



MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE



MAY 2026

YOUR SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO CURRENT AFFAIRS



A Note to Our Readers

Dear Readers,

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

The content for the 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) and DD News**, ensuring coverage that is both relevant and reliable.

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

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

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

With best wishes,
Team Simply Current Affairs.



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



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25 Reflections in Prelims 2026

from our **Magazine**

YOUR SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO CURRENT AFFAIRS

33. Which of the following best explain(s) the rationale for protecting mangrove ecosystems in the context of climate resilience ?

1. Mangroves reduce tidal energy and store freshwater, making them ideal sites for paddy cultivation in saline estuarine belts.
2. Their salt-sensitive roots filter seawater, making mangroves key to converting coastal land into freshwater aquaculture zones.
3. By withstanding tidal surges and offering biomass resources, mangroves function both as natural bio-shields and livelihood bases for rural communities.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3
(d) 3 only

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**.

34. In what way(s) does the Vizhinjam International Seaport represent a structural shift in India's maritime trade and logistics policy ?

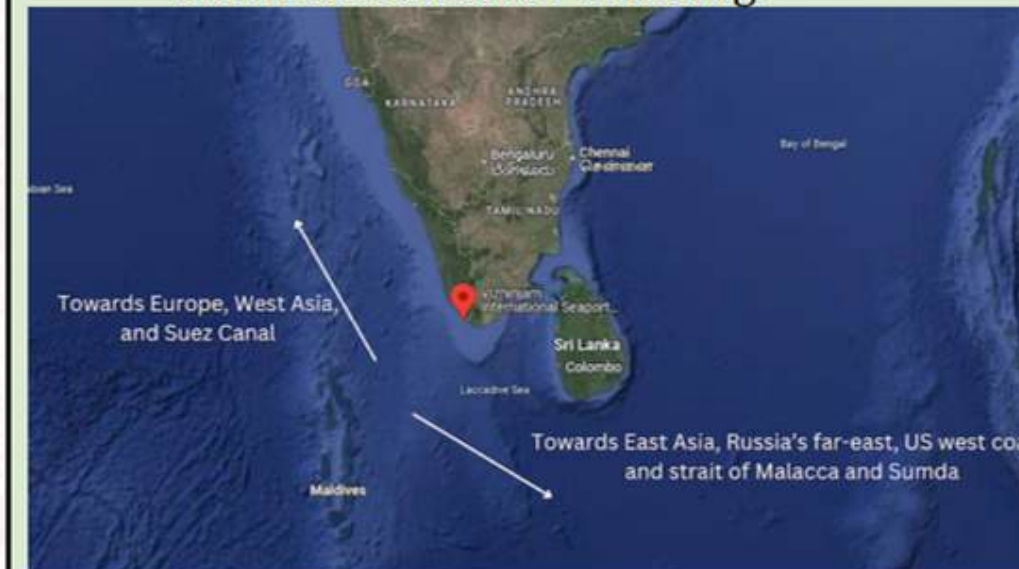
1. By functioning exclusively as a domestic cargo hub to reduce reliance on coastal shipping and eliminate the need for foreign collaborations.
2. By focusing primarily on passenger cruise tourism and heritage shipping to increase Kerala's profile as a maritime heritage destination.
3. By leveraging its natural deep draft and strategic location to reduce dependence on foreign trans-shipment ports, enhance revenue retention, and reposition India in regional maritime trade.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- ☒ (a) 1 only
☒ (b) 1 and 2
☐ (c) 2 and 3
☒ (d) 3 only

Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport:

- The **Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport** in Kerala, inaugurated in May 2025, marks a strategic shift towards **reducing reliance on foreign ports** like Colombo, Singapore, and Dubai for container handling.



- As **India's first dedicated container transshipment port**, Vizhinjam leverages its **natural draft of about 20 metres, requiring minimal capital dredging**, and its **proximity (just 10 nautical miles) to international shipping routes** linking Europe, West Asia and the Far East — the east-west shipping axis.

40. Ships from which of the following countries have to cross the Strait of Hormuz to reach out to the Indian Ocean ?

1. Bahrain
2. Syria
3. Qatar
4. Egypt

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) 3 and 4

2) Strait of Hormuz

About

- The Strait of Hormuz is a **narrow waterway** (only 30 miles wide at the narrowest point) located between the **Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman**.
- It is bounded to the **north by Iran** and to the **south by Oman** and the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.

Significance

- The Strait of Hormuz serves as the **only sea exit from the Persian Gulf into the Arabian Sea and the wider Indian Ocean**, making it **one of the world's most strategically important choke points**.



41. Match List I with List II and select the answer using the code given below the Lists :

List I (INTERPOL Notice)	List II (Description)
A. Silver Notice	1. To seek information on unidentified bodies
B. Blue Notice	2. To collect additional information about a person's identity, location, or activities in relation to a criminal investigation
C. Black Notice	3. To provide warning about a person's criminal activities, where the person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety
D. Green Notice	4. To identify and trace criminal assets

Code :

	A	B	C	D
(a)	3	1	2	4
(b)	3	2	1	4
(c)	4	2	1	3
(d)	4	1	2	3

SIMPLY
Current Affairs
By Guna Mathivanan

INTERPOL'S CRIME PALETTE

- RED NOTICE**
Location and arrest of a person with a view to his/her extradition
- BLUE NOTICE**
Information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation
- GREEN NOTICE**
To warn about criminal activities and a possible threat to public safety
- YELLOW NOTICE**
To locate missing persons, often minors or persons unable to identify himself/
- BLACK NOTICE**
To seek information on unidentified bodies
- ORANGE NOTICE**
To warn of an event, person representing a serious or imminent threat to imminent threat to public safety
- PURPLE NOTICE**
Information on modi operandi, procedures, objects, devices, or hiding places used by criminals

Source: www.interpol.int

44. Which of the following statements about DHRUV64 is/are correct ?

1. It is the third chip fabricated under the DIR-V Programme with an overall aim to enable the creation of microprocessors for India.
2. It is India's first homegrown 1.0 GHz, 64-bit dual-core microprocessor.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- ☒ (a) 1 only
- ☐ (b) 2 only
- ☒ (c) Both 1 and 2
- ☒ (d) Neither 1 nor 2



- Designed using the **open-source RISC-V instruction set architecture**, the processor represents a major leap in India's ability to **design advanced computing hardware end-to-end**, without reliance on proprietary foreign technologies.

RISC-V:

- RISC-V (pronounced "risk five") is a **set of basic instructions that a processor understands**.
- RISC-V is an **open instruction set**, which means its **core rules are publicly available** and anyone can design a chip that follows them without paying a licence fee for the instruction set itself.
- DHRUV64 is tied to the **Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) programme**, which aims to build a portfolio of RISC-V-based microprocessors for industry, military, and consumer technologies.

Technical Capabilities and Applications

- DHRUV64 features a **clock speed of 1.0 GHz** and is based on a **64-bit dual-core architecture**.

49. Which of the following statements with regard to India's indigenous new high resolution weather model, the 'Bharat Forecast System,' is/are correct ?

1. Its objective is to generate forecasts at the Panchayats cluster level.
2. It was developed by IIT Delhi.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- ☒ (a) 1 only
- ☐ (b) 2 only
- ☒ (c) Both 1 and 2
- ☐ (d) Neither 1 nor 2

BharatFS:

- Under the Mission Mausam, the **Bharat Forecast System (BharatFS)**, an advanced computer simulation model, has been launched by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- **BharatFS is the world's highest-resolution operational weather model, operating on a 6-kilometre grid.**
- **Developed indigenously by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, BharatFS enhances India's weather prediction resolution from 12 km to 6 km, enabling every village in India to access more precise and location-specific forecasts.**
 - It makes it the **world's first model at such a high resolution for localised forecasts.**
- With this 6 km resolution, the **model can capture localized weather phenomena** such as thunderstorms, heavy rain spells, lightning, hailstorms and intense heatwaves which often vary sharply even within a district.

53. Which one of the following correctly represents the three key sub-indices of the Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) ?
- (a) Credit access, Insurance depth, and Pension coverage
 - (b) Banking access, GDP contribution, and Financial literacy
 - (c) Access, Usage, and Quality
 - (d) Access, Affordability, and Transparency

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.

54.

Which one of the following best describes the key objective of India's 'Open Network for Digital Commerce' (ONDC) initiative?

- (a) To allow government control over all digital commerce transactions
- (b) To replace private e-commerce players
- (c) To break the dominance of large e-commerce platforms by enabling interoperability across networks
- (d) To mandate UPI-based payments for all online transactions

Significance

- ONDC represents a step toward **digital commerce democratization**, shifting it from a **platform-centric model**—where a few e-commerce giants dominate the market—to an **open, interoperable platform** where buyers and sellers can interact regardless of the platforms they're using.
- ONDC aims to **create new opportunities, curb digital monopolies** and by **supporting micro, small and medium enterprises and small traders** and help them get on online platforms by lowering entry barriers.

60. Which of the following statements about Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and Critical Minerals is/are correct ?

1. Modern technological innovations including Artificial Intelligence, robotics and space exploration extensively utilise Rare Earth Elements (REEs).
2. China has the highest share in mining of REEs followed by India.
3. The Government of India launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) in 2025 to establish a robust framework for self-reliance in the critical mineral sector.
4. Rare Earth Elements are a set of 13 metallic elements.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4
(d) 1, 2 and 4

5) Rare Earths

What are they?

- Rare earths are a **group of 17 naturally occurring metallic elements** including **15 silvery-white metals** called **lanthanides**, or **lanthanoids**, plus **scandium** and **yttrium**.

60. Which of the following statements about Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and Critical Minerals is/are correct ?
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- (a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4
(d) 1, 2 and 4

5) Rare Earths

What are they?

- Rare earths are a **group of 17 naturally occurring metallic elements** including **15 silvery-white metals** called **lanthanides**, or **lanthanoids**, plus **scandium** and **yttrium**.

What are they used for?

- **Rare earths or the magnets** which they are sometimes made into are found in a **wide variety of everyday and hi-tech devices**, from lightbulbs to guided missiles.
- Rare earths are also used in **future facing applications** such as **robotics**, **home automation** and **green technologies** such as **hybrid and electric vehicles** and **wind turbines**.

5) National Critical Mineral Mission

About

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

Q. Which of the following statements with regard to Green Hydrogen is/are correct ?

1. It is decarbonized hydrogen obtained from natural gas reforming combined with carbon capture and storage (CCS).
2. It is produced using electrolysis of water with electricity generated by renewable energy.
3. National Green Hydrogen Mission of India aims for abatement of nearly 50 MMT of annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- ☒ (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
☒ (c) 2 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

6.1. National Green Hydrogen Mission

About

- Launched in 2023, the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) aims to make India the Global Hub for production, usage and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.
- The Mission aims to build capabilities to produce at least 5 Million Metric Tonne (MMT) of Green Hydrogen per annum by 2030.
- The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy is responsible for overall coordination and implementation of the Mission.

intensive processes.

- **Blue Hydrogen:** It is produced via natural gas or coal gasification combined with carbon capture storage (CCS) or carbon capture use (CCU) technologies to reduce carbon emissions.
- **Green Hydrogen:** It is produced using electrolysis of water with electricity generated by renewable energy. The carbon intensity ultimately depends on the carbon neutrality of the source of electricity (i.e. the

74. Which of the following statements with regard to the National Quantum Mission (NQM) is/are correct ?

1. It aims at developing intermediate-scale quantum computers with 50 – 1000 physical qubits.
2. Its implementation includes setting up of four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) in academic and national R&D institutes across India.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Objectives

- The mission, spearheaded by the **Department of Science and Technology**, targets developing **intermediate scale quantum computers with 50-1000 physical qubits in 8 years** in various platforms like superconducting and photonic technology.
- Establish **satellite-enabled quantum-secured communication** between **two ground stations over 2000 km within India** and extend this technology for **long-distance secure quantum communication with other countries**.
- The mission will help develop **magnetometers with high sensitivity** in atomic systems and Atomic Clocks for

- **Single photon sources/detectors, entangled photon sources** will also be developed for quantum communications, sensing and metrological applications.
- **Four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs)** will be set up in top academic and National R&D institutes on the domains - **Quantum Computing, Quantum Communication, Quantum Sensing & Metrology and Quantum Materials & Devices**.
 - Each T-Hub will follow the **Hub-Spoke-Spike model**, fostering a **cluster-based network** where research projects (Spokes) and individual research groups (Spikes) operate alongside central hubs.

15. Which of the following statements with regard to India's Deep Ocean Mission is/are correct?

1. It was launched by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India.
2. Matsya-6000 has been designed to carry 3 people for deep sea exploration.
3. Samudrayaan is a project under this mission.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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.

81. Which of the following statements with regard to the persons with disabilities in India is/are correct?

1. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, an Act passed by the Parliament of India in 2018, mandates reservation in education and employment, places a legal duty on Governments to ensure accessibility and non-discrimination.
2. The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan focuses on achieving universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities across three key domains — built infrastructure, transport systems and information and communication technology.
3. The National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) is a public sector organisation set up by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs as a not-for-profit company to promote entrepreneurship among Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).



- The aim of the Campaign is to create a **barrier free environment** and provide **disabled-friendly access in public facilities and places**.
- The Accessible India Campaign comprises of the following three components:
 - **Built Environment Accessibility:** To provide an accessible physical environment for everyone. Measures should be undertaken to eliminate obstacles and barriers to indoor and outdoor facilities including schools, medical facilities, and workplaces.
 - **Transportation System Accessibility:** Focuses on providing PwDs an equal right to travel and use public and private transportation infrastructure with dignity and independence.
 - **Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility:** Access to

with disabilities can live with dignity, free from discrimination and with equal opportunities.

Disabilities covered:

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

Rights and entitlements:

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

Children with disabilities not to be separated from their parents:

902 Consider the following statements with respect to the AI Impact Summit, 2026 held in New Delhi :

1. The Summit's intellectual framework was based on three foundational Sutras : People, Planning, and Progress.
2. The Preamble of the Summit stresses Democratising AI Resources, which acknowledges the Charter for Democratic Diffusion of AI as a binding framework to support locally relevant innovation and strengthen resilient AI ecosystems while respecting national laws.
3. The New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact was structured around seven Chakras (Pillars), which included Access for Social Empowerment, AI for Science, and Secure and Trusted AI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 3 only

5) AI Impact Summit

What's in the news?

- India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) recently hosted the AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi.



- The Summit was structured around **three foundational pillars (Sutras)—People, Planet, and Progress**—which were translated into action through **seven thematic pillars (Chakras)**.



99. Which of the following statements with respect to the Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) is/are correct?

1. The period of its implementation is 1st April, 2021 to 31st March, 2026.
2. The key objective of the Revamped RGSA is to develop the governance capabilities of the Panchayati Raj Institutions to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. The share of the Central funding for the Revamped RGSA is 100% for all States and Union Territories.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3
(d) 2 and 3

2. **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** To assess and certify individuals with prior learning experience or skills.
3. **Special Projects:** To facilitate training in special areas and/or premises of Government bodies, Corporates or Industry bodies.

4.2. Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

About

- The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) was launched in **2018** by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** to **develop and strengthen the Panchayati Raj System** across India.
- The scheme was **revamped in FY 2022-23**, with the main objective of supporting the **capacity building of Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) by imparting training to Elected Representatives (ERs) and other stakeholders** to develop their governance capabilities.

- **The funding pattern for the State Component** follows a ratio of **60:40** between the Centre and States, except for **North Eastern and Hilly States and the UT of Jammu & Kashmir**, where the ratio is **90:10**.
- For **other UTs**, the **Central share** is **100%**.

4.3. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

About

- The Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) was launched in **2015** to **bridge the gap in financial accessibility**, offering **collateral-free loans up to ₹20 lakh** to the **non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises**.
- PMMY aims to **“fund the unfunded”** by bringing the **small entrepreneurs into the formal financial system** and extending affordable credit to them.

100. Which of the following countries are members of the European Union ?

1. Belarus
2. Poland
3. Germany
4. Switzerland

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1, 2 and 4
- (b) 1 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 2 and 4 only

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.



European Free Trade Association:

- Established in 1960, EFTA is an **intergovernmental organization of four member countries that are not part of the European Union (EU): Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.**



- EFTA aims to promote **free trade and economic integration** among its member states.

- online transactions
55. Which one of the following statements about Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Central Bank Digital Currency (Digital Rupee) is *not* correct ?
- (a) UPI is a real-time payment system but Digital Rupee is akin to sovereign paper currency.
 - (b) In case of UPI, settlement for end users happens instantly as the money gets immediately debited or credited but in case of Digital Rupee, there is no settlement as the wallet balance gets transferred to another wallet.
 - (c) UPI transactions are recorded by banks and reflected in bank statements but in case of Digital Rupee, no data is captured in bank statements as transactions are from one wallet to another.
 - (d) In both the cases (UPI and Digital Rupee), the liability lies with the users and their respective banks.



Cash, but Digital !

- e₹, being a digital form of the ₹ bank note, is **legal tender** and is the **liability of RBI**.
 - Legal tender refers to a form of currency that is **recognised by law as an acceptable means for settling debts or obligations**. It is the **money which a creditor is under compulsion to accept in settlement of his claims**.

Q2. Consider the following statements with regard to involvement of private entities in India's space programme :

1. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) is an autonomous agency formed to facilitate participation of private entities.
2. Agnikul Cosmos launched the world's first flight using 3D-printed rocket engine.
3. Skyroot Aerospace has developed liquid fuel for GSLV.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Enhancing Private Participation in the Space Sector:

- The **Space Sector Reforms of 2020**, followed by the **Indian Space Policy-2023**, have created a structured and forward-looking framework to enable **private-sector participation and enhance India's role in the global space economy**.
- **IN-SPACe** is functioning as a **single-window agency to promote, regulate, and authorize activities of Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs)**, ensuring streamlined governance.
- **Liberalised FDI policy** allows up to **100 per cent foreign investment** through the automatic route in less sensitive categories, with **graded caps (up to 74 per cent or 49 per cent)** for sensitive segments.

