the Kirti Chakra, the Vir Chakra** and the **Shaurya Chakra**.



- **Gallantry awards** along with some other Defence Distinguished Service awards are conferred to the awardees/Next-of-Kins (NoKs) by the **President** at the **Defence Investiture Ceremony** held every year at the **Rashtrapati Bhawan**.
 - However, the **Param Vir Chakra** and the **Ashoka Chakra** are conferred by the **President** to the awardees/NoKs on the occasion of the **Republic Day Parade**.

Why in News?

- President Droupadi Murmu approved gallantry awards for 70 Armed Forces personnel, including six posthumous awards, on the eve of the 77th Republic Day.
 - **Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla**, who made history by becoming the **first Indian to visit the International Space Station** as a part of the **Axiom-4 Mission**, has been honoured with the **Ashoka Chakra**, the country's highest peacetime gallantry award.

Axiom-4 Mission:

- The Axiom-4 Mission, launched atop a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** in June 2025, carried the **SpaceX Dragon spacecraft** to the **International Space Station (ISS)** where astronauts carried out significant scientific research.
 - *ISS is a **multi-nation construction project** that is the **largest single structure humans ever put into space**. The ISS is in a **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** about 400 km to 420 km above Earth's surface.*
 - *The ISS includes contributions from 15 nations. **NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia)** and the **European Space Agency** are the major partners of the space station who contribute most of the funding; the other partners are the **Japanese***



Aerospace Exploration Agency and the Canadian Space Agency.

- *The ISS serves as a **microgravity and space environment research laboratory** in which crew members conduct experiments in biology, human biology, physics, astronomy, meteorology, and other fields.*
- The Axiom-4 mission is a **collaboration between NASA, ISRO, European Space Agency (ESA) and SpaceX** (an American space technology company) and includes astronauts from **four countries - India (Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla)**, the United States, Poland, and Hungary.
- The experiments aimed at **advancing our understanding of microgravity** and its **effects on various biological processes**. Additionally, experiments also explored the **potential for crop growth in space**.
- The mission also studied **Tardigrades**, also known as **'water bears'**, a phylum of eight-legged segmented micro-animals, discovered by German zoologist Johann August Ephraim Goeze in 1773.
 - **Harmless to humans**, tardigrades are known for their **ability to survive in extreme conditions**, and earlier studies have suggested they may provide **useful insights for improving human stress and radiation tolerance**.

2) Padma Awards

About

- The Padma Awards are **one of the highest civilian honours of India announced annually on the eve of Republic Day** (except for brief interruptions during the years 1978 and 1979 and 1993 to 1997).
- These Awards were instituted by the Government of India in **1954**, alongside the **Bharat Ratna**, to recognize distinguished contributions in various fields.

Bharat Ratna:

- Bharat Ratna is the **highest civilian award in India**.
- It is awarded in recognition of **exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour**.
- The **recommendations** for Bharat Ratna are **made by the Prime Minister to the President of India**.
- The **number of Bharat Ratna Awards is restricted to a maximum of three in a particular year**.

- The Padma Awards seek to **recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines** where an **element of public service is involved**.
- The Awards are given in **three categories**:
 - **Padma Vibhushan** (for exceptional and distinguished service);
 - **Padma Bhushan** (distinguished service of higher order); and
 - **Padma Shri** (distinguished service).
- Recipients of these awards receive a **medal and a certificate signed by the President of India**.



Padma Vibhushan



Padma Bhushan



Padma Shri

Eligibility:

- **All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex** are eligible for these awards.
- However, **Government servants including those working with PSUs**,



except doctors and scientists, are **not eligible** for these Awards.

- The **nomination process is open to the public**. Even **self-nomination** can be made.

Fields:

- The Padma awards are given across various fields such as **art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, civil services, sports and others** (fields not covered above and may include propagation of Indian Culture, protection of Human Rights, Wild Life protection/conservation etc).

Deciding Authority:

- The Padma Awards are conferred on the **recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee**, which is constituted by the **Prime Minister** every year.
- The Padma Awards Committee is headed by the **Cabinet Secretary** and includes Home Secretary, Secretary to the President and four to six eminent persons as members. The recommendations of the committee are submitted to the **Prime Minister** and the **President of India** for approval.