72. Which of the following statements with regard to drone swarms is/are correct ?

1. They use Terahertz band of frequency to communicate with the command centre.
2. Individual drones in the swarm can communicate with other drones in the swarm.
3. GPS Spoofing is a commonly used technique to counter drone swarm attack.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- ☒ (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- ☒ (c) 1 and 2 only
- ☒ (d) 1, 2 and 3

GNSS Spoofing

- GNSS spoofing is a form of cyber interference in which false satellite navigation signals are transmitted to mimic genuine signals that mislead aircraft's systems to compute a wrong position, speed, or time while believing the data is authentic.
- Modern aircraft rely heavily on GNSS for navigation, terrain warning, surveillance, braking systems, and pilot-Air Traffic Control (ATC) coordination. Spoofing can reduce pilot situational awareness, trigger false alerts, and increase cockpit workload.

88. With reference to the organisations under the Government of India, consider the following details :

Sl. No.	Organisation	Function	Controlling Union Ministry
1.	Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB)	To coordinate between various law enforcement agencies	Ministry of Home Affairs
2.	Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)	To investigate complex corporate frauds	Ministry of Finance <i>MCA</i>
3.	Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)	To preserve values in public life and ensure the health of the national economy	Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension

4.1. Central Bureau of Investigation

About

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the **premier investigative agency** in India, with a **dual responsibility** to **investigate grievous cases** and **provide leadership and direction in fighting corruption to the Police force** across the country.
- It functions under the **Department of Personnel, Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances.**
- CBI also acts as an **interface** between the **law enforcement agencies of India** and

95. Consider the following UN organisations/ agencies :

1. World Food Programme
2. United Nations Children's Fund
3. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
4. International Labour Organisation

How many of the above has/have been awarded the Nobel Prize twice ?

(a) 1

(b) 2

(c) 3

(d) 4



World Food Programme

- WFP delivers **food assistance** to vulnerable communities, particularly those affected by war.
- WFP was awarded the **2020 Nobel Peace Prize** for its efforts to combat world hunger.

85

Consider the following statements about Mission Sudarshan Chakra of India :

1. It aims to enhance India's air defence, ballistic missile defence and aerial offensive capabilities.
2. This Mission is being designed to enhance rapid, precise, and powerful defence responses, reinforcing India's strategic autonomy.
3. One of the aims of this Mission is to cover all public places of India by an expanded nationwide security shield by 2035.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- ☒ (a) 1, 2 and 3
(b) 1 and 2 only
☒ (c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1 only

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.**"

57. A bond whose proceeds are used only to finance or refinance a combination of both environmental and social projects is called :

- (a) Green Bond
- (b) Social Bond
- (c) Sustainability Bond
- ☒ Sovereign Bond

BRIDGING THE FINANCE GAP IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

- India has adopted a **multi-pronged strategy** to bridge the climate finance gap, moving beyond traditional funding to create a robust, market-driven ecosystem.
- A cornerstone of this strategy is the issuance of **Sovereign Green Bonds**, are **debt instruments issued by the Government of India to raise money for green projects to reduce carbon emissions.**
 - A defining feature of these instruments is the 'Greenium'—the **yield advantage** green bonds hold over comparable conventional bonds.
- To further deepen the pool of available capital, **100% FDI has been permitted under the Automatic Route for renewable energy projects.**

- 62) Which of the following statements about Crowdfunding is/are correct ?
1. Crowdfunding is solicitation of funds (small amount) from multiple investors through a web-based platform or social networking site for a specific project.
 2. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are able to raise funds at lower cost of capital without undergoing rigorous procedures.
- Select the answer using the code given below :
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - ☒ (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Crowd Funding Mechanism:

- Besides, the Policy also envisages a **crowd funding mechanism** in which corporates and individuals will be encouraged to extend **financial support** for treatment of rare diseases.

67. Which of the following statements with regard to Large Language Models (LLMs) used in machine learning is/are correct ?

1. LLMs assign probabilities to the next possible words and then pick the one with the highest probability.
2. LLMs process data through mathematical optimization to minimise prediction errors.
3. LLMs produce unbiased outputs.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Inclusive AI deployment.

- A **Large Language Model (LLM)** is a type of neural network trained on massive datasets (trillions of words from books, code, and the internet) to understand and generate human-like text.
- **Frontier AI systems** are the **most advanced, large-scale foundational AI models currently available**, pushing the boundaries of capabilities in reasoning, coding, and multimodality (text, image, audio).

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SCHEMES

1) PM SVANidhi

About 	Prime Minister Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) is a central-sector micro-credit scheme to provide affordable loans to street vendors. 
Nodal Ministry 	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)
Features 	- Launched in 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the scheme facilitates a working capital loan (collateral-free) of ₹10,000 with a 7% interest subsidy to street vendors engaged in vending in urban areas as on or before March 24, 2020. - Upon timely repayment of the first loan, vendors become eligible for higher loans of Rs.20,000 and Rs.50,000 in the second and third tranches respectively. - The scheme promotes digital transactions through cash back incentives. - The scheme operates through multiple lending institutions, including banks, non-banking financial companies, and small finance banks.
Implementation 	Joint responsibility of MoHUA and Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance.
Restructuring of PM SVANidhi	- In 2025, the Union Cabinet approved the restructuring of PM SVANidhi. - The key features of the restructured scheme include enhanced loan amounts across the first and second tranches, provision of UPI-linked RuPay Credit Card for beneficiaries who have repaid the second loan and digital cashback incentives for retail and wholesale transactions. - The first tranche loan has been increased up to ₹15,000 (from ₹10,000) and second tranche loan increased up to ₹25,000 (from ₹20,000), while the third tranche remains unchanged at ₹50,000. - The lending period has now been extended until 31st March, 2030. - The scheme's coverage is being expanded beyond statutory towns to census towns, peri-urban areas etc. in graded manner.
Why in News? 	PM SVANidhi has completed six years of successful implementation.



2) SARTHAK PDS Scheme

What's in News? 	- The Union Cabinet has approved the SARTHAK Public Distribution System (PDS) scheme for a period of five years till March 2031, aiming to modernise the country's PDS through technology-led reforms. Public Distribution System: - PDS evolved as a system of management of scarcity through distribution of foodgrains at affordable prices. - Over the years, PDS has become an important part of the Government's policy for management of the food economy in the country. - PDS is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State/UT Governments. - The Central Government, through Food Corporation of India (FCI), has assumed the responsibility for procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation of food grains to the State Governments. - The operational responsibility including allocation within State, identification of eligible families, issue of Ration Cards and supervision of the functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) etc., rest with the State Governments. - Under the PDS, presently the commodities namely wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene are being allocated to the States/UTs for distribution. Some States/UTs also distribute additional items of mass consumption through the PDS outlets such as pulses, edible oils, iodized salt, spices, etc. - PDS is supplemental in nature and is not intended to make available the entire requirement of any of the commodities distributed under it to a household or a section of the society.
About 	- SARTHAK-PDS does not replace the existing PDS system but will ensure structural reform across the delivery of foodgrains, logistics, transportation, material handling, and grievance redressal. - SARTHAK-PDS has been structured as an umbrella scheme by merging two existing programmes — Assistance to State Agencies for Intra-State Movement of Foodgrains and FPS Dealers' Margin under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), and the Scheme for Modernization and Reforms through Technology in Public Distribution System (SMART PDS). - The merger is aimed at strengthening implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013, by bringing financial assistance and technology modernisation under a single administrative framework. National Food Security Act, 2013: - NFSA 2013 marks a paradigm shift in the approach to food security in India from welfare to rights based approach. - The Act legally entitled up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized foodgrains under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).



	- The eligible persons (Priority Households) are entitled to receive 5 Kgs of foodgrains per person per month at subsidised prices of Rs. 3/2/1 per Kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains. - The Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households, which constitute the poorest of the poor, receive 35 Kgs of foodgrains per household per month. - One of the guiding principles of the Act is its life-cycle approach wherein special provisions have been made for pregnant women and lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years, by entitling them to receive nutritious meals free of cost. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are further entitled to receive cash maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000. - The eldest women of the household of age 18 years or above will be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing ration cards. - In case of non-supply of entitled foodgrains or meals, the beneficiaries will receive food security allowance.
Objectives 	- The scheme has a dual objective — ensuring financial support to state governments in transporting food grains from Food Corporation of India warehouses to districts and fair price shops, while also introducing technology-driven reforms across the ration distribution chain. Advanced technologies, including AI, machine learning, blockchain, and natural language processing will enable real-time monitoring, grievance and analytics systems, data-driven oversight by State Command Control Centres, and ISO-certified process frameworks for security and transparency.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. PM SHRI Schools

About 	PM SHRI School (PM Schools for Rising India) is a centrally sponsored scheme launched by the Government of India in 2022. 
Aim 	The scheme aims to upgrade and develop more than 14500 Schools across the country by strengthening the selected existing schools from amongst schools managed by Central Government/ State/ UT Government/ local bodies.



Features



- The initiative will **transform selected schools into model institutions** showcasing all components of the **National Education Policy 2020**.
- These schools will focus on **quality education, holistic development and 21st-century skills**, while also serving as **mentor institutions for neighboring schools**.

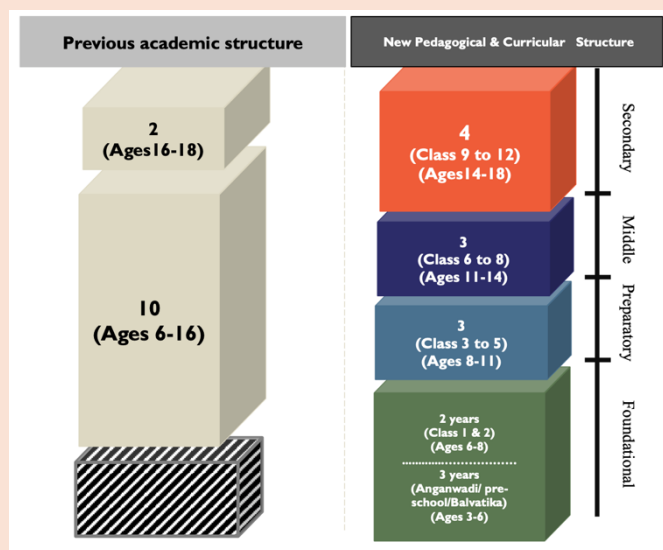
National Education Policy 2020:

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was announced to transform the education system in the country and to replace the 34-year-old **National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986**.
- NEP 2020 is founded on the **five guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability**.

Highlights of the Policy:

1. Early Childhood Care & Education:

- The policy places **early learning at the heart of school reform**, recognising that over 85% of brain development happens before age six.
- It **replaces the current 10+2 structure** in school education with a **new 5+3+3+4 structure** corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years respectively.
- The new system will have **12 years of schooling with three years of Anganwadi/pre-schooling**.



2. School Education:

- The policy aims to achieve **100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in preschool to secondary level by 2030**.
- There will be **no rigid separations** between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams.
- Vocational education** will start in schools from the **6th grade**, and will include **internships**.
- A **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** will be set-up to focus on **early language and mathematical skills from Grades 1 to 3 by 2025**.
- The **medium of instruction** until at least class 5 (and preferably till class 8) should be **home language or mother tongue or local/regional language**.
- The policy gives the freedom to the state, region, and child to choose **three languages** to be learned.

3. Higher Education:

- The policy aims to **increase GER in higher education** from 26.3% (2018) to **50% by 2035**.
- By **2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions**, each of which will aim to have 3,000 or more students.
- There shall, **by 2030, be at least one large multidisciplinary institution in or near every district**.
- Affiliation of colleges is to be phased out in 15 years** and a stage-wise mechanism is to be established for granting **graded autonomy to colleges**.



- **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** will be set up as a **single umbrella body for the entire higher education, excluding medical and legal education.**
- **Internationalization of education** will be facilitated through both institutional collaborations, and student and faculty mobility and allowing entry of top world ranked Universities to open campuses in our country.
- A new entity - **National Research Foundation (NRF)** - will be set up to **catalyze and expand research and innovation** across the country.
- A **National Mission for Mentoring** will be established, with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty, to provide mentoring/professional support to university/college teachers.

4. Others Focus Areas:

- An autonomous body, the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)**, will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology for school and higher education.
- NEP 2020 emphasizes setting up of **Gender Inclusion Fund, Special Education Zones** for disadvantaged regions and groups.
- A new **National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)**, will be set up as a **standard-setting body** for all recognized school boards of India.
- **National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit and Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI)** to be set up.
- By **2025, at least 50% of learners** through the school and higher education system shall have **exposure to vocational education.**
- The policy also aims to achieve **100% youth and adult literacy.**
- The **Centre and the States** will work together to **increase the public investment in the Education sector** to reach **6% of GDP** at the earliest.

3.2. PM-SETU

About 	• PM-SETU (Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs) is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2025 to strengthen India's vocational training ecosystem. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs): • ITIs have been the backbone of vocational education and training in India since the 1950s, operating under State Governments. • These institutes provide industrial and technical training post completion of a secondary level of education in science.
Aim 	• The scheme envisages the upgradation of 1,000 Government ITIs across the country in a hub-and-spoke model comprising 200 hub ITIs and 800 spoke ITIs. • Each hub will be connected to four spokes on average. Hubs will host innovation centres, training for trainers, production units and placement services. • Spoke ITIs will improve access in regions farther from hubs.



Features 	- Collectively, PM-SETU will redefine India's ITI ecosystem, making it government-owned but industry-managed, with global co-financing support from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. - The scheme also envisages strengthening of five National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) in Bhubaneswar (Odisha), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Hyderabad (Telangana), Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Ludhiana (Punjab) as Centres of Excellence with global partnerships.
Implementation 	A National Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship would facilitate overall implementation of the scheme.

3.3. Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna

About 	The Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) was launched in March 2026 as a Central Sector Scheme to develop 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across the country in the next 6 years.
Aim 	The scheme is aimed at boosting manufacturing, attracting investments and generating large-scale employment.
Features 	- BHAVYA will focus on developing modern, ready-to-use industrial ecosystems, covering both greenfield (new) and eligible brownfield (existing) industrial parks. - The initiative will be implemented in partnership with states and private players, with parks ranging in size from 100 to 1,000 acres. - The minimum contiguous land parcel size has been kept at 25 acres for north-eastern and hilly States. - A key feature of the scheme is its emphasis on streamlined approvals and single-window clearances, enabling industries to move quickly from planning to production. Project selection will be carried out through a challenge-based mechanism, ensuring that only high-quality, investment-ready proposals are approved.
Implementation 	The National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, will play a key role in implementing the initiative.
Financial Assistance	Financial assistance of up to ₹1 crore per acre will be provided for core infrastructure such as roads, utilities, drainage and ICT systems; value-added facilities including factory sheds, testing labs and warehousing; and social infrastructure like worker housing and support amenities. Additional support of up to 25% of project cost will be extended for external connectivity infrastructure.



3.4. PMJJBY, PMSBY & APY Complete 11 Years

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)

- Launched in 2015, PMJJBY is a one-year **life insurance scheme** of the **Ministry of Finance** renewable from year to year, offering **coverage for death due to any reason**.
- The scheme is offered/administered by the **Life Insurance Corporation and other Life Insurance companies** willing to offer the product on similar terms with necessary approvals and tie up with Banks for this purpose.



1. Target Group:

- Individuals in the **age group of 18-50 years** having a savings bank or a post office account.
 - People who join the Scheme before completing 50 years of age can continue to have the risk of life covered up to age of 55 years upon payment of premium.

2. Benefits:

- Life cover of Rs 2 Lakh** in case of death due to any reason against a premium of **Rs 436 per annum**.

3. NRIs Eligibility:

- Any Non-Resident Indian (NRI)** having an eligible bank account with a bank branch located in India is **eligible** for purchase of PMJJBY cover. However, the claim benefit will be paid to the beneficiary/ nominee **only in Indian currency**.
 - An NRI is an Indian citizen residing abroad for employment or other purposes, retaining full citizenship rights.*

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)

- Launched in 2015, PMSBY is a one-year **accidental insurance scheme** of the **Ministry of Finance** renewable from year to year, offering **coverage for death or disability due to accident**.
- The scheme is offered/administered through **Public Sector General Insurance Companies (PSGICs) and other General Insurance companies** willing to offer the product on similar terms with necessary approvals and tie up with Banks/Post offices for this purpose.



1. Target Group:

- Individuals in the **age group of 18-70 years** having a savings bank or a post office account.

2. Benefits:

- Accidental death and disability cover of Rs 2 lakh** (Rs 1 lakh in case of partial disability) for death or disability due to an accident against a premium of **Rs 20 per annum**.

3. NRIs Eligibility:

- Any NRI having an eligible bank account with a bank branch located in India is **eligible** for purchase of PMSBY cover. However, the claim benefit will be paid to the beneficiary/ nominee **only in Indian currency**.

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

- APY is a **voluntary, contributory pension scheme** launched by the Government of India in **2015** with the objective of creating a **universal social security system for all Indians, especially the poor, the underprivileged and the workers in the unorganized sector**.



1. Target Group:

- Aimed at **workers in the unorganised sector**, who often lack formal pension coverage.
- Initially **available to all citizens of India** between **18 and 40 years of age**.
 - With effect from 1st October 2022, **individuals paying income tax are not eligible** to join the scheme.

2. Defined Pension Benefit:

- **Guaranteed minimum pension at the age of 60 years** ranging between **Rs.1000 to Rs. 5000**, depending on the **contributions** by the subscribers.
 - The minimum pension is guaranteed by the Government in the sense that if the **actual realized returns on the pension contributions are less** than the assumed returns for minimum guaranteed pension, **such shortfall shall be funded by the Government**.
 - On the other hand, if the **actual returns on the pension contributions are higher** than the assumed returns for minimum guaranteed pension, such **enhanced scheme benefits shall be passed on to the subscribers**.

3. Administering Body:

- **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**
 - *PFRDA is a statutory regulatory body established in 2003 to promote, develop and regulate the pension sector in India.*

4. Other Key Features:

- There is **no restriction on the number of persons in a family** who can join APY.
- **The same pension is payable to spouse** after death of Subscriber.

Why in News?

- Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) have completed 11 years of providing social security cover to citizens across the country.
- Over 27 crore enrolments have been done under PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, 58 crore in PM Suraksha Bima Yojana and 9 crore enrolments under Atal Pension Yojana.



INITIATIVES

1) Centre operationalises Labour Codes, publishes Rules

What's in the news?

- The Union government has fully operationalised the four Labour Codes-- Code on Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Code on Social Security (2020) and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHCW) Code (2020).
- The move rationalises 29 existing labour laws and aims to modernise regulations, strengthen worker protections and align India's labour framework with evolving employment structures.
- **Note:** As labour is in the concurrent list, both the States and Centre have the power to legislate on this matter. However, if there is a conflict between central and state laws, the central law prevails.

Code on Wages, 2019

- The Code on Wages standardizes definitions of key terms and streamlines procedures, reducing ambiguity and ensuring faster, time bound justice for employers.
- **Floor wage:** The central government will fix a floor wage, taking into account the living standards of workers (it may set different floor wages for different geographical areas). State governments must ensure their minimum wages are not lower than this floor level.
- **Minimum wage:** The Code establishes a statutory right to minimum wages for all employees, extending its coverage to every sector, both organised and unorganised. The minimum wages will be revised at an interval of not more than five years.
- **Overtime:** Employers must pay overtime wages at a rate not less than twice the normal wages for any work performed beyond regular working hours.
- **Gender discrimination:** There shall be no discrimination on the basis of gender, including transgender identity, in matters of

recruitment, wages, or employment conditions for the same or similar work performed by employees.

- **Women's Representation on Advisory Boards:** One-third members of the Central/State Advisory Boards shall be women. The boards shall advise on fixation or revision of minimum wages, providing increasing employment opportunities for women.
- **Inspector-cum-Facilitator:** The traditional role of "Inspector" is replaced with "Inspector-cum-Facilitator," emphasizing guidance, awareness, and advisory roles alongside enforcement to improve compliance.
- **Decriminalization of Offences:** The Code replaces imprisonment for certain first-time offences with monetary fines, making the framework less punitive and more compliance-oriented.

Did you know?

- The Labour Reforms simplify the registration and licensing framework by introducing the concept of a Single Registration, Single License, and Single Return, thereby reducing the overall compliance burden to improve employment.
- The Code on Wages, 2019 has reduced the number of rules from 163 to 58, number of forms from 20 to 6 and number of registers from 24 to 2.

Code on Social Security, 2020

- Social security refers to measures to ensure access to health care and provision of income security to workers. The code merges nine existing Social Security Acts into one framework, ensuring universal social protection for organized, unorganized, gig, and platform workers.
- **Extension of Social Security:** For the first time in the country, social security benefits



have been **extended** to **unorganised, gig and platform workers**.

- **Gig workers:** Workers outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship (e.g., freelancers).
 - **Platform workers:** Workers who access other organisations or individuals using online platforms and earn money by providing them with specific services.
 - **Unorganised workers:** Include home-based and self-employed workers.
- **National Social Security Board:** The Code provides for the establishment of a National Social Security Board to **advise the Government for formulating and monitoring suitable schemes** for different sections of workers in the unorganised, gig and platform sectors.
 - **Social Security Fund:** A Social Security Fund will be set up based on **contributions from the Central & State Governments**, collected from Corporate Social Responsibility, fines collected, etc.
 - This fund will be used to provide **benefits** such as life insurance, disability cover, health and maternity benefits, and provident fund schemes for **unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers**.
 - **Eligibility for Gratuity:** Gratuity is **payable on the termination of employment**, if the employee has been in the organisation for **at least five years**. The Code **extends gratuity entitlement to Fixed Term Employees** (employed for a specific duration under a contract) as well, **after completing one year of continuous service**.
 - **Maternity Benefit Entitlement:** Every woman employee who has **worked for at least 80 days in the 12 months** before the expected delivery is **eligible for maternity benefit equal to her average daily wages** during the leave period.
 - The **maximum duration** of maternity leave is **26 weeks**, of which up to **8 weeks** can be taken **before delivery**.
 - A woman who **adopts a child below 3 months of age** or a **commissioning mother** (a

biological mother who uses surrogacy) is entitled to **12 weeks of maternity benefit**.

- To provide more flexibility to women returning after maternity leave, the Code allows them to **work from home, if the nature of work permits**.
- If the **employer does not provide free pre-natal and post-natal care**, the woman employee is entitled to a **medical bonus of ₹3,500**.
- **After returning to work post-childbirth**, a woman employee is entitled to **two nursing breaks each day** for nursing her child until the **child attains 15 months of age**.
- **Every establishment with 50 or more employees** must provide a **crèche facility within a prescribed distance**. This requirement is now **gender-neutral** and **applies to all types of establishments**.
 - The employer must allow **four visits a day** by the woman to the crèche which includes the rest intervals.

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020

- The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code replaces 13 Central Labour laws by a **single comprehensive legislation**, thereby reducing multiplicity and bringing uniformity across industries and States/UTs.
- **Formalisation through Appointment Letters:** Every employee will be given **appointment letters in the prescribed format** specifying the details of the employee, designation, category, details of the wages, details of social security etc.
- **Revised Factory Thresholds:** The **threshold to obtain a license for a factory** has been **increased** from 10 to **20 with power** and 20 to **40 without power**.
- **Contract workers:** **Threshold** for applicability of the provisions relating to **contract labour** has been **increased** from 20 to **50 workers** as a result the contractor



employing less than 50 contract labour will not require license.

- **Wider Definition of Migrant Workers:** The definition of **inter-state migrant workers (ISMW)** now covers **workers employed directly, through contractors, or migrating on their own.**
 - **Benefits include:** a **lump-sum annual travel allowance** to native place once in 12 months and **portability of public distribution system and social security benefits** across states.
- **National Standards and National Board:** In place of 6 boards under different acts, now there is a single **National Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Board** which is of **tripartite nature** and has representation from trade unions, employer associations, and State Governments.
 - The board will set **national standards for occupational safety, health and working conditions** that will be **mandatory for states to follow.**
- **Women's Participation in Labour:** **Women workers are entitled to work in all establishments for all types of work (with safeguards).** Women can also **work at night**, with their consent and the employer is to make adequate arrangements to provide safety, facilities and transportation to women workers.

Industrial Relations Code, 2020

- The Industrial Relations Code seeks to **promote industrial harmony** by balancing worker protection with business flexibility and facilitating ease of Doing Business.
- **Definition of 'Worker':** The definition of 'worker' has been **expanded to include sales promotion employees, working journalists, and supervisory employees earning up to ₹18,000 per month.**
- **Statutory recognition to Trade Unions:** A **union with 51% membership** in an establishment can be categorised as a **Negotiating Union** with exclusive rights to represent workers in collective bargaining and grievance redressal.
 - In case this **threshold is not met**, **Negotiating Council** shall be

constituted comprising **representatives of all trade unions with at least 20% membership.**

- **Introduction of Fixed-term Employment:** The concept of Fixed Term Employment (FTE) has been introduced, which allows **engagement of workers through a direct written contract between the employer and the employee for a specified duration.**
 - Such workers are **entitled to all benefits**, including working hours, wages, allowances, and statutory benefits, **on par with permanent employees.**
- **Regulation of Strikes and Lockouts:** The Code states **mandatory provisions before strike** for all establishments with **14 days prior notice.** Strikes are **restricted** during conciliation or tribunal proceedings.
- **Worker Re-Skilling Fund:** In case of any **retrenchment of a worker** by an employer, the **employer will need to contribute equivalent to 15 days' last drawn wages** of the retrenched worker, within 45 days of retrenchment.
- **Increased Threshold for Lay-off, Retrenchment & Closure:** The code establishes that the industrial establishment, **employing 300 or more workers** (earlier 100), shall require **prior permission from the appropriate Government**, for lay-off, retrenchment, or closing down its industrial establishment.

2) Mission for Cotton Productivity

What's in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved Rs.5659 crore for the **Mission for Cotton Productivity (2026-27 to 2030-31)** to address bottlenecks, declining growth, and quality concerns in India's cotton sector.



Cotton Cultivation in India:

- Cotton cultivation in India dates back several millennia. Archaeological evidence suggests that cotton was grown in the **Indus Valley Civilization** as early as 2500 BCE.
- Cotton is primarily grown in the **tropical and subtropical regions** of India, with the majority of production concentrated in the states of **Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh**.
- It requires **high temperature, light rainfall or irrigation, 210 frost-free days, well-drained soil** and **bright sunshine** for its growth.

Current Status:

- **India is the only country that grows all four species of cotton:** G. Arboreum and G. Herbaceum (Asian cotton), G. Barbadense (Egyptian cotton) and G. Hirsutum (American Upland cotton).
- Although **India is a leading producer and exporter of cotton, some quantity** i.e. less than 5% of the total consumption of cotton in India is **imported** by the textile industry to meet their specific requirement.
- Once hailed as **"white gold,"** cotton is facing several **challenges**, including pests, diseases, weather uncertainties, and fluctuating market prices.
- While **India accounts for 40% of the world's cotton area, productivity** remains around **440 kg per hectare**, much lower than 2,000 kgs per hectare in many other countries.

About the Mission

- The mission is aligned with the **government's "5F" vision—Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign**—and seeks to **strengthen the entire cotton value chain, from production to exports**.

Did you know?

- The Indian cotton industry provides livelihood to about 60 million people in the country.
- Under the programme, the focus will be on **developing high-yielding, climate-resilient and pest-resistant seed**

varieties, alongside the promotion of modern crop production techniques.

- These include High Density Planting System (HDPS), closer spacing, integrated cotton management practices and promotion of Extra Long Staple (ELS) Cotton.
- To **ensure reliable quality assessment**, the mission will **strengthen cotton testing infrastructure** across the country with standardised and accredited facilities.
- In addition, **branding and traceability initiatives** under **Kasturi Cotton Bharat will be scaled up** to position Indian cotton as a premium and globally trusted product.

Kasturi Cotton Bharat:

- Kasturi Cotton Bharat programme is a **certification and branding initiative** of the **Ministry of Textiles** to **establish a globally recognized brand for high-quality, sustainable cotton**.
- Kasturi Cotton Bharat focuses on **three pillars: Traceability** (using blockchain), **Certification**, and **Branding** to enhance the value of Indian cotton.
- **Digital integration of agricultural markets** is another key component, aimed at enabling transparent price discovery and better returns for farmers through e-platforms.
- The mission will also **promote recycling of cotton waste** and **encourage circular economy** (an economic model designed to minimize waste and maximize the efficient use of resources) **practices** within the textile sector.
- The mission targets an **increase in cotton production to 498 lakh bales by 2030-31**, with **productivity** expected to rise from 440 kg per hectare to **755 kg per hectare**.

Implementation

- The programme will be **jointly implemented** by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** and the **Ministry of Textiles**, with support from institutions including the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.
- It will initially cover **140 districts across 14 major cotton-growing states**.



3) Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram 2.0

About RBSK

- Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) is a program to **improve the overall quality of life of children** and **provide comprehensive care to all the children** in the community.
- It was launched in **2013** by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.

RBSK

RASHTRIYA BAL SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM
राष्ट्रीय बाल स्वास्थ्य कार्यक्रम
FROM SURVIVAL TO HEALTHY SURVIVAL

- This program involves **screening of children from birth to 18 years of age for four Ds - Defects at Birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Development Delays**, spanning **32 common health conditions for early detection and free treatment and management**, including surgeries at tertiary level.
- Children diagnosed with identified health conditions are provided **early intervention services** and **follow-up care** at the **district level**.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released the **Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) 2.0 Guidelines** expanding its scope to address emerging child health priorities.
- The updated framework **reinforces and broadens the established 4Ds approach - Defects at Birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Developmental Delays**, while **incorporating new-age health challenges** including non-communicable diseases, mental health conditions, and behavioural concerns.
- Revised guidelines introduce a **comprehensive preventive, promotive and curative continuum of care**, strengthening the programme's existing **lifecycle-based approach covering children from birth to 18 years**, with **increased focus on digitalization**.

- A key feature of RBSK 2.0 is the **expanded screening scope**, covering a wider range of conditions including developmental disorders, mental health issues, and risk factors for non-communicable diseases.

4) SEHAT Mission

What's in the news?

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** and the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** have jointly launched "**SEHAT - Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation**", a national mission-mode programme designed to **translate agricultural advancements into tangible health outcomes for citizens**.

Indian Council of Medical Research:

- ICMR is the **apex body** in India for the **formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research**.
- Established in **1911**, the ICMR is **funded by the Government of India** through the **Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research:

- ICAR is an **autonomous organisation** under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- Formerly known as **Imperial Council of Agricultural Research**, it was established in **1929** as a **registered society** under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 in pursuance of the report of the **Royal Commission on Agriculture**.
- The Council is the **apex body** for **coordinating, guiding, and managing research and education in agriculture** including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences.

- The initiative aims to **strengthen convergence between agricultural sciences and health research** to address the **emerging challenges of malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and nutrition insecurity** through science-driven interventions and sustainable agricultural transformation.



- The mission focuses on **five priority areas of national significance**:
 1. **Development and evaluation of biofortified and nutrient-dense crop varieties** to address malnutrition and improve nutritional status;
 2. **Strengthening integrated farming systems** to promote dietary diversification, enhance farm incomes, and build resilience;
 3. **Addressing occupational health risks** among agricultural workers through targeted, evidence-based interventions;
 4. **Advancing agriculture-enabled strategies** for the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases through the promotion of functional foods and nutritionally superior crop varieties; and
 5. **Strengthening 'One Health' preparedness** through integrated surveillance, diagnostics, and research at the human-animal-environment interface.
- The mission **will not have any separate funding** as both the implementing agencies — ICAR and ICMR — will jointly bear the expenses.

5) CPGRAMS

About

- Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) is an **online platform available to the citizens 24x7 to lodge their grievances to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery**.
- Launched in **2007**, it is a **single portal connected to all the Ministries/Departments of Government of India and States**.
- The system was developed by the **National Informatics Centre**, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in collaboration with the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

- It has been developed with an objective of **speedy redress and effective monitoring of grievances** by Ministries/Departments/Organizations of Government of India.
- The **time limit** for redress of grievance is **21 days**. In case of delay an **interim reply** with reasons for delay is required to be given.
- CPGRAMS also provides an **appeal facility** to the citizens if they are not satisfied with the resolution by the Grievance Officer.

Why in News?

- The Union Government has launched the **AI-enabled CPGRAMS Voice Chatbot, SAMADHAN DIDI**.
- Developed by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)** in collaboration with **Bhashini**, the chatbot **enables citizens to register public grievances through an interactive conversational interface**.

BHASHINI:

- BHASHINI (BHASHa INterface for India) is an initiative aimed at **democratizing access to digital content and services across India's linguistic spectrum**.
- Launched in **2022**, its goal is to provide **technology translation services in 22 scheduled Indian languages** and **increase the amount of content available in Indian languages**.
- BHASHINI uses **cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) technologies** to enable users to access content and services in their preferred language.
- BHASHINI is implemented by the **Digital India Corporation**, a not for profit company set up by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
- SAMADHAN DIDI currently **supports all 22 scheduled Indian languages**, and efforts are underway to incorporate additional regional and local languages.



6) Mission Mausam

About

- Mission Mausam is a **central sector scheme**, launched in **2024**, to **boost India's weather and climate-related science, research and services**.
- The Mission, to be chiefly implemented by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**, envisages making the country **"Weather Ready and Climate Smart"** with the aim that **no weather will go undetected and early warning for all**.
- The mission's focus includes **improving the observations by augmenting various observational networks** throughout the country, **capacity building**, and **awareness generation**.

- With this 6 km resolution, the **model can capture localized weather phenomena** such as thunderstorms, heavy rain spells, lightning, hailstorms and intense heatwaves which often vary sharply even within a district.

Why in News?

- India's first **"SkyCast" aviation weather monitoring system** was recently inaugurated at **Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport in New Delhi**, marking the beginning of a new era of **"fog-free, weather-smart aviation"**.
- Developed under the **"Mission Mausam"** initiative, the **advanced integrated atmospheric monitoring system** is designed to provide **real-time weather intelligence to pilots, airlines and airport operators**, helping reduce flight delays, diversions and cancellations caused by fog, turbulence and poor visibility.
- With the launch of SkyCast, **India has become the 19th country in the world** to deploy such an integrated aviation weather monitoring system. The SkyCast will be expanded to other airports across the country.
- Beyond aviation, SkyCast observations would support **artificial intelligence-enabled forecasting systems, urban weather prediction, pollution management, transport advisories and disaster response planning**.

BharatFS:

- Under the Mission Mausam, the **Bharat Forecast System (BharatFS)**, an advanced computer simulation model, has been launched by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- BharatFS is the **world's highest-resolution operational weather model, operating on a 6-kilometre grid**.
- Developed indigenously by the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune**, BharatFS enhances India's weather prediction resolution from **12 km to 6 km**, enabling every village in India to access **more precise and location-specific forecasts**.
 - It makes it the **world's first model at such a high resolution for localised forecasts**.