Maximum Number of Awards:

- The total number of awards to be given in a year (excluding posthumous awards and to foreigners) should not be more than **120**.
 - The award is **normally not conferred posthumously**. However, in highly deserving cases, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously.

Note:

- The award **does not amount to a title under Article 18(1)** of the Indian Constitution and **cannot be used as a suffix or prefix to the awardees' name**.
- A **higher category** of Padma award can be conferred on a person only where a period of **at least five years has elapsed** since conferment of the earlier Padma award. However, in highly deserving cases, a relaxation can be made by the Awards Committee.

Why in News?

- For the year 2026, President of India has approved conferment of 131 Padma Awards.



DEFENCE & SECURITY

1) S-400 Missile

About

- The S-400 Triumf, developed by **Russia's Almaz Central Design Bureau**, is widely regarded as **one of the most advanced and formidable surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems** in the world.
- The S-400 is designed to provide a **multi-layered air defence shield capable of intercepting a broad spectrum of aerial threats**, including fighter jets, ballistic and cruise missiles, drones and stealth aircraft within the **range of 400km**.
- Equipped with **sophisticated phased-array radar**, these missiles can **engage multiple targets simultaneously** flying at **speeds up to Mach 14** (approximately 17,000 km/h) and at **altitudes ranging from 10 metres to 30 kilometres**.



Why in News?

- Following the successful use of the S-400 air defence missile system during Operation Sindoor, India plans to acquire another five squadrons of the S-400 Triumf air defence systems.
- India has already procured five squadrons of the S-400 air defence missile system, known in Indian service as "**Sudarshan Chakra**."

2) LR-AShM

About

- Developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** specifically to meet the operational requirements of the **Indian Navy**, the **Long-Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Glide Missile (LR-AShM)** is a **hypersonic glide missile capable of engaging both static and moving targets** with high precision.
- The missile, a **first-of-its-kind system**, features **fully indigenous avionics and advanced sensor packages**, underscoring India's self-reliance in cutting-edge missile technologies.



- The LR-AShM follows a **quasi-ballistic trajectory**, achieving speeds of up to **Mach 10** (multiples of speed of sound), with an **operational range of approximately 1,500 km**.

- The **ballistic missiles** are a category of missiles that **utilise projectile motion to deliver warheads**. During their arched trajectories, the ballistic missiles are **powered during their initial travel but later take a gravity driven path**.
- The **quasi ballistic missiles** are a class of missiles that have **low trajectory** and take the **ballistic trajectory but can change course and make maneuvers during the flight** if required.



- Its **low-altitude flight profile**, combined with **extreme speed and manoeuvrability**, significantly reduces **detectability by enemy ground- and ship-based radar systems**.
- The missile uses a **two-stage solid propulsion system**, after which it performs an **unpowered hypersonic**

glide (travelling at Mach 5 or above) before striking the target.

Why in News?

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) showcased LR-AShM during the 77th Republic Day parade.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM OTHER ARTICLES

1) Valley of Flowers National Park

About

- The Valley of Flowers National Park, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, is located in the high Himalayan valleys of **Uttarakhand**. It forms a part of the **Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve**.
- The park forms a unique **transition zone between Zaskar and Great Himalayas**.
- It hosts over 600 species of wildflowers, including the rare **Blue Poppy, Brahmakamal, and Cobra Lily**.
- Fauna found here include **Asiatic black bear, snow leopard, brown bear and blue sheep**.

2) Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

News:

- Mozambican rights activist and humanitarian **Graca Machel** has been selected for the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2025.
- The Indira Gandhi Prize, formally known as the **Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development**, is awarded annually to **individuals and organizations promoting international peace and development**.
- Named after former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, it is being conferred every year since **1986** by **Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust**.
- The prize is awarded to a person or organization **without any distinction of nationality, race or religion** and includes a **cash award of Rs 1 crore and a trophy with a citation**.

3) 'India has 22 judges per 10 lakh people'

News:

- In a written reply, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said that at present, the **judge-to-population ratio in the country** works out to be approximately **22 judges per million population**.

- In its **120th report** way back in 1987, the **Law Commission** had recommended a **judge-to-population ratio of 50 judges per million** of the Indian population.

4) National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning

About

- National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) is a project of the **Ministry of Education** initiated by **seven Indian Institutes of Technology** (Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras, Guwahati and Roorkee) along with the **Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore** in 2003.
- It is an **online-learning platform** with the objective of making **high quality learning material available to students of engineering institutions across the country, free of cost**.

5) Cabinet approves continuation of APY

News:

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **continuation of Atal Pension Yojana (APY) up to FY 2030-31**.
 - *Refer SCA Prelims Magazine December Edition for details about APY.*

6) Karnataka records highest-ever organ donations in 2025, ranks third nationally

News:

- **Karnataka's State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO)**, the nodal agency that facilitates cadaver organ donations, has recorded 198 donations in 2025, the **highest recorded in the State so far**.
- With this, **Karnataka ranked third in the country** in organ donations for the year, after **Tamil Nadu, and Telangana**.



7) SC Says Menstrual Health Fundamental Right Under Article 21

News:

- The **Supreme Court** has ruled that the **right to menstrual hygiene is an integral part of the right to life under Article 21** of the Constitution.
- The apex court has **mandated all States and Union Territories** to ensure the provision of **free biodegradable sanitary napkins** and **functional, gender-segregated toilets** for adolescent girls across all schools.
 - In April 2025, the Supreme Court acknowledged the **right to digital access** as a **fundamental right under Article 21**.
 - The Court ruled that in a world where digital platforms are required to access basic services like banking, healthcare, education, and government programmes, **denying equal access to digital content amounts to exclusion and discrimination**.

8) Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises

About

- The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) is a **key source of official statistics on the unincorporated non-agricultural sector** of the Indian economy.
- The survey is conducted by the **National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- ASUSE is conducted with the primary objective of **measuring various economic and operational characteristics and structural changes** in India's vast unincorporated non-agricultural sector, comprising mainly of small manufacturers, service providers, and trading establishments.
- The sector also serves as an **important link in the domestic value-chains supporting the incorporated sector**.

9) Rozgar Mela

About

- The 18th edition of the Rozgar Mela was organized at 45 locations across the country.
- To **boost employment initiatives** in the country, the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**, under the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** has been organizing Rozgar Melas nationwide.
- These events aim to **connect unemployed youth with suitable job opportunities in the private sector**.
- Since the launch of the initiative, over 11 lakh recruitment letters have been issued to successful candidates through Rozgar Melas held across the country.

10) India Becomes World's Largest Rice Producer

News:

- **India** has become the **world's largest producer of rice, surpassing China**.
 - India's rice production has reached 150.18 million tonnes, compared to China's 145.28 million tonnes.
- **Between 1969-70 and 2024-25**, the **area under paddy cultivation** in India **increased by more than 36%, yield tripled and production almost quadrupled**.
 - **India** is also the **world's leading rice exporter**.

11) Arunachal welcomes First Sun

News:

- **Dong village** in Arunachal Pradesh welcomed the first sunrise of 2026 with the cultural performance "**Alo Prabhat: Dance of the Dawn**" during the Sunrise Festival organised by the State Tourism Department.
- Owing to its extreme eastern longitude, it is considered the **first human habitation in the country to receive the earliest rays of the sun each day**.
- This phenomenon is geographical in nature, as **places situated further east**



experience sunrise earlier due to the Earth's rotation from west to east.

- **Note:** India follows a **single time zone (IST: 82°30'E longitude)**. However, eastern states experience sunrise almost two hours earlier than western states.

12) Wolf Supermoon

About

- "Wolf Supermoon" was observed in January 2026.
- A "wolf supermoon" combines two terms: **Wolf Moon** and **Supermoon**.
 - The **Wolf Moon** is the traditional name for the **first full moon of January**, derived from seasonal folklore.
 - A **Supermoon** occurs when a **full moon coincides with the Moon's perigee** (its closest point to Earth in its elliptical orbit), making it appear **slightly larger and brighter** than usual.



- This combination makes the Wolf Supermoon **one of the brightest full Moons of 2026**, even if the size difference is subtle to the naked eye.