POLITY

1) Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

About

- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, enacted in 2016, aims to **uphold the dignity of people with disabilities and prevent discrimination**, replacing the 1995 Persons with Disabilities Act.
- The Act fulfills India's obligations to the **United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, to which **India is a signatory**.

Disabilities covered:

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

Rights and Entitlements:

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

Children with disabilities not to be separated from their parents:

- The Act states that no child with disability shall be separated from his or her parents on the grounds of disability except on an order of a competent court, if required, in the best interest of the child.

Establishment of Authorities:

- **Central & State Advisory Boards on Disability** are to be set up to serve as apex

policy making bodies at the Central and State level.

- The **Office of Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities** has been strengthened who will now be assisted by **2 Commissioners** and an **Advisory Committee** comprising not more than 11 members drawn from experts in various disabilities.
- The **Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners** will act as **regulatory bodies** and **Grievance Redressal agencies** and also **monitor** implementation of the Act.
- **Special Courts** will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning violation of rights of PwDs.

Accessible India Campaign:

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



- The aim of the Campaign is to create a **barrier free environment** and provide **disabled-friendly access in public facilities and places**.
- The Accessible India Campaign comprises of the following three components:
 - **Built Environment Accessibility:** To provide an accessible physical environment for everyone. Measures should be undertaken to eliminate obstacles and barriers to indoor and outdoor facilities



including schools, medical facilities, and workplaces.

○ **Transportation System**

Accessibility: Focuses on providing PwDs an equal right to travel and use public and private transportation infrastructure with dignity and independence.

○ **Information and Communication**

Eco-System Accessibility: Access to information refers to all information. This can range from actions such as being able to read price tags, to physically enter a hall, to participate in an event, to read a pamphlet with healthcare information, to understand a train timetable, or to view webpages.

- To provide full legislative cover to the Campaign and Right to accessibility, the Government enacted the **Rights for Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016**.

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court has included persons who were forcibly administered acid within the definition of 'acid attack victims' under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
 - The 2016 law recognised only victims of acid-throwing, and not forcible acid ingestion.
- The deemed recognition would aid victims of forcible acid ingestion to claim disability benefits due under the 2016 Act.

2) Right to Information Act, 2005

About

- Under the Right to Information Act, 2005, **Public Authorities** are required to make **disclosures on various aspects of their structure and functioning**.
 - This includes: (i) disclosure on their organisation, functions, and structure, (ii) powers and duties of its officers and employees, and (iii) financial information.
- If such information is **not made available**, **citizens have the right to request** it from the Authorities.

- This may include information in the **form of documents, files, or electronic records** under the control of the Public Authority. The intent behind the enactment of the Act is to **promote transparency and accountability** in the working of Public Authorities.

Who are included in the ambit of 'Public Authorities'?

- The RTI Act defines "public authorities" in **Section 2(h)**.
- A "public authority" means **any authority or body or institution of self-government established or constituted**
 - by or under the Constitution;
 - by any other law made by Parliament;
 - by any other law made by State Legislature;
 - by notification issued or order made by the appropriate Government, and includes any –
 - body owned, controlled or substantially financed;
 - Non-Government organizations substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds provided by the appropriate Government.

Section 8 of the RTI

- This provides for **exemption from disclosure of information** that are more valid in reasons:
 - Which would affect the **sovereignty and integrity** of India, the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State;
 - Which has been **expressly forbidden** to be published by any court of law or tribunal;
 - Which would cause a **breach of privilege** of Parliament or the State Legislature;
 - Information including **commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property**;
 - Information received in **confidence from foreign government**;
 - Information which would **endanger the life or physical safety of any person**; etc.



Enforcement

- The Act has established a **three tier structure** for enforcing the right to information guaranteed under the Act.
- The first request for information goes to the **Central/State Assistant Public Information Officer** and **Central/State Public Information Officer**, designated by the Public Authorities. These Officers are required to provide information to an RTI applicant **within 30 days** of the request.
 - If information sought **concerns the life or liberty of a person**, it shall be supplied within **48 hours**.
- Appeals from their decisions go to an **Appellate Authority**.
- Appeals against the order of the Appellate Authority go to the **State Information Commission or the Central Information Commission**.
 - These Information Commissions consist of a **Chief Information Commissioner**, and **up to 10 Information Commissioners**.

Section 4(2) of the RTI

- It mandates that different authorities and government departments should **voluntarily disclose (*suo motu*) much information to the public at regular intervals through various means**, including the internet, so that the public have minimum resort to the use of this Act to obtain information.

Fee

- There is an **application fee** that **varies for the Centre and for States**.
 - For **public authorities under the Central Government**, this is **Rs. 10**.

Why in News?

- The **Central Information Commission** has held that the **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** **does not fall within the ambit of a “public authority”** under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act and therefore cannot be compelled to disclose information under the law.
 - BCCI is a **society** registered under the **Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975**.

Central Information Commission:

- The Central Information Commission was constituted in 2005 under the **Right to Information Act, 2005**.
- The Commission includes **1 Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)** and **not more than 10 Information Commissioners (IC)** who will be appointed by the **President of India** on recommendation of a committee consisting of
 - **Prime Minister** (Chair),
 - **Leader of the Opposition** in the **Lok Sabha** and
 - **A Union Cabinet Minister** to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
- The **jurisdiction** of the Commission **extends over all Central Public Authorities**.
- The Commission's powers and functions which broadly relate to:
 - **adjudication in second appeal** for giving information;
 - **direction** for record keeping, *suo motu* disclosures receiving and enquiring into a complaint on inability to file RTI etc;
 - imposition of **penalties** and
 - **monitoring and reporting** including preparation of an annual report.
- The decisions of the Commission are **final and binding**.



3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. Public Interest Litigation

About

- Public Interest Litigation (PIL) refers to the legal process that allows **individuals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or**
- It is a tool to challenge the misuse of power, ensure transparency, and hold the government accountable for its actions.

Evolution of PIL

- The evolution of PIL can be traced to the **Supreme Court decisions of the late 1970s**, such as *Hussainara Khatoon & Ors. vs. Home Secretary, State of Bihar (1979)* (related to deplorable conditions of undertrial prisoners in Bihar), which

social activists to file a petition in court on behalf of the public interest.

- A PIL is **not defined in any law, statute or act**. The concept of PIL in India was introduced to **provide access to justice for the underprivileged**, ensuring that their fundamental rights are protected. marked a **departure from the traditional doctrine of locus standi**, under which **only an aggrieved party could approach the court**, towards permitting representative standing.
- This enabled **third parties to institute proceedings on behalf of marginalised groups** unable to access justice due to systemic barriers.



ECONOMY

1) RBI Board approves record surplus transfer

What's in the news?

- The **Central Board of Directors of Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has approved the transfer of a record **₹2.87 lakh crore as surplus to the Central Government** for the financial year 2025-26, marking one of the highest dividend payouts by the central bank.
- The central bank said it had decided to transfer **₹1.09 lakh crore** towards the **Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB)** for FY26 while maintaining the buffer at **6.5 per cent of the RBI balance sheet**, within the revised **Economic Capital Framework range of 4.5-7.5 per cent**.

RBI Central Board of Directors:

- The Reserve Bank's affairs are governed by a **Central Board of Directors**.
- The **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, provides that **there shall be one Governor and not more than four Deputy Governors** (two from within the ranks, a commercial banker and an economist to head the monetary policy department) to be appointed by the **central government** on the central board of RBI.
- **Functions:** General superintendence and direction of the Bank's affairs.

Appointments:

- The RBI governor is appointed by the **Prime Minister's office** on the recommendation of the **Union Finance Minister**.
- Deputy Governors are appointed on the basis of the **Appointment Committee of Cabinet (ACC)**-approved guidelines, which stipulate that the **search committee** constituted for the purpose will recommend the person to be appointed as a Deputy Governor.

Legal Provisions

- According to the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, after the RBI has made **provisions for bad and doubtful debt** and has **met all its**

expenses, including any provisions it needs to make towards **buffer funds**, the **balance of the profits shall be paid to the Central Government**.

- The main buffer fund the RBI maintains is called the **Contingent Risk Buffer**, which is basically a **safety net** in the event of a financial stability crisis.
- In **2018**, a committee was set up under the chairmanship of former RBI governor **Bimal Jalan** to determine the **RBI's Economic Capital Framework (ECF)**, including how big the CRB should be.
 - The committee recommended that the **CRB should be in the range of 5.5-6.5% of the RBI's balance sheet**. This was adopted by the RBI in 2019.
- The Jalan committee also recommended that the **ECF be reviewed every five years**. The central board has decided that the **CRB range would be widened to 4.5-7.5%** from 2024-25 onwards.

How does the RBI make profits?

- Typically, the central bank's income comes from the **returns it earns on its foreign currency assets**, which could be in the form of **bonds** and treasury bills of other central banks or top-rated securities, and deposits with other central banks.
- It also earns **interest on its holdings of local rupee-denominated government bonds or securities**, and while **lending to banks**.
- In addition to these, the RBI also generate profit through **seigniorage**.
 - *Seigniorage refers to the interest a central bank earn, minus the cost of producing, distributing and replacing bank notes.*

2) Asian Development Bank

About

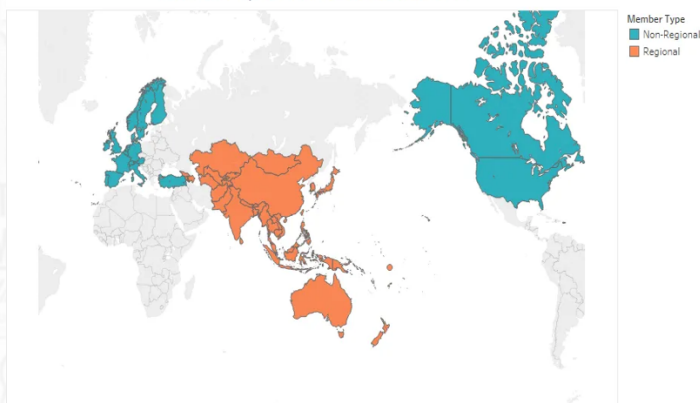
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a **multilateral development bank** supporting **sustainable, inclusive, and**



resilient growth across Asia and the Pacific.

- Founded in **1966** and based in **Manila, Philippines**, the ADB assists members and partners by providing **loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments** to promote social and economic development.
- ADB comprises **69 members (including India)** - of which 50 are from within **Asia and the Pacific** and 19 outside.
- The ADB was **modelled closely on the World Bank**, and has a **similar weighted voting system** where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
 - **Japan and the United States**, two of the bank's founding members, each owned a **15.6% stake**, making them the **largest shareholders**. Other significant stakeholders include the **People's Republic of China (6.4%), India (6.3%), and Australia (5.8%)**.

Asian Development Bank Member Countries



Why in News?

- The Ministry of Rural Development held a meeting with a delegation from the Asian Development Bank to discuss collaboration under the **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)**.

DILRMP

- The **Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**, has been implementing **DILRMP** since **2016-17** with the objective of **digitization of land records**, with **100% financial assistance from the Central Government**.
- The **objective** of the programme is to make available **online information on land records and registration**, thereby checking

fraudulent/benami transactions and reducing land disputes.

3) Regional Rural Banks

About

- The Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) were established in **1975** under the provisions of the **Ordinance** promulgated in 1975 and **Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976** to provide **financial assistance to different segments of the rural population**.
- Established based on the recommendations of the **Narasimham Committee on Rural Credit**, the main objectives of setting up the RRB is to **provide credit and other facilities, especially to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas**.



FINANCE & TRUST



LIFE & GROWTH

Ownership:

- Each RRB is **sponsored by a public sector bank**, which provides **assistance** in several ways, such as subscription to its share capital, managerial and financial assistance, etc.
- RRBs are **jointly owned by the Government of India, the concerned State Government and Sponsor Banks** with the issued capital shared in the proportion of **50%, 15% and 35%** respectively.

Regulation and Oversight:

- **NABARD** is entrusted with the responsibility for conduct of **statutory inspections** of RRBs. The **regulatory powers** rest with the **Reserve Bank of India**.
- The **area of operation** of the RRBs is **limited to few notified districts** in a State.
- The RRBs are required to provide **75% of their outstanding advances as priority sector lending** with primary focus on



agricultural credit, including small and marginal farmers, as well as micro entrepreneurs and rural artisans.

Why in News?

- To institutionalize **performance monitoring** and **strengthen governance reforms** in Regional Rural Banks, the Department of Financial Services (DFS) had introduced a three-year **Viability Plan** covering FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25.
- In view of emerging financial sector challenges and the need for continued oversight, DFS has now approved a **revised Viability Plan 2.0** for a further period of three years from 2025-26 to 2027-28, aimed at **enhancing financial sustainability** and **long-term competitiveness** of RRBs.

4) Anti-Dumping Duties

What are Anti-dumping duties?

- An anti-dumping duty is a protectionist tariff that a **domestic government imposes on foreign imports that are believed to be priced below fair market value**, a practice known as **dumping** in international trade.

Dumping:

- Dumping is the practice of **selling a product in a foreign market at an unfairly low price** (lower than the product's normal value in its home market) in order to **gain a competitive advantage over other suppliers**.
- Dumping is done to **gain access to the foreign market and eliminate competition**. It creates a **monopoly** in the market.
- Anti-dumping duty is imposed to **protect local businesses and markets from unfair competition** by foreign imports.

WTO Regulations

- The imposition of anti-dumping duty is a **legitimate trade remedial measure under**

the World Trade Organization's Anti-Dumping Agreement.

- It allows the government of the affected country to take legal action against the dumping country as long as there is **evidence of genuine material injury to industries in the domestic market**.

- In other cases, the WTO intervenes to prevent anti-dumping measures.

How is the anti-dumping duty levied in India?

- Anti-dumping measures in India are administered by the **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)**, an attached office of the **Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
 - DGTR conducts the **investigation** and **makes recommendations** to the Government for imposition of anti-dumping measures.
- Such duty is finally levied by the **Ministry of Finance**.

Why in News?

- According to a recent study, the non-implementation of the recommended anti-dumping duties has resulted in an annual economic loss of ₹11,938 crore to the domestic industry, whereas the imposition of these levies could generate an additional ₹28,540 crore annually in forex by reducing imports.
- The study was done by **C-DEP Research** (an independent think tank based in New Delhi) and **Centre for WTO Studies**.
 - The Centre for WTO Studies was set up by the **Department of Commerce, Government of India** in **1999** as a permanent repository of WTO negotiations-related knowledge and documentation.



ENVIRONMENT

1) India's first satellite-tagged Ganges soft-shell turtle released in Kaziranga

Kaziranga National Park

- Kaziranga National Park, located in **Assam**, is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- It was established 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.

Why in News?

- **India's first satellite-tagged Ganges soft-shell turtle**, an endangered species, was released in the Kaziranga National Park.
- Tracking its seasonal movement patterns, home range, and critical habitats such as nesting and breeding sites will aid the active conservation and management of the species in the Brahmaputra river basin.



Ganges soft-shell Turtle

- The Ganges soft-shell turtle (*Nilssonia gangetica*), a **Schedule I** animal under the Wildlife Protection Act of 2022, is a **freshwater turtle species** found in **South Asia** in rivers such as the **Ganges, Indus** and **Mahanadi**.

- It can be differentiated from other riverine turtles by its **distinct arrowhead-shaped markings on the top of the head**.
- Recorded as **endangered** on the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List**, this large turtle is a **major river predator** and **helps clean up the system** by feeding on dead and decaying animal matter.

2) Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026

About

- In January 2026, the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** 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 came 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.

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court has directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to issue a notification under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 delegating its powers to District Collectors across the country for one year to ensure strict implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026.

3) Coal Gasification

About

- Coal gasification is a process that **converts solid coal into a gaseous fuel** called syngas.
- Instead of burning coal directly, it is **heated at high temperatures in a controlled environment with limited oxygen and steam**.
- This chemical transformation **breaks coal into its core components**, mainly **carbon monoxide, hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and smaller hydrocarbons**.
- Unlike **combustion**, which **releases energy by burning coal**, **gasification extracts the chemical value embedded in coal**.

- This makes it **fundamentally different**, which means that coal is no longer just a fuel for electricity, but a **raw material for producing industrial chemicals and cleaner fuels** such as **urea, methanol, ethanol, ammonium nitrate, synthetic natural gas (SNG), hydrogen, ether, and dimethyl**, among others.

Coal Gasification: Is It Green?

- Gasification is **still coal-based**. But it is **more efficient and cleaner** than direct burning.
- It also **enables carbon capture more easily** at the syngas stage.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved a ₹37,500 crore **coal gasification scheme** to position domestic coal not just as a power fuel but as an **industrial and energy-security asset**.

Did you know?

- Recently, the Union Coal Minister said that **coal gasification can help substitute imports of up to ₹3 lakh crore**.
- Under the scheme, new projects for production of syngas and its downstream products will get **financial incentives of up to 20 per cent of plant and machinery costs**.

Significance

- The Scheme marks a major step towards accelerating India's coal gasification programme, advancing the **national target of gasifying 100 Million Tonnes (MT) of coal by 2030**, strengthening energy security, and **reducing dependence on imports of key products** such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) (more than 50% imported), urea (~20% imported), ammonia (~100% imported), and methanol (~80-90% imported).



SPECIES IN NEWS

1) Pangolin

About

- Pangolins are **mammals** uniquely covered in **tough, overlapping scales**.
- They **eat ants and termites** using an extraordinarily long, sticky tongue, and are able to quickly **roll themselves up into a tight ball when they feel threatened**.
- Pangolins are **solitary animals**. They usually live by themselves and do **most of their hunting at night**.



- Also called **scaly anteaters** because of their preferred diet, pangolins are the **most trafficked mammal in the world** for their meat and scales.

Did you know?

- Pangolins are the only mammals with scales. Their scales are made of keratin, the same protein as human fingernails.

Distribution:

- Eight different pangolin species** can be found across **Asia and Africa**. All of these have shown decline in their population.

- Asian pangolins:
 - Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) – Critically Endangered
 - Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*) – Critically Endangered
 - Philippine pangolin (*Manis culionensis*) – Critically Endangered
 - Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) – Endangered
- African pangolins:
 - White-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*) – Endangered
 - Giant pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*) – Endangered
 - Ground pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*) – Vulnerable
 - Black-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tetradactyla*) – Vulnerable.
- All eight species** of pangolin are listed under **Appendix I** (threatened with extinction) of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**.
- India is home to two species** — the **Indian Pangolin**, found across the subcontinent; and the **Chinese Pangolin**, found across a larger area in south Asia. Both are listed under **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 2022**.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Quad

- Quad is an **informal strategic dialogue** between **India, USA, Japan and Australia** to work for a **free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region**.
- Quad began as a loose partnership after the **2004 Indian Ocean tsunami**, when the four countries joined together to provide humanitarian and disaster assistance to the affected region.
- It was formalised by **former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007**, but then fell dormant for nearly a decade.
- The group gained momentum in **2017** amid China's growing influence in the region.

Why in News?

- The 11th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting was recently held in New Delhi.



Key Outcomes of the Meeting

- To boost maritime cooperation, the Quad partners launched the first-ever **Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration (IPMSC) initiative**.
 - The programme aims to **enhance maritime domain awareness and information sharing in the Indo-Pacific**.
- The four nations also expanded the **Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative** and announced plans to develop a **comprehensive Common Operating Picture (COP)** to improve real-time

maritime information sharing across the region.

- *IPMDA is a Quad-led technology and training initiative launched in 2022 to enhance maritime security. It integrates commercial satellite tracking to provide near-real-time intelligence to regional partners.*
- The ministers also unveiled the **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative Framework** aimed at **strengthening resilient and diversified supply chains for critical minerals** through coordinated investments, mining, processing and recycling cooperation.
- To **strengthen regional energy resilience**, the Quad partners launched the **Quad Initiative on Indo-Pacific Energy Security**, which will focus on cooperation in energy technology, policy, market analysis and emergency response exercises.
- As part of **infrastructure cooperation**, the Quad announced plans to work with the **Government of Fiji on port infrastructure development**.
- Under the **AI-ENGAGE initiative**, the Quad partners announced more than USD 6 million in funding for six international research projects focused on improving crop yields, pest management and food security using artificial intelligence, robotics and sensing technologies.

AI-ENGAGE:

- The **AI-ENGAGE (Advancing Innovations for Empowering NextGen Agriculture)** initiative is a **multinational research collaboration** established under the **Quad framework**.
- It **supports projects that utilize artificial intelligence and emerging technologies** to **modernize agriculture, combat climate impacts, and ensure global food security**.



India-U.S. Framework on Critical Minerals

- On the sidelines of the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, **India and the United States** signed a **bilateral Critical Minerals Framework** to ensure steady supplies of critical minerals.
- The framework will **strengthen resilient and diversified supply chains**, help both nations collaborate on financing, and also help with the **effective management** of critical minerals.

Critical Minerals:

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

2) Third India-Nordic Summit

What's in the news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the **third India-Nordic Summit** in **Oslo, Norway**.
- The summit brought together leaders from **Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden** to discuss ways to expand cooperation in trade, climate action, innovation and technology.
 - The meeting follows the **earlier India-Nordic Summits** held in

Stockholm in 2018 and **Copenhagen** in 2022.

Nordic Countries:

- Nordic countries is a group of countries in **northern Europe** consisting of **Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden**.
- The designation includes the **Faroe Islands** and **Greenland**, which are autonomous island regions of Denmark, and the **Åland Islands**, an autonomous island region of Finland.



- The term is sometimes used **interchangeably with Scandinavia**, a peninsular region of northern Europe that serves as the geographic core of the Nordic countries.
 - Scandinavia is typically defined more restrictively, however, and refers primarily to **Norway, Sweden, and Denmark**.

Highlights of the Summit

- India and the Nordic countries **elevated their relationship to a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership**, signalling a shift towards long-term collaboration in future-focused sectors.
 - The partnership is expected to **deepen cooperation in the blue economy, circular economy and digital infrastructure**.
- The summit placed strong emphasis on **strengthening economic integration** between India and the Nordic countries leveraging the **India-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and**



Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA).

European Free Trade Association:

- Established in 1960, EFTA is an intergovernmental organization of four member countries that are not part of the European Union (EU): Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.



- EFTA aims to promote **free trade and economic integration** among its member states.

EFTA-TEPA:

- The **India-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)** was signed in 2024 and officially came into effect in 2025.
- TEPA is a modern and ambitious agreement that incorporates, for the **first time** in any Free Trade Agreement signed by India, a **legal commitment linked to investment and job creation**.
- Under the pact, EFTA has **committed an investment of \$100 billion in India** in the next 15 years which would facilitate the creation of **one million direct jobs in India**.
- Under TEPA, EFTA has offered 92.2% of tariff lines encompassing 99.6% of India's exports. The EFTA's market access offer covers **100% of non-agri**

products and tariff concession on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP).

- India is offering 82.7% of its tariff lines which covers 95.3% of EFTA exports of which **more than 80% import is Gold**.
 - Sectors such as dairy, soya, coal and sensitive agricultural products are kept in the **exclusion list**.
- Services offers from EFTA include better access through **digital delivery of Services (Mode 1), commercial presence (Mode 3)** and improved commitments and certainty for entry and **temporary stay of key personnel (Mode 4)**.
- India and the Nordic countries agreed to **step up cooperation in the Arctic**, reflecting New Delhi's growing interest in polar research and climate science.
- The summit also prioritised **collaboration in science, technology, engineering and mathematics**.
- India and the Nordic countries agreed to **promote greater mobility of talent**, aiming to increase opportunities for students, researchers, academics and skilled professionals.
- India highlighted investment opportunities for Nordic companies, including the provision of **100 per cent FDI in Indian Defence Industrial Corridors**.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. Kimberly Process

About

- The Kimberley Process is a **tripartite initiative** involving **governments, the international diamond industry and civil society**, aimed at **preventing the trade in "conflict diamonds"** i.e. rough diamonds used by rebel groups or their allies to finance conflicts that undermine legitimate governments.





- The **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)**, established pursuant to a **UN resolution**, came into effect in **2003** and has since evolved into an effective mechanism for curbing the trade in conflict diamonds.
 - KPCS is enforced individually by KP Participant countries to ensure that rough diamonds in the legitimate supply chain are KP-compliant.
- The Kimberley Process currently has **60 participants** (including **India**), with the **European Union and its Member States** counted as a **single participant**.
- Together, **KP participants** account for **over 99 per cent of global rough diamond trade**, making it the most comprehensive international mechanism governing this sector.

Current Chair:

- **India** assumed the **Chairship of the Kimberley Process** from **1 January 2026**.
 - This is the **third time** India has been entrusted with the chair of the Kimberley Process.
- India's Chairship theme for 2026 focuses on the **3Cs — credibility, compliance and consumer confidence** in the natural diamond sector.

3.2. Shangri-La Dialogue

About

- Widely recognised as **Asia's premier defence summit**, the Shangri-La Dialogue brings together defence ministers, military chiefs, policy makers and strategic experts across the globe.
- Organised by an **independent think tank**, the **International Institute for Strategic**

Studies (IISS), the Dialogue is held **annually** in **Singapore**.

- The Dialogue is a **unique platform for debate** among government ministers and senior officials, as well as business leaders and security experts, on **Asia's developing security challenges**.
- The dialogue began in **2002**, following global security concerns and terror attacks like 9/11.

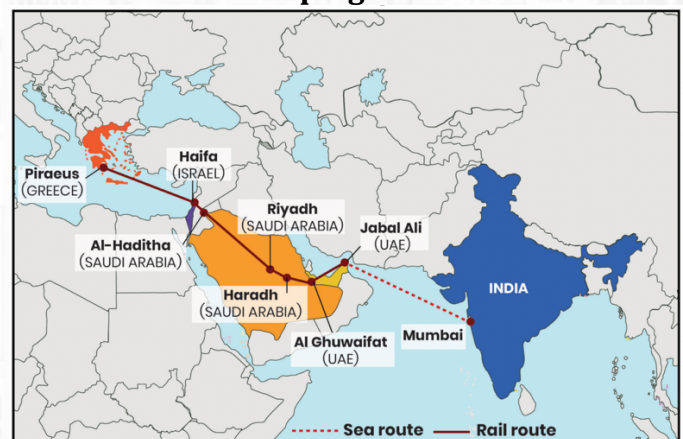
Why in News?

- The 23rd Shangri-La Dialogue was recently held in Singapore.

3.3. India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

About

- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is a **multinational infrastructure project** that aims to revolutionize global trade and connectivity.
- Launched at the **2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi**, IMEC links **India, the Middle East, and Europe** through a **multi-modal network of railways, ports, and highways**.
 - IMEC forms part of the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)**, a **G7 collaborative initiative** designed to **fund infrastructure projects in developing nations**.



Objectives

- IMEC is a **transcontinental economic corridor** designed to:



- Facilitate seamless **trade and logistics between Asia, the Gulf, and Europe;**
- Improve **transportation infrastructure** across key strategic regions;
- Foster **economic cooperation and green development** through sustainable infrastructure projects.
- This strategic corridor spans **India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe.**
- IMEC is often viewed as a potential counterweight to **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).**

Belt and Road Initiative:

- The Belt and Road Initiative is a massive **China-led infrastructure project** that aims to stretch around the globe.
- Launched in **2013**, the plan was two-pronged: the overland **Silk Road Economic Belt** and the **Maritime Silk Road.**
- The project initially aimed to strengthen connectivity with **Southeast Asia** but later expanded to **South and Central Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.**

Participating Nations

- **India, European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, UAE and the US** have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for IMEC.

3.4. Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

About

- The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) aims to **prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology**, to **foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy**, and to **further the goal of disarmament.** It entered into force in **1970.**
- Its **states-parties** are classified into **two categories: nuclear-weapon states (NWS)**—nuclear weapon states that had manufactured and detonated a nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967 (**United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom**)—and **non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS).**
 - Under the treaty, the **five NWS** commit to pursue **general and complete disarmament**, while the **NNWS** agree to **forgo developing or acquiring nuclear weapons.**
- The Treaty represents the **only binding commitment** in a multilateral treaty to the **goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.**
- The NPT has 191 members; **India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Sudan** have not joined, and **North Korea** announced its withdrawal from the treaty in 2003.



ORGANISATIONS

1) Asian Productivity Organization

About

- Established in 1961, the Asian Productivity Organization is an **intergovernmental organization** committed to **enhancing productivity for sustainable socioeconomic development in the Asia-Pacific region**.
- It comprises **21 member economies**, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Taiwan, Fiji, Hong Kong, **India**, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkiye, and Vietnam.
 - India** is a **founding member** of APO.



- APO is headquartered in **Tokyo, Japan**.

Why in News?

- As **Chair of the Asian Productivity Organization**, **India** hosted the **68th Session of the APO Governing Body** in **New Delhi**.
 - The **Governing Body** is the **APO's highest decision-making authority** and **meets annually** to set the organization's strategic direction, approve major proposals, and review Secretariat performance.

2) UN Secretary-General Election

About UN

- The United Nations (UN) is an **international organization** founded in **1945 after the Second World War** by **51 countries** committed to **maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights**.
 - The **predecessor of the UN** was the **League of Nations**, established in **1919**, after **World War I**, under the **Treaty of Versailles**.
- Currently made up of **193 Member States** (including **India**), the UN and its work are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its **founding Charter**.
- The UN has **six official languages**: **Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish**.



Six Principal Organs

- The **UN Charter** established **six principal organs** of the United Nations: **the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat**.
- All were established in 1945** when the UN was founded.

1. General Assembly:

- The General Assembly is the **main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ** of the UN.



- All **193 Member States** of the UN are **represented** in the General Assembly, making it the **only UN body with universal representation**.

2. Security Council:

- The Security Council has **primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security**.
- It has **15 Members**:
 - **5 permanent members** (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States).
 - **10 non-permanent members**, elected for **two years** by the **General Assembly**, taking into account a **geographical distribution**.
- **Each member** of the Council has **one vote**. **Resolutions** are adopted when supported by a **majority of votes of nine out of fifteen votes**.
 - **Permanent members** have the **right to veto**. Any decision of the Council is rejected if one of the permanent members uses it.
- Under the UN Charter, **all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions**.

3. Economic and Social Council:

- The Economic and Social Council is the **principal body** for coordination, policy review and dialogue and recommendations on **economic, social and environmental issues**, as well as **implementation of internationally agreed development goals**.
- It has **54 Members**, elected by the **General Assembly** for overlapping **three-year terms**.

4. Trusteeship Council:

- The Trusteeship Council was established to provide **international supervision for 11 Trust Territories** – areas that at the time were administered by 7 of the UN Member States.
- The Council was established to ensure that adequate steps were taken to **prepare the Territories for self-government and independence**.

- The Trusteeship Council **suspended its operations on 1 November 1994**, a month after the independence of **Palau**, the last remaining United Nations trust territory.

5. International Court of Justice:

- The International Court of Justice is the **principal judicial organ of the United Nations**.
- Its seat is at the **Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands)**.
 - It is the **only one of the six principal organs** of the United Nations **not located in New York (United States of America)**.
- The Court's role is to **settle**, in accordance with international law, **legal disputes** submitted to it by States and to **give advisory opinions** on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.

6. Secretariat:

- The Secretariat carries out the **day-to-day work** of the UN as mandated by the General Assembly and the Organization's other main bodies.
- The **Secretary-General is the head of the Secretariat**, who is appointed by the **General Assembly** on the **recommendation of the Security Council** for a **five-year, renewable term**.
 - The Secretary-General, described by the UN Charter as the Organization's **"Chief Administrative Officer,"** also serves as a symbol of the UN's ideals and an advocate for all the world's people, particularly the poor and vulnerable.
 - The Charter also **empowers** the Secretary-General to **"bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter, which in his or her opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security"**.



Did you know?

- Although there is technically no limit to the number of five-year terms a Secretary-General may serve, none so far has held office for more than two terms.

Why in News?

- The election of the next UN Secretary-General is underway.

What is the process?

- The 15-member **Security Council** will **formally recommend a candidate** to the 193-member **General Assembly** for election as the **10th U.N. secretary-general** later this year.
- The Security Council will hold **secret ballots** – referred to as a **straw poll** – until a **consensus** is reached on a candidate. The **choices** council members are given for each candidate in the straw poll are: **encourage, discourage or no opinion**.
- The **Security Council** then adopts a **resolution**, traditionally behind closed doors, **recommending an appointment to the General Assembly**. The resolution needs **nine votes** in favor and **no vetoes** to pass.
- Once the **General Assembly confirms** the choice through a **simple majority vote**, the new Secretary-General will take office on January 1, 2027.
 - The **General Assembly's approval** of the appointment has long been seen as a **rubber stamp**.

3) Food and Agriculture Organization

About

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** leading international efforts to **defeat hunger**.

Specialized agencies of UN:

- The UN specialized agencies are **autonomous international organizations working with the United Nations**.

- All were brought into relationship with the UN through **negotiated agreements**.
- There are **15 specialized agencies** (treating the World Bank Group as a single cluster):
 - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): Rome, Italy
 - International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): Montreal, Canada
 - International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD): Rome, Italy
 - International Labour Organization (ILO): Geneva, Switzerland
 - International Monetary Fund (IMF): Washington, D.C., USA
 - International Maritime Organization (IMO): London, United Kingdom
 - International Telecommunication Union (ITU): Geneva, Switzerland
 - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Paris, France
 - United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO): Vienna, Austria
 - UN Tourism: Madrid, Spain
 - Universal Postal Union (UPU): Bern, Switzerland
 - World Bank Group (WBG): Washington, D.C., USA
 - World Health Organization (WHO): Geneva, Switzerland
 - World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO): Geneva, Switzerland
 - World Meteorological Organization (WMO): Geneva, Switzerland.

- Established in **1945**, it is an **intergovernmental organization**, with more than 190 member countries



(including **India**) and one member organization, the **European Union**.



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

- FAO's goal is to achieve **food and security for all** and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food and lead active, healthy lives.
- The headquarters of FAO is in **Rome, Italy**.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with the prestigious **Agricola Medal for 2026** by the Food and Agriculture Organization.
 - The Agricola Medal is awarded to distinguished world leaders and individuals for **exceptional and long-term contributions to global food security, sustainable agriculture, poverty reduction and improved nutrition**.

4) World Health Assembly

About WHO

- World Health Organization (WHO) is the **United Nations' specialized agency for Health**.
- Founded in **1948**, it is an **inter-governmental organization** of more than 190 member states (including **India**).
- WHO works globally to **promote health, expand universal health coverage and respond to emergencies**.
- WHO gets its **funding** from two main sources: Member States paying their assessed contributions (**countries' membership dues**), and **voluntary contributions** from Member States and other partners.
- Headquarters: **Geneva, Switzerland**.



World Health Assembly

- The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the **decision-making body of WHO** and is attended by **delegations from all Member States**.
- It is held **annually** in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Why in News?

- The 79th World Health Assembly was held recently in Geneva, Switzerland under the theme of '**Reshaping global health: a shared responsibility**'.

5) International Telecommunication Union

About

- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** for issues concerning **information and communication technologies (ICTs)**.
- Established in **1865** as **International Telegraph Union** to manage the first international telegraph networks, the **Union's mandate has expanded over the years** to cover the invention of voice telephony, the development of radiocommunications, the launch of the first communications satellites, and most recently, artificial intelligence and metaverse.