13) Biomaterials

About

- Biomaterials are **materials derived wholly or partly from biological sources, or engineered using biological processes**, that are designed to replace or interact with conventional materials.
- They are increasingly used across sectors such as **packaging, textiles, construction, and healthcare**.

- Common examples include **bioplastics** made from plant sugars or starch, **bio-based fibres** used in textiles, and medical biomaterials such as **biodegradable sutures and tissue scaffolds**.

14) Spina Bifida and Folic Acid

About

- Spina Bifida is a **birth defect of the spinal cord** causing paralysis, hydrocephalus, incontinence, and orthopedic issues, but no intellectual impairment.
- India has one of the **highest prevalence rates**, affecting over 25,000 children annually (**~4 per 1,000 births**).
- It is **largely preventable (>70%)** with **pre-conceptual folic acid supplementation**.

- **Folate** is the **natural form of vitamin B9** in foods (leafy greens, beans, citrus), while **folic acid** is the **synthetic, more stable, and better-absorbed form used in supplements and fortified foods**.
- Many women do not get enough folate from diet alone, and natural folate can be lost during cooking.
- Folic acid supplementation (**400–800 mcg daily**) before conception and during pregnancy supports **fetal neural tube development, DNA synthesis, red blood cell production, placental and fetal growth, and prevents maternal anemia**.

15) Ice Vault

About

- Scientists have inaugurated the **first global repository of mountain ice cores** (samples from glaciers rescued worldwide) at **Concordia Station, Antarctica**, to **preserve climate history** as glaciers rapidly disappear (5% global loss since 2000).
- Ice cores are the time machines that allow us to **investigate past climate**. They **preserve actual bubbles of air** that mean that we can look at **past concentrations of greenhouse gases** in the atmosphere.



- They allow us to **reconstruct past temperature and precipitation changes**, and help us **understand relationships between the composition of the atmosphere and changing climate**.

16) Euthanasia

About

- Euthanasia, often referred to as **mercy killing**, involves **intentionally ending a person's life to alleviate intractable suffering**.
- It is broadly classified into two types:
 - **Active Euthanasia:** Involves direct actions to cause the patient's death, such as administering a lethal injection.
 - **Passive Euthanasia:** Entails **withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatments**, allowing the patient to die naturally.

Euthanasia in India

- In India, **passive euthanasia is legally permissible under specific conditions**.
- The **Supreme Court** recognized this in the landmark **Aruna Shanbaug case (2011)**, **allowing the withdrawal of life support for patients** in a permanent vegetative state.
- This was further reinforced in the **Common Cause v. Union of India (2018)** judgment, where the top court **recognised the legality of "passive euthanasia"** for terminally ill patients, reiterating that the **"right to die with dignity"** was an aspect of the **Right to life under Article 21** of the Constitution of India.

17) Kathputli

About

- Kathputli is a **traditional string puppet performance** from **Rajasthan** and is considered one of the State's oldest folk art traditions.



- These puppets **do not have legs** and are dressed in long, flowing skirts.
- The puppetry is **accompanied by folk music** on the **dholak and harmonium**.

18) RBI's report on Demographic Transition

News:

- A new **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report** titled **'State Finances: A Study of Budgets 2025-26: Demographic Transition in India - Implications for State Finances'** has indicated by 2036, **more than half of the States are projected to transition into the ageing category**, with **Kerala at the forefront**, with more than 22% of its population as elderly.
 - A **State** is classified as **ageing** if the **share of population aged 60 years and above is 15% or more**.
- In these regions, the **demographic dividend is likely to close earlier than the national average**, primarily on account of rapid and sustained decline in fertility levels.
 - *Demographic dividend refers to the economic growth that can happen when a country has more working-age people (ages 15 to 64) than dependents (children and the elderly).*
- **Kerala has topped this list for State-wise share of population aged above 60 for some years now. Tamil Nadu is expected to enter the ageing category in 2026**, with 15.8% of the State's population over 60 years.