- ITU has **three main areas of activity** organized in **three Sectors**:
 1. **Radiocommunications Sector (ITU-R)**: Regulates the **radio-frequency spectrum** used by radiocommunication services, including satellites;
 2. **Standardization Sector (ITU-T)**: **Sets standards** on various aspects of the global infrastructure of information and communication technologies, ranging from telegraphy to television, broadband to bluetooth; and
 3. **Development Sector (ITU-D)**: **Supports international cooperation** in delivering technical assistance and in creating, developing and improving telecommunication and ICT equipment and networks in developing countries.
- The ITU's membership includes 194 Member States (including **India**) and more than 1000 companies, universities and international and regional organizations.
- The **ITU Constitution and Convention** establishes the **binding and global framework** for international telecommunications.
- The **supreme organ** of the Union is the **quadrennial Plenipotentiary Conference** (held **every four years**), where the Member States decide on the Union's general policies, direction and activities.
- Headquarters: **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Why in News?

- An Indian delegation participated in the **International Telecommunication Union Council 2026 meeting** held in Geneva, Switzerland.

ITU Council

- The **ITU Council** acts as the **governing body of the ITU** and comprises **48 elected Member States**. It **meets annually in Geneva** to oversee the organisation's strategy, policy, budget and financial control.

- **India** has been a **member** of the ITU Council **since 1952**.

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. National Testing Agency

About

- National Testing Agency (NTA) has been established as an **autonomous and self-sustained testing organization** to **conduct entrance examinations for admission/fellowship in higher educational institutions**.
- NTA was established by the **Ministry of Education** following the Union Cabinet's approval in **2017**.
- It is a **registered society** under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and is **under the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act**.

Objectives

- To conduct **efficient, transparent and international standards tests** in order to assess the competency of candidates for admission, and recruitment purposes.
 - NTA administers several prominent entrance exams, including JEE-Main for engineering, NEET-UG for medical courses, and CUET-UG for various undergraduate programs. Additionally, it conducts exams like CUET-PG for postgraduate admissions, UGC-NET, and CSIR UGC-NET for research fellowships and PhD admissions, among others.
- To **undertake research** on educational, professional and testing systems to identify gaps in the knowledge systems and take steps for bridging them.
- To identify experts and institutions in **setting examination questions**.

6.2. SAARC

About

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a **regional intergovernmental organization** established with the signing of the **SAARC Charter** in **Dhaka** in 1985.



- Initially founded with 7 members, SAARC now comprises **eight Member States: Afghanistan** (joined in 2007), **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka**.
 - There are **nine observers** namely Australia, China, EU, Iran, Japan, Korea, Mauritius, Myanmar and USA.



- The main objective of the Association include **promotion of welfare of the peoples of South Asia** and to improve their quality of life.
- Decisions** at all levels are to be taken on the **basis of unanimity**; and **bilateral and contentious issues are excluded** from the deliberations of the Association.
- The Secretariat of the Association is located in **Kathmandu, Nepal**.
- Note:** SAARC has been **dormant** and has **not held a formal summit since 2014**, in keeping with India's position of refusing to engage with Pakistan over its support for terrorism.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

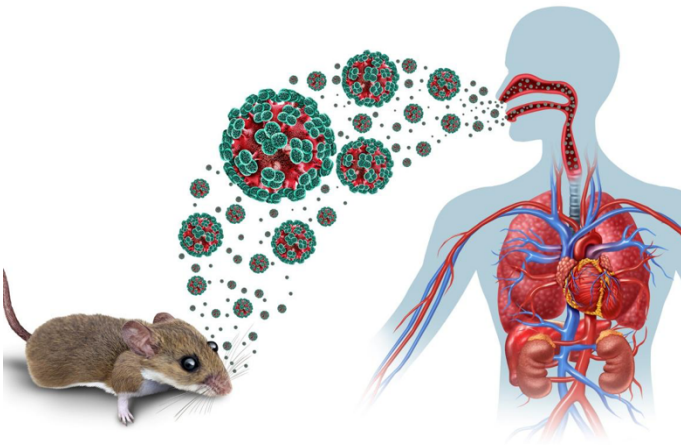
1) Hantavirus

About

- Hantaviruses are a group of **zoonotic viruses** (that spreads from animals to humans) belonging to the family **Hantaviridae**.
- They are mainly carried by **rodents** such as **mice, rats, and voles**.
- They are **single stranded RNA viruses** which usually cause long-term infection in their natural rodent hosts without causing illness.
- Although many hantavirus species exist worldwide, **only a few are known to infect humans** and cause severe disease.

Transmission:

- Humans acquire hantavirus infection mainly through **contact with infected rodents or their urine, droppings, and saliva**.
- **Human-to-human transmission is very rare** and has been documented mainly with the **Andes strain** found in South America.



Disease Manifestation:

- Hantaviruses cause **different diseases depending on the region and virus type**.
 - In the **Americas**, they cause **Hantavirus Cardiopulmonary Syndrome (HCPS/HPS)**, a severe illness affecting the lungs and heart that may progress to breathing

difficulty, fluid accumulation in the lungs, shock, and death.

- In **Europe and Asia**, they mainly cause **Haemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS)**, which affects the kidneys and blood vessels and may lead to low blood pressure, bleeding, and kidney failure.

Symptoms:

- Symptoms usually appear 1–8 weeks after exposure and include **fever, headache, muscle aches, abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting**.
 - In severe cases, HCPS can rapidly progress to respiratory failure, while HFRS can cause kidney complications and bleeding disorders.

Treatment:

- There is currently **no specific antiviral treatment or vaccine available** for hantavirus infection.
- Management mainly involves supportive medical care, including close monitoring and treatment of respiratory, cardiac, and kidney complications.

Why in News?

- A recent outbreak of **Andes virus** (a type of hantavirus) was reported among passengers and crew of a dutch expedition cruise ship MV Hondius.
 - The outbreak caused severe respiratory illness, with reported deaths.

2) Ebola Virus Disease

About

- Ebola disease (also known as **Ebola haemorrhagic fever**) is a **severe and often fatal viral illness** affecting **humans and other primates**.
- It is caused by **RNA viruses** belonging to the **Orthoebolavirus genus** of the **Filoviridae family**.



- **Six species of Orthoebolaviruses** have been identified so far including **Zaire, Bundibugyo, Sudan, Tai Forest, Reston and Bombali.**

- The disease was first identified in **1976** during outbreaks in **Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo** (near the Ebola River, from which it got its name).

Transmission:

- Ebola is a **zoonotic disease**, with **fruit bats** of the *Pteropodidae* family considered its natural reservoir.
- Humans get infected through **contact with infected animals** such as bats, monkeys, or forest animals.
- **Human-to-human transmission** occurs through **direct contact with the blood, body fluids, organs, or contaminated materials** of infected persons.

Symptoms:

- Symptoms begin suddenly with fever, fatigue, muscle pain, headache, and sore throat, followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, rash, and kidney/liver problems.
- Severe cases may develop **internal and external bleeding, shock, and multi-organ failure.**

Vaccine:

- Approved vaccines and treatments are **currently available only for the Zaire species** of the Ebola virus. Vaccines and treatments for the other species are still under development.

Why in News?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the **Ebola virus disease outbreak** caused by **Bundibugyo virus** in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).**
 - This rare species of Ebola, for which there is **no proven vaccine, kills around a third of those infected.**

Public Health Emergency of International Concern

- PHEIC is defined as an **extraordinary event** which is determined to constitute a **public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease** and to potentially require a **coordinated international response.**
- It is declared by **WHO** under the **International Health Regulations (2005).**

International Health Regulations (2005):

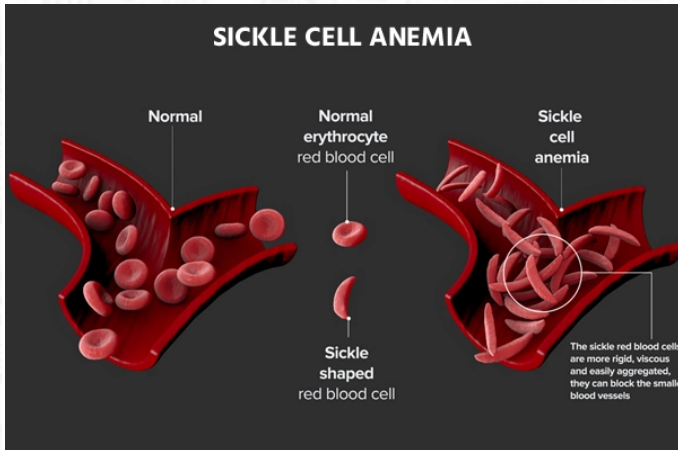
- IHR represents a **binding international legal agreement** involving 196 countries across the globe, including all the Member States of the WHO.
- Their aim is to **help the international community prevent and respond to acute public health risks** that have the **potential to cross borders** and threaten people worldwide.
- It aims to **mobilize international responses** to outbreaks and allows the WHO to **implement significant measures** related to travel, trade, quarantine, screening, and treatment.
- Notable PHEIC declarations include the H1N1 virus (2009) swine flu pandemic, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa (2014-2016), polio (2014), the Zika virus (2016), the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2019), the Novel Coronavirus outbreak (2019), M-pox (2022, 2024).

3) Sickle Cell Anaemia

About

- Sickle Cell Anaemia is a **hereditary genetic disorder** affecting **haemoglobin**, the oxygen-carrying component of blood.
 - Haemoglobin has two alpha and two beta subunits, and **mutations in the beta gene** cause **red blood cells** to become **sickle-shaped like the letter "C."**





- Normal red blood cells are flexible and move smoothly through blood vessels, whereas **sickle-shaped cells become rigid, slowing or blocking blood flow.**
- They also have a **shorter lifespan**, leading to **reduced oxygen supply** and causing **complications** such as **chronic anemia, pain, fatigue, acute chest syndrome, and stroke.**

Prevalence in India:

- **India** has the **highest prevalence in South Asia**, with over 20 million affected individuals.
- Highly prevalent among **tribal populations** (e.g., Bhil, Gond, Madia) and is concentrated in the **central belt** (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha), with pockets in southern states.
- Key challenges include **low awareness, inadequate screening, and poor healthcare access** in rural/tribal areas.

Treatment:

- Sickle cell anaemia is a **hereditary disorder**, making its **complete elimination difficult** without major scientific advances.
- At present, the **only potential cures are gene therapy and stem cell transplantation**—both expensive and still under development.
 - **Gene therapy** works by modifying the DNA of the haemoglobin gene to correct the defect, while **stem cell transplantation** involves replacing the diseased bone marrow with healthy donor marrow; both

approaches are currently in clinical trial stages worldwide.

- In the absence of definitive cures, **blood transfusion** remains a commonly used treatment, though it faces **challenges** such as limited donor availability, concerns over safe blood supply, and the risk of infections.

National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission:

- In 2023, the Government of India launched the **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission** to address the pressing health challenges posed by sickle cell disease, particularly among the tribal population.
- The mission marks a crucial milestone in the Government's ongoing efforts to **eliminate sickle cell disease as a public health problem by 2047.**

Note:

- In India, **Sickle Cell Anaemia** is recognized as a disability under the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act)**, and individuals with this condition may be eligible for certain rights and benefits afforded to persons with disabilities.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs recently organized a workshop on "**BIRSA 101**", **India's first indigenous CRISPR-based gene therapy for Sickle Cell Disease.**

CRISPR:

- CRISPR, which stands for **Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats**, is a revolutionary **gene-editing technology** that allows **scientists to locate and correct errors in DNA**, the genetic blueprint inside every cell of the human body, with extraordinary precision.
- It works using a **protein called Cas9**, which acts like **molecular scissors**. A protein is a biological molecule that performs specific tasks inside the body.



- A separate guide molecule, essentially a GPS signal, directs these scissors to the exact location of the error in the DNA. The scissors cut, and the cell repairs itself using a corrected version of the instruction.

BIRSA 101

- “BIRSA 101”, named after **Bhagwan Birsa Munda**, aims at elimination of Sickle Cell Disease, which particularly affects India's tribal population.
- It was developed by the **CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB)**.
 - *CSIR-IGIB is a premier Institute of CSIR, engaged in research of national importance in the areas of genomics, molecular medicine, bioinformatics and proteomics.*
- The CRISPR system used in BIRSA 101—**enFnCas9**—is a guided protein that has the capacity to **directly correct the mutation in the HBB gene** responsible for producing sickle haemoglobin.
- The indigenous platform is expected to **significantly reduce treatment costs**, offering new hope to affected communities.

Birsa Munda:

- Birsa Munda (1875–1900) was a revered **tribal leader** from the **Munda Tribe** of the **Chhota Nagpur Plateau** area.
- Known as ‘**Dharti Aaba**’ (‘**Father of the Earth**’) by tribal communities, Birsa Munda spearheaded a **tribal religious movement** named **Munda Rebellion/Ulgulan/Great Tumult** a fierce movement for tribal self-rule and the **restoration of Khuntkatti** (community land rights).
 - Though the movement was quickly suppressed by the British, it led to the enactment of the **Tenancy Act (1903)** which **recognised the khuntkhatti system**.
- He started the faith of **Birsait**. The religion believed in **One God** and encouraged tribals who had converted to other

religions to revert to their original religious beliefs.

- He died in British custody at a young age of 25 years.
 - In honor of his legacy, his **birth anniversary** (15th November) is celebrated as **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** (Tribal Pride Day) across India.

4) Mission Drishti

What's in the news?

- **Mission Drishti**, the world's first **OptoSAR (Optical + Synthetic Aperture Radar) Earth observation satellite**, was recently launched aboard a **Falcon 9 rocket** from **Vandenberg Space Force Base, California**.
- It was developed by the Bengaluru-based space startup **GalaxEye**.

Synthetic Aperture Radar:

- SAR is an **advanced imaging technology** first developed for military use in the 1950s.
- **Unlike optical imaging** (which is a passive process using reflected sunlight to capture detailed spectral information), SAR actively **sends radar signals to Earth's surface and captures their reflections**.
- SAR can **see through clouds, smoke, and even dense vegetation**, making it **ideal for 24/7 monitoring in all weather conditions**.



About the Mission

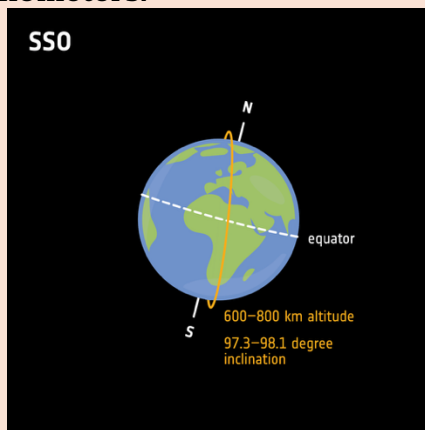
- Mission Drishti is the **largest privately-built satellite in India**.



- It is placed in **Sun Synchronous Low Earth Orbit**.

Sun-Synchronous Orbit (SSO):

- SSO is a particular kind of polar orbit in which **satellites are in sync with the Sun**. Matching Earth's rotation around the Sun, they **always appear in the same position relative to our star**.
- This means they **pass over the same spot on Earth at the same local time every day** – for example passing over the city of Paris daily at noon.
- This consistency allows for the **accurate monitoring of changes** over days, weeks, months or even years, as images are more comparable in terms of light and shadows.
- Typical SSOs around Earth are at an altitude of approximately **600–800 kilometers**.



- Mission Drishti is a **dual-use satellite** with **both civilian and military applications** including defence and surveillance, agriculture monitoring, disaster management, maritime monitoring, infrastructure planning and environmental assessment.

Why is it Unique?

- **Conventional satellites** generally rely on either **optical sensors** or **SAR sensors**.
 - **Optical sensors** provide clear and intuitive images but are **limited by cloud cover** and **perform poorly during nighttime conditions**.
 - On the other hand, **SAR sensors** can **capture images through clouds and in darkness**, but their

data is complex and often requires **expert interpretation**.

- **Drishti combines both optical and SAR technologies** on a single platform, enabling **simultaneous imaging of the same location at the same time**.
 - This integrated approach addresses long-standing limitations of conventional systems and enables **more reliable and consistent data acquisition across diverse environmental conditions**.

5) Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis

About

- Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM) is a **rare but highly fatal infection of the brain and spinal cord** caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, a microscopic amoeba commonly called a "**brain-eating amoeba**."

Favourable Conditions:

- The amoeba thrives in **warm freshwater bodies** such as lakes, ponds, rivers, hot springs, and poorly chlorinated swimming pools.
- **Climate change, rising temperatures, low water levels, and pollution** favour its growth.



Disease Transmission:

- *Naegleria fowleri* infects people when water containing the amoeba **enters through the nose**, travels to the brain, and causes **brain tissue damage and swelling**. This typically occurs when **people swim in warm freshwater bodies**.



- The infection **does not spread from person to person** and is **not caused by drinking contaminated water**.

Symptoms:

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

Treatment:

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

Why in News?

- Kerala has recently reported several cases of Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM).

6) SMILE Mission

What's in the news?

- The **European Space Agency (ESA)** and **China National Space Administration (CNSA)** jointly launched the **Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer (SMILE) Mission** from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana.

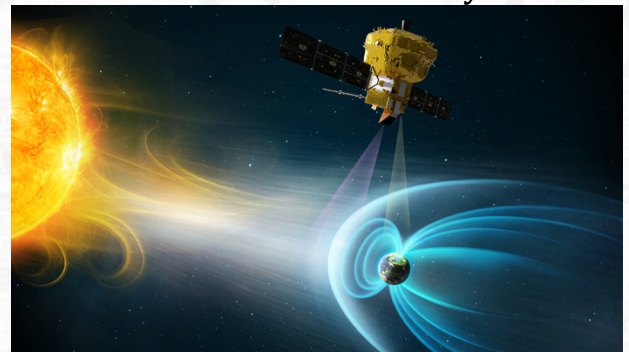
About the Mission

- The SMILE is an ambitious mission to **better understand solar storms, geomagnetic storms, and the science of space weather**.
- SMILE aims to capture the **first X-ray images of Earth's magnetosphere** in action and study the **interaction between the solar wind** (charged particles from the Sun) and **Earth's magnetic shield**.