PRACTICE WITH PYQS

1) Which of the following organizations brings out the publication known as 'World Economic Outlook'? (2014)

- A. The International Monetary Fund
- B. The United Nations Development Programme
- C. The World Economic Forum
- D. The World Bank

2) "Rapid Financing Instrument" and "Rapid Credit Facility" are related to the provisions of lending by which one of the following? (2022)

- A. Asian Development Bank
- B. International Monetary Fund
- C. United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative
- D. World Bank

3) With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea, consider the following statements: (2022)

1. A coastal state has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baseline determined in accordance with the convention.
2. Ships of all states, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea.
3. The Exclusive Economic Zone shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

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

4) What is/are the purpose/purposes of the Government's 'Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme' and 'Gold Monetization Scheme'? (2016)

1. To bring the idle gold lying with Indian households into the economy.
2. To promote FDI in the gold and jewellery sector.
3. To reduce India's dependence on gold imports.

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

5) Consider the following statements in respect of Bharat Ratna and Padma Awards: (2021)

1. Bharat Ratna and Padma awards are titles under the Article 18 (1) of the Constitution of India.
2. Padma Awards, which were instituted in the year 1954, were suspended only once.
3. The number of Bharat Ratna Awards is restricted to a maximum of five in a particular year.



Which of the above statements are not correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

6) The “New START” treaty was in the news. What is this treaty? (2011)

- A. It is a bilateral strategic nuclear arms reduction treaty between the USA and the Russian Federation.
- B. It is a multilateral energy security cooperation treaty among the members of the East Asia Summit.
- C. It is a treaty between the Russian Federation and the European Union for energy security cooperation.
- D. It is a multilateral cooperation treaty among the BRICS countries for the promotion of trade

7) India is a member of which one of the following? (2015)

1. Asia-Pacific economic cooperation
2. Association of South-East Asian Nations
3. East Asia Summit

Select the correct answer using the code given below

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 3 only
- C. 1, 2, and 3
- D. India is a member of none of them

8) The 2004 Tsunami made people realize that mangroves can serve as a reliable safety hedge against coastal calamities. How do mangroves function as a safety hedge ? (2011)

- A. The mangrove swamps separate the human settlements from the sea by a wide zone in which people neither live nor venture out
- B. The mangroves provide both food and medicines which people are in need of after any natural disaster
- C. The mangrove trees are tall with dense canopies and serve as an excellent shelter during a cyclone or tsunami
- D. The mangrove trees do not get uprooted by storms and tides because of their extensive roots.

9) Given below are two statements, one labelled as Assertion (A) and the other labelled as Reason (R) : (1996)

Assertion (A) : Mangroves are very specialised forest ecosystems of tropical and subtropical regions bordering certain sea coasts.

Reason (R) : They stabilise the shoreline and act as bulwark against encroachments by the sea.

In the context of the above two statements, which one of the following is correct?

- A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A
- B. Both A and R are true but R is not a correct explanation of A
- C. A is true but R is false
- D. A is false but R is true

10) Which one of the following is the correct sequence of ecosystems in the order of decreasing productivity? (2013)

- A. Oceans, lakes, grasslands, mangroves



- B. Mangroves, oceans, grasslands, lakes
- C. Mangroves, grasslands, lakes, oceans
- D. Oceans, mangroves, lakes, grasslands

11) Consider the following pairs: (2013)

National Park	River flowing through the Park
1. Corbett National Park	Ganga
2. Kaziranga National Park	Manas
3. Silent Valley National Park	Kaveri

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 3 only
- C. 1 and 3
- D. None of these

12) Consider the following space missions: (2025)

- I. Axiom-4
- II. SpaDeX
- III. Gaganyaan

How many of the space missions given above encourage and support microgravity research?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All the three
- D. None

13) Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world? (2017)

- A. World Economic Forum
- B. UN Human Rights Council
- C. UN Women
- D. World Health Organization

14) The Global Competitiveness Report is published by the (2019)

- A. International Monetary Fund
- B. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- C. World Economic Forum
- D. World Bank

15) With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. PSLVs launch the satellites useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four- staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.



Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 3 only

Answers:

- 1. A
- 2. B
- 3. D
- 4. C
- 5. D
- 6. A
- 7. B
- 8. D
- 9. A
- 10. C
- 11. D
- 12. C
- 13. A
- 14. C
- 15. A