Magnetosphere:

- A magnetosphere is the **region around a planet dominated by the planet's magnetic field**. Other planets in our solar system have magnetospheres, but **Earth has the strongest one of all the rocky planets**.
- The magnetosphere **shields our home planet from solar and cosmic particle radiation**, as well as **erosion of the atmosphere by the solar wind**.

- The spacecraft will be positioned at about 1.21 lakh km above Earth's north pole and be able to **observe the edge of the magnetosphere in its entirety**.
- SMILE weighs about 2,600 kg and has a **mission life of about three years**.



Significance of SMILE

- The Sun constantly spews various types of matter, magnetic fields, energy and plasma into space. Among the **most harmful solar ejections** are **solar flares, solar storms and coronal mass ejections**, all of which are **highly potent** and can **interfere with space weather**.
 - Perturbations to space weather can have **major ramifications on many of Earth's critical space assets**.
- The SMILE mission will, in real-time, be able to capture **X-ray images of how the Earth's magnetosphere instinctively reacts and protects the Earth** from numerous incoming solar emissions and charged particles.
- Unlike previous missions, it will also get a **full view of the interactions happening in the magnetosphere**.



REPORTS & INDICES

1) National Family Health Survey-6

About NFHS

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a **large-scale, multi-round survey** conducted in a **representative sample of households throughout India**.
- **Five rounds** of the survey have been conducted since the **first survey in 1992-93**.
- The survey provides **state and national information for India** on fertility, infant and child mortality, the practice of family planning, maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition, anaemia, utilization and quality of health and family planning services.
- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** has designated the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai**, as the nodal agency, responsible for providing coordination and technical guidance for the survey.
 - *Established in 1956, IIPS is dedicated to teaching, research, and capacity building in population studies and public health. It is under the administrative control of MoHFW.*

Why in News?

- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has released the **National Family Health Survey-6**.
- NFHS-6, conducted during **2023-24**, covered nearly **6.79 lakh households** across **715 districts** and provides **vital evidence on population, health, nutrition and family welfare indicators** and **supports evidence-based planning and programme implementation up to the district level**.

Key Findings from NFHS-5 (2019-21) to NFHS-6 (2023-24):

Safe Motherhood:

- NFHS-6 highlights **significant improvements in maternal and child healthcare services** across the country.
 - **95.9% of pregnant women received antenatal care (ANC)**, while mothers receiving ANC in the first trimester increased from 70.0% to 76.2%.
 - **Institutional deliveries** increased from 88.6% to **90.6%**, moving India closer towards universal coverage.

Family Planning Improvements:

- India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** remains at **2.0**.
- The **Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR)** increased from 66.7% to **69.1%**.

Child Immunization Success:

- **Full vaccination coverage among children age 12-23 months** increased from 83.8% to **87.1%**.

Progress in Child Nutrition:

- **Stunting** (low height for age) among children under five years declined substantially from 35.5% to **29.3%**.
- **Severe wasting** (too thin for one's height) declined sharply from 7.7% to **5.2%**, while **underweight prevalence in under five children** also registered a **marginal decline** from 32.1% to **31.8%**.

Health Protection Expansion:

- **Health insurance/financing scheme coverage** has **expanded significantly** from 41.0% to **60.2%** at the household level.
 - Flagship schemes such as **Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** have played a pivotal role in increasing access to affordable healthcare services, particularly for vulnerable populations.



India - Key Indicators

Indicators	NFHS-6 (2023-24)			NFHS-5 (2019-21)
	Urban	Rural	Total	Total
Population and Household Profile				
1. Population below age 5 years (%)	6.6	8.6	8.0	8.2
2. Population below age 15 years (%)	22.0	27.0	25.5	26.5
3. Population age 60 years and above (%)	12.7	13.0	12.9	11.8
4. Population living in households with electricity (%)	99.5	97.8	98.3	96.8
5. Population living in households with an improved drinking-water source ¹ (%)	99.1	95.4	96.5	95.9
6. Households using iodized salt (%)	96.2	93.3	94.2	94.3
7. Households with any usual member covered under a health insurance/financing scheme (%)	56.4	62.0	60.2	41.0
8. Households with any usual member having a bank account/post office account (%)	97.3	98.6	98.2	95.7
9. Female population age 6 years and above who ever attended school (%)	84.3	69.2	73.7	71.8
10. Households with any usual female members owning a house and/or land (alone or jointly with others) (%)	18.2	19.1	18.8	14.0
11. Children age 2-4 years who attended pre-school (%)	50.0	46.0	47.0	40.1
Characteristics of Adults (age 15-49 years)				
12. Women with 10 or more years of schooling (%)	61.5	39.7	46.4	41.0
13. Men with 10 or more years of schooling (%)	64.0	49.9	54.6	50.2
14. Women who have ever used the internet (%)	77.3	58.6	64.3	33.3
15. Men who have ever used the internet (%)	87.1	77.1	80.5	51.2
Marriage and Fertility				
16. Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years (%)	11.4	23.3	20.1	23.3
17. Men age 25-29 years married before age 21 years (%)	9.7	19.0	15.9	17.7
18. Total fertility rate (children per woman)	1.6	2.1	2.0	2.0
19. Women age 15-19 years who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey (%)	3.4	7.9	6.7	6.8
Current Use of Family Planning Methods (currently married women age 15-49 years)				
20. Any method ² (%)	69.6	68.9	69.1	66.7
21. Any modern method ² (%)	52.9	52.7	52.7	56.4
22. Any traditional method (%)	16.7	16.2	16.4	10.3
23. Female sterilization (%)	32.6	38.1	36.5	37.9
24. Male sterilization (%)	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.3
Unmet Need for Family Planning (currently married women age 15-49 years)				
25. Total unmet need ³ (%)	7.0	9.1	8.5	9.4
26. Unmet need for spacing ³ (%)	3.5	4.9	4.5	4.0
27. Unmet need for limiting ³ (%)	3.5	4.2	4.0	5.4
Maternal and Child Health				
Antenatal Care (for last birth in the 5 years before the survey)				
28. Mothers who had an antenatal check-up in the first trimester (%)	81.4	74.4	76.2	70.0
29. Mothers who had any antenatal care visits (%)	96.2	95.8	95.9	92.6
30. Mothers who had at least 4 antenatal care visits (%)	75.8	61.4	65.2	58.5
31. Mothers whose last birth was protected against neonatal tetanus ⁴ (%)	94.4	93.6	93.8	92.0
32. Mothers who consumed iron folic acid for 100 days or more when they were pregnant (%)	67.4	50.3	54.9	44.1
33. Mothers who consumed iron folic acid for 180 days or more when they were pregnant (%)	49.2	33.7	37.8	26.0
34. Registered pregnancies for which the mother received a Mother and Child Protection (MCP) card (%)	94.9	95.9	95.6	95.9
Delivery Care (for births in the 5 years before the survey)				
35. Institutional births (%)	95.2	89.0	90.6	88.6
36. Institutional births in public facility (%)	48.2	62.1	58.6	61.9
37. Births attended by skilled health personnel ⁵ (%)	95.3	90.0	91.3	89.4
38. Births delivered by caesarean section (%)	40.5	22.8	27.2	21.5
39. Births in a private health facility that were delivered by caesarean section (%)	57.4	52.2	54.1	47.4
40. Births in a public health facility that were delivered by caesarean section (%)	28.0	14.0	16.9	14.3



India - Key Indicators

Indicators	NFHS-6 (2023-24)		NFHS-5 (2019-21)	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Total
Postnatal Care (for last birth in the 5 years before the survey)				
41. Mothers who received postnatal care from a doctor/nurse/LHV/ANM/midwife/other health personnel within 2 days of delivery ⁺ (%)	88.6	80.7	82.8	78.0
42. Children born at home who were taken to a health facility for a check-up within 24 hours of birth (%)	6.6	6.4	6.4	4.2
43. Children who received postnatal care from a doctor/nurse/LHV/ANM/midwife/ other health personnel within 2 days of delivery ⁺ (%)	89.9	83.7	85.3	79.1
Child Vaccinations and Vitamin A Supplementation				
44. Children age 12-23 months fully vaccinated based on information from either vaccination card or mother's recall ⁶ (%)	81.0	83.1	82.6	76.6
45. Children age 12-23 months fully vaccinated based on information from vaccination card only ⁷ (%)	85.7	87.6	87.1	83.8
46. Children age 12-23 months who have received any vaccine (%)	95.7	96.5	96.4	96.4
47. Children age 12-23 months who have received BCG (%)	94.5	95.1	95.0	95.2
48. Children age 12-23 months who have received 3 doses of polio vaccine ⁸ (%)	83.6	85.5	85.0	80.5
49. Children age 12-23 months who have received 3 doses of pentavalent vaccine (%)	88.1	89.6	89.2	87.0
50. Children age 12-23 months who have received the first dose of measles-containing vaccine (MCV) (%)	91.1	91.9	91.7	87.9
51. Children age 24-35 months who have received a second dose of measles-containing vaccine (MCV) (%)	71.3	72.0	71.8	58.6
52. Children age 12-23 months who have received birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine (%)	80.0	76.8	77.6	67.4
53. Children age 12-23 months who have received 3 doses of rotavirus vaccine (%)	84.0	85.9	85.4	36.4
54. Children age 9-35 months who received a vitamin A dose in the last 6 months (%)	77.1	73.7	74.6	71.2
55. Children age 12-23 months who received most of their vaccinations in a public health facility (%)	90.2	97.4	95.6	94.5
56. Children age 12-23 months who received most of their vaccinations in a private health facility (%)	8.0	1.4	3.1	4.2
Treatment of Childhood Diseases (children under age 5 years)				
57. Prevalence of diarrhoea in the 2 weeks preceding the survey (%)	6.7	8.3	7.9	7.3
58. Prevalence of severe diarrhoea in the 2 weeks preceding the survey (%)	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.7
59. Prevalence of symptoms of acute respiratory infection (ARI) in the 2 weeks preceding the survey (%)	1.4	2.0	1.9	2.8
60. Children with fever or symptoms of ARI in the 2 weeks preceding the survey taken to a health facility or health provider (%)	74.8	67.3	68.8	69.0
Child Feeding Practices and Nutritional Status of Children				
61. Children under age 3 years breastfed within one hour of birth ⁹ (%)	48.0	50.8	50.1	41.8
62. Children under age 6 months exclusively breastfed ¹⁰ (%)	54.5	56.2	55.8	63.7
63. Children under age 6 months currently breastfeeding ¹⁰ (%)	91.0	96.0	95.6	95.1
64. Children under age 6 months exclusively breastfed or breastfeeding and consuming plain water only/other milk ¹⁰ (%)	82.4	86.2	85.3	82.8
65. Children age 6-8 months receiving solid or semi-solid food and breastmilk ¹⁰ (%)	58.8	59.7	59.5	45.9
66. Breastfeeding children age 6-23 months receiving an adequate diet ^{10, 11} (%)	15.6	15.0	15.1	10.8
67. Non-breastfeeding children age 6-23 months receiving an adequate diet ^{10, 11} (%)	18.2	15.2	16.3	12.3
68. Total children age 6-23 months receiving an adequate diet ^{10, 11} (%)	16.2	15.0	15.3	11.0
69. Children under 5 years who are stunted (height-for-age) ¹² (%)	23.9	30.9	29.3	35.5
70. Children under 5 years who are wasted (weight-for-height) ¹² (%)	16.5	19.8	19.0	19.3
71. Children under 5 years who are severely wasted (weight-for-height) ¹³ (%)	4.6	5.4	5.2	7.7
72. Children under 5 years who are underweight (weight-for-age) ¹² (%)	25.3	33.8	31.8	32.1
73. Children under 5 years who are overweight (weight-for-height) ¹⁴ (%)	1.8	1.1	1.3	3.4



India - Key Indicators

Indicators	NFHS-6 (2023-24)		NFHS-5 (2019-21)	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Total
Nutritional Status of Adults (age 15-49 years)				
74. Women whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal (BMI <18.5 kg/m ²) ¹⁵ (%)	13.2	22.5	19.7	18.7
75. Men whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal (BMI <18.5 kg/m ²) (%)	14.9	21.9	19.7	16.2
76. Women who are overweight or obese (BMI ≥25.0 kg/m ²) ¹⁵ (%)	42.8	25.5	30.7	24.0
77. Men who are overweight or obese (BMI ≥25.0 kg/m ²) (%)	36.3	23.0	27.3	22.9
Blood Sugar Level among Adults (age 15 years and above)				
Women				
78. Blood sugar level - high (141-160 mg/dl) ¹⁶ (%)	8.0	7.3	7.5	6.1
79. Blood sugar level - very high (>160 mg/dl) ¹⁶ (%)	11.9	8.0	9.1	6.3
80. Blood sugar level - high or very high (>140 mg/dl) or taking medicine to control blood sugar level ¹⁶ (%)	21.9	16.2	17.8	13.5
Men				
81. Blood sugar level - high (141-160 mg/dl) ¹⁶ (%)	8.8	8.8	8.8	7.3
82. Blood sugar level - very high (>160 mg/dl) ¹⁶ (%)	13.2	10.0	10.9	7.1
83. Blood sugar level - high or very high (>140 mg/dl) or taking medicine to control blood sugar level ¹⁶ (%)	23.9	19.7	20.9	15.6
Hypertension among Adults (age 15 years and above)				
Women				
84. Mildly elevated blood pressure (Systolic 140-159 mm of Hg and/or Diastolic 90-99 mm of Hg) (%)	10.5	8.9	9.4	12.4
85. Moderately or severely elevated blood pressure (Systolic ≥160 mm of Hg and/or Diastolic ≥100 mm of Hg) (%)	5.0	4.7	4.8	5.2
86. Elevated blood pressure (Systolic ≥140 mm of Hg and/or Diastolic ≥90 mm of Hg) or taking medicine to control blood pressure (%)	23.5	17.8	19.4	21.3
Men				
87. Mildly elevated blood pressure (Systolic 140-159 mm of Hg and/or Diastolic 90-99 mm of Hg) (%)	13.9	11.7	12.4	15.7
88. Moderately or severely elevated blood pressure (Systolic ≥160 mm of Hg and/or Diastolic ≥100 mm of Hg) (%)	3.6	3.1	3.3	5.7
89. Elevated blood pressure (Systolic ≥140 mm of Hg and/or Diastolic ≥90 mm of Hg) or taking medicine to control blood pressure (%)	26.2	20.4	22.1	24.0
Women's Empowerment (women age 15-49 years)				
90. Currently married women who usually participate in three household decisions ¹⁷ (%)	91.4	88.0	89.0	88.7
91. Women who worked in the last 12 months and were paid in cash (%)	29.8	31.2	30.8	25.4
92. Women having a bank or savings account that they themselves use (%)	88.3	89.3	89.0	78.6
93. Women having a mobile phone that they themselves use (%)	77.6	57.4	63.6	53.9
94. Women age 15-24 years who use hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual period ¹⁸ (%)	90.7	75.0	79.2	77.6
Gender Based Violence (age 18-49 years)				
95. Ever-married women age 18-49 years who have ever experienced spousal violence ¹⁹ (%)	17.5	24.4	22.3	29.2
96. Ever-married women age 18-49 years who have experienced physical violence during any pregnancy (%)	2.3	2.9	2.7	3.1
97. Young women age 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18 (%)	0.4	0.8	0.7	1.2
Tobacco Use and Alcohol Consumption among Adults (age 15 years and above)				
98. Women age 15 years and above who use any kind of tobacco (%)	4.6	10.0	8.4	8.9
99. Men age 15 years and above who use any kind of tobacco (%)	26.2	41.1	36.3	38.0
100. Women age 15 years and above who consume alcohol (%)	0.5	1.4	1.1	1.3
101. Men age 15 years and above who consume alcohol (%)	15.5	20.6	18.9	18.7



Women's Empowerment and Financial Inclusion:

- **Women who had ever used the internet nearly doubled** from 33.3% to **64.3%**.
- **Women having a bank or savings account** that they themselves use increased from 78.6% to **89.0%**, and **women having a mobile phone** that they themselves use rose from 53.9% to **63.6%**.
- The **use of hygienic methods of menstrual protection among women age 15-24 years** has increased from 77.6% to **79.2%**.

Challenges

- Despite the high rate of institutional births, **only about 50% of newborns are breastfed within the first hour of life**,

indicating that the health system must intensify efforts to support early initiation of breastfeeding.

- About 60% of children between the ages of six to eight months, receive solid/semi-solid food, while **only 15% between six to 23 months receive an adequate diet**.
- Emerging challenges such as **rising non-communicable diseases, lifestyle-related risks and the dual burden of undernutrition and rising overweight/obesity among adults** highlight the need for continued focus on **preventive healthcare, behavioural change and balanced nutrition strategies**.



ART & CULTURE

1) Netherlands Returns 11th-Century Chola Copper Plates To India

What's in the news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was presented with the historic **11th-century Chola Copper Plates** by authorities of **Leiden University** during his official visit to the **Netherlands**.
 - The copper plates were taken to the Netherlands during Dutch colonial rule on the Coromandel Coast in the 18th century.
- Known as the **Leiden Copper Plates**, the collection consists of 21 large and three small copper plates bound by a bronze ring bearing the seal of **Chola king Rajendra Chola I**.
 - Five plates contain inscriptions in **Sanskrit**, while sixteen are inscribed in **Tamil**. Another set of plates, carrying the seal of **Kulottunga Chola I**, also contains **Tamil inscriptions**.



Significance

- The **copper plates** are regarded as one of the most valuable records of the Chola Empire, **detailing its administration, taxation, land reforms, irrigation systems, and trade practices**.

- The inscriptions also highlight the **dynasty's religious harmony**, recording the **grant of Anaimangalam village for a Buddhist vihara** established by the **Srivijaya rulers of Southeast Asia**.
- Historians believe the plates provide **rare evidence of strong maritime, diplomatic, and cultural links between South and Southeast Asia** nearly a thousand years ago.

2) Vande Mataram

About

- Composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee**, 'Vande Mataram' was **first published** in the literary journal **Bangadarshan** in 1875.
- Later, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee incorporated the hymn in his novel '**Anandamath**' which was published in 1882.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee:

- Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–1894) was one of the most prominent figures of **19th-century Bengal**.
- As a **distinguished novelist, poet, essayist and civil servant** his contributions significantly influenced the **development of modern Bengali prose** and the articulation of an emerging Indian nationalism.
- His notable works include **Anandamath, Durgeshnandini, Kapalkundala**, and **Devi Chaudhurani**.

Ananda Math:

- Ananda Math is set in the backdrop of the **1769-73 Bengal famine**, which killed 10 million people, and the **late-18th century Sanyasi Rebellion**, a series of armed uprisings against the rule of **Mir Jafar** and his **East India Company overlords**.



- The central plot of 'Ananda Math' revolves around a group of Sanyasins known as Santanas, who dedicate their lives to the cause of their motherland. They venerate the motherland personified as the mother goddess; their devotion is solely to their land of birth.
- "Vande Mataram" is the song sung by the Santanas of Ananda Math.

- It was set to music by Rabindranath Tagore and was first sung by him at the 1896 Indian National Congress session in Calcutta.
- Its political significance emerged during the Swadeshi and anti-partition movements in Bengal, with the slogan Vande Mataram first raised publicly on August 7 1905 by thousands of students in Calcutta.
 - At the Varanasi session of the Indian National Congress that same year, Vande Mataram was adopted for all-India occasions.
- Over time, Vande Mataram became a rallying cry of freedom fighters, a slogan of resistance against the foreign power.

Impact on Indian Revolutionaries Abroad

- In 1907, Madam Bhikaji Cama raised the tricolour flag for the first-time outside India in Stuttgart, Berlin. The words Vande Mataram were written on the flag.
- Two years later, revolutionary Madan Lal Dhingra's final words before his execution in London were the same.
- In 1909, Indian patriots in Paris undertook the publication of a magazine called Bande Mataram from Geneva.

National Status

- Being officially adopted as the national song by the Constituent Assembly of India on 24th January 1950, the then President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad, declared that Vande Mataram should be honoured equally with the national anthem, Jana Gana Mana.

- **Note:** The Constitution never referred to any national song as part of the constitutional framework. It was only in 1976, by the 42nd amendment, that a provision was introduced for a fundamental duty under Article 51A (which also had a clause obligating every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideas and institutions, the National Flag, and the National Anthem).

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved an amendment to the Prevention of Insults To National Honour Act, 1971 to make any insult or obstruction to the singing of National Song Vande Mataram a punishable offence.
- At present, insults to the National Anthem Jana Gana Mana, the National Flag and the Constitution of India is mentioned in the 1971 Act and is punishable by an imprisonment of up to three years or a fine or both.

3) International Booker Prize

About

- The International Booker Prize, a literary award presented annually, recognises the best works of long-form fiction or collections of short stories translated into English and published in the UK and/or Ireland. It was established in 2005.
- Formerly known as the Man Booker International Prize, the award carries a prize money of 50,000 pounds.
- It is administered by the Booker Prize Foundation, a registered charity in the United Kingdom.

International Booker Prize vs Booker Prize:

- The International Booker Prize is distinct from the Booker Prize, which was first awarded in 1969.
- The key difference lies in the language of origin:



- The **Booker Prize** is awarded to the **best original novel written in English**.
- The **International Booker Prize** honours the **best work of fiction translated into English** from any other language.
- Both awards serve as **sister prizes within the Booker Prize Foundation**.

Taiwanese author Yáng Shuāng-zǐ, translated into English by Lin King.

Did you know?

- In 2025, Indian writer Banu Mushtaq and translator Deepa Bhashi won the International Booker Prize for the collection of short stories, "Heart Lamp".

Why in News?

- The International Booker Prize 2026 has been awarded to 'Taiwan Travelogue' by



DEFENCE & SECURITY

1) ULPGM-V3

What's in the news?

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has successfully carried out final development trials of the **UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3**, paving the way for its critical user trials by the armed forces.
- ULPGM-V3 is an **indigenous, fire-and-forget, precision-guided missile** specifically engineered for launch from **unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or combat drones)** to eliminate stationary and moving tactical threats on the ground and in the air.
- During the tests, the missile system was operated through an **advanced integrated Ground Control System (GCS)** designed to automate launch and operational readiness.



- The missile was developed by **Research Centre Imarat**, a Hyderabad-based DRDO laboratory, in collaboration with other DRDO facilities.

2) TARA Glide Weapon

What's in the news?

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** have successfully carried out the maiden flight-trial of the **Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) weapon system** off the coast of Odisha.

About TARA

- TARA, a **modular range extension kit** developed indigenously, is India's first

glide weapon system designed to convert unguided warheads into precision-guided weapons.



- The system aims to **enhance the range, accuracy and lethality of low-cost munitions** for engaging ground-based targets.
- The weapon has been designed and developed by **Research Centre Imarat**, in collaboration with other DRDO facilities.

3) Border Roads Organisation

About

- The **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** is a **road construction executive force** in India that provides **support to Indian Armed Forces**.
- It was set up in **1960** to **secure India's borders** and **develop road infrastructure** in remote areas of the north and north-east states of the country.
- BRO also develops and maintains road networks in **India's friendly neighbouring countries** such as **Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka**.
- Since 2015-16, BRO has been **functioning fully** under the **Ministry of Defence**. Earlier, it was partially under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Why in News?

- The 66th Raising Day of **Project Deepak** of the **Border Roads Organisation** was celebrated recently.



- Established in 1961, the project has been instrumental in executing critical infrastructure works in the strategically vital regions of the **Western Himalayas**.

4) Navy takes delivery of Project 17A frigate Mahendragiri

What's in the news?

- Mahendragiri**, the sixth ship of **Nilgiri-class (Project 17A)** was delivered to the Indian Navy recently, marking a significant milestone in achieving self-reliance in warship design and construction.



- The ship was built at **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL)**, a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Defence.

Project 17A:

- Project 17A, also known as the **Nilgiri-class frigate program**, is an **Indian Navy** initiative to build **seven advanced stealth guided-missile frigates** with **high indigenous content**.
 - A frigate is a **fairly small ship that can move at fast speeds**. A modern frigate acts as a **versatile, multi-mission warship** with roles including **anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare** to **protect other vessels** like merchant ships and larger fleet ships.
- With an **indigenous content of 75 per cent**, the project has involved over 200 MSMEs at MDSL.

5) BrahMos

About

- BrahMos is a **supersonic cruise missile** jointly developed by **India's** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the **Russian Federation's** NPO Mashinostroyeniya, a rocket design establishment.

Did you know?

- The name BrahMos has been coined from the names of two rivers, the **Brahmaputra** in India and the **Moskva** in Russia.

Ballistic Missiles vs Cruise Missiles:

- Ballistic missiles are **rocket-propelled weapons** that follow a **predetermined arched trajectory**.
 - These missiles can **travel vast distances** and are **capable of carrying both nuclear and conventional warheads**.
 - They often **exit the Earth's atmosphere** before re-entering to strike their targets.
- In contrast, **cruise missiles** are **guided missiles** that **remain within the Earth's atmosphere throughout their flight**.
 - Powered by **jet engines**, they maintain a **constant speed** and are designed for **precision strikes**.
 - Cruise missiles can be launched from **various platforms**, including aircraft, ships, and ground-based launchers.
 - They typically **fly at lower altitudes**, making them **harder to detect** by radar systems.

What is a Supersonic Cruise Missile?

- Depending upon the **speed**, cruise missiles are classified as:
 - Subsonic cruise missile** (flies at a speed lesser than that of sound i.e. less than 1 Mach)



2. **Supersonic cruise missile** (travels at a speed of around 2-3 Mach)
3. **Hypersonic cruise missile** (travels at a speed of more than 5 Mach).

- It is a **two-stage missile** with **solid propellant booster** as first stage and **liquid ramjet** as the second stage.



- Capable of flying at **Mach 2.8**, BrahMos uses a **"fire and forget" guidance system** — once launched, no further guidance is required.
- The missile's **low radar signature and high kinetic energy** make it especially **difficult to intercept**.
- The **range of the missile** was originally capped at **290km** as per obligations of the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**. Following **India's entry into the club** in 2016, the range has been **extended to 450km** and work is on to extend it to 600km and beyond.

Missile Technology Control Regime:

- MTCR is an **informal, voluntary association of governments** to **restrict the proliferation of missiles, complete rocket systems, unmanned air vehicles, and related technology**.
- Established in 1987, MTCR includes 35 members (including **India**).

Why in News?

- **Vietnam** has signed a BrahMos missile deal with India.
 - **The Philippines**, which signed a contract in 2022, was the **first**

foreign buyer of the BrahMos missile system from India. **Indonesia** has also entered into an agreement with India to procure the BrahMos missile system.

6) India conducts successful test-launch of Agni-1 ballistic missile

What's in the news?

- India has successfully test-fired **short-range ballistic missile 'Agni-1'** from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha.
- The test was carried out under the aegis of the **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)**.
 - *The tri-service Strategic Forces Command was created in 2003 to manage the strategic nuclear assets of India.*



About Agni-1

- Developed after the 1999 Kargil war, Agni-1 was created to precisely **fill the tactical gap between the 250-km range Prithvi-II and the longer-range Agni-II missile**.
 - The **Agni series** ranges from **Agni-I to Agni-V**, with the latter the most advanced (with a **range of 5,000 km**) and first tested in 2012. Other missiles in the series include Agni-I, Agni-II (2,000 km), and Agni-III and IV (2,500–3,500 km).
- Agni-1, with a **range of 700km to 1200km**, is capable of carrying **both conventional and nuclear warheads** and is designed for quick deployment and high mobility.



- It is designed to be **road-mobile** via specialised transporter erector launchers and can also be launched from **rail-based platforms**.
- Developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**, Agni-1 has already been deployed by the Indian armed forces and serves as a crucial component of India's strategic deterrence.



PLACES IN NEWS

1) Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

About

- The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is a **narrow waterway** connecting the **Gulf of Aden with the Red Sea**.
- This strait is an **essential route for travel** from the **Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean**, and it currently hosts a **significant proportion of maritime transport between Asia and Europe**.
- Situated in the **southern Red Sea**, this 36-kilometer-wide passage is bordered on the eastern side by **Yemen** and on the western side by the coasts of **Eritrea and Djibouti**.



Did you know?

- Literally meaning the 'Gate of Tears', the strait got its name due to the navigational dangers it presents to mariners.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM OTHER ARTICLES

1) PRAGATI 2026

About

- A **13-nation multilateral military exercise PRAGATI 2026** was recently held in Meghalaya.
 - Apart from **host India**, soldiers from **"12 friendly nations"** participated in the PRAGATI 2026. They are Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

2) Trend in Remittances

News:

- According to RBI data, **India received \$132 billions of remittances in 2024-25**, with the figure standing at **\$108 billion in the first three quarters of 2025-26**.
- According to the **RBI's latest survey on remittances**, **inflows from the Gulf countries of UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain had declined to 38% of the overall figure in 2023-24 from 47% in 2016-17**.
- Meanwhile, **money being sent to India has risen from advanced countries such as the US and the UK**.
- Remittances are a **key source of foreign exchange for India** as it helps **offset some part of the country's trade deficit**, which is under pressure due to a sharp rise in global energy prices and the rapid depreciation of the rupee.

3) Finance Ministry notifies 100% FDI in insurance sector

News:

- The Union Ministry of Finance has notified **100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector under the automatic route**.
- While **100% foreign investment** will be allowed in **insurance companies and intermediaries, including brokers**, under the **automatic route**, the **cap is**

20% for Life Insurance Corporation (LIC).

- The Parliament had passed the **Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (amendment of insurance laws) Bill, 2025**, in, 2025, paving the way for hiking the FDI cap in the insurance sector to 100% under the automatic route, from 74% earlier. Subsequently, after the President's assent, the Bill became law.

4) Finance Ministry notifies FDI easing to allow Chinese investments to enter

News:

- The Finance Ministry has notified a decision to **allow overseas companies with Chinese shareholding of up to 10% to invest in India under the automatic route**.
- In March 2026, the Union Cabinet amended its **2020 rules** that had **placed restrictions on Foreign Direct Investment from countries that shared a land border with India**.
 - **Press Note 3**, issued in 2020, had specified that **any entity of a country that shares a land border with India can invest in India only after securing Government approval**.
- The amendment now incorporates a provision of **'beneficial ownership'** and specifies that **companies with non-controlling stake (up to 10%) belonging to entities from these countries can invest in India without first seeking Indian government approval**.
 - While India shares borders with China, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Myanmar, the restrictions were primarily aimed at limiting **investments from China**,



following the Galwan Valley clash in June 2020.

5) Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve

About

- Namdapha, a National Park and Tiger Reserve, is situated in the state of **Arunachal Pradesh**. The area lies close to the **Indo-Myanmar-China trijunction**.
- The park is widely known for its **unique physical features of altitudinal variation from 200 m to 4571 m** due to which there is **diversity in its floral and faunal components**.
- It is **only park in the World to have the four Feline species of big cat** namely the **Tiger** (*Panthera Tigris*), **Leopard** (*Panthera Pardus*), **Snow Leopard** (*Panthera Uncia*) and **Clouded Leopard** (*Neofelis Nebulosa*) and **numbers of Lesser cats**.
- A number of primate species are seen in the park, such as **Assamese macaque, pig-tailed macaque, stump-tailed macaque** and a number of the distinctive **Hoolock Gibbons**, highly endangered and **only 'ape' species found in India** dwells in this forest.

6) Researchers discover rare new tree species in Kerala

News:

- Researchers from the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI), Kerala, have discovered a **new evergreen tree species from the southern Western Ghats of Kerala**.



- The newly discovered species identified in the **Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary** has been officially named, *Humboldtia nairiana*.
 - The species, belonging to the genus *Humboldtia*, has been **named in honour of G.M. Nair**, a distinguished plant biotechnologist and former Director of JNTBGRI.
- The species is **strictly endemic to Kerala** and is **presently known only from** the biodiversity-rich **Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve** at an elevation of about 300 meters.

7) Declining Out-of-Pocket Expenditure

News:

- Concurrent with the increase in government health expenditure, the **out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) share in total health expenditure has declined by 21%**, from 2013-14 till date.
- The OOPE as a share of the total health expenditure has been calculated as **43.4% in 2022-23**, as against **64.2% in 2013-14**.
- The **share of government health expenditure in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased** from 1.15% in 2013-14 to **1.43% in 2022-23**.

8) India, Korea agree to address India's growing bilateral trade deficit

News:

- The 12th round of negotiations on upgrading the existing trade agreement between India and South Korea was held recently, with South Korea agreeing to address **India's growing bilateral trade deficit**.
- The **India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IKCEPA)** came into force in 2010.
- India's trade deficit with South Korea stood at \$15.6 billion in 2025-26**, compared to \$5.1 billion in the financial year ended March 2010.



9) Digi Yatra

About

- Launched by the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** in **2022**, Digi Yatra is a **biometric-enabled digital processing system** that allows **air travellers to pass through various checkpoints at airports using facial recognition** instead of physical IDs or boarding passes.
- Currently available at major airports like Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Mumbai (with more to come), it's a part of India's vision to create **smart airports**.
- **Biometric data is only used for verification** during boarding and is **deleted within 24 hours of departure**.

10) Rozgar Mela

About

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi distributed more than 51,000 appointment letters to newly appointed youth in various Government departments and organisations at the 19th Rozgar Mela.
- 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**.

11) Cold Water Fisheries

News:

- India's cold water fisheries sector is emerging as an important component of the Blue Economy by generating livelihoods, improving nutrition, promoting eco-tourism, and supporting sustainable mountain development.
- Cold-water fisheries are practiced in **high-altitude snow-fed rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs** with **temperatures ranging between 5°C and 25°C**,

dissolved oxygen above 6 mg/L, and pH levels between 6.5 and 8.0.

- India's total fish production reached approximately 197.75 lakh tonnes during 2024–25, with **cold-water fisheries contributing nearly 3 percent of inland fish production**.
- Cold-water fisheries flourish across Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Meghalaya, and Nagaland, along with hill districts of West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

12) India Assumes Chair of Common Criteria Development Board

News:

- **India** has been nominated as the **Chair of the Common Criteria Development Board (CCDB)** from April 2026 to April 2028.
- The **Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA)** is the **foundational international treaty** that enables the **mutual recognition of IT security certificates across borders**.
- The **CCDB** serves as the **technical core of the CCRA**, managing the international work program for the Common Criteria (CC) and the Common Methodology for Information Technology Security Evaluation (CEM). While other CCRA groups handle policy matters, the **CCDB focuses on the technical standards and evaluation criteria** that secure global IT products.

13) Windfall Tax

About

- Windfall taxes are designed to **tax the profits a company derives from an external, sometimes unprecedented event**—for instance, the energy price-rise as a result of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- These are profits that cannot be attributed to something the firm actively did, like an investment strategy or an expansion of business.



- Governments typically levy a **one-off tax retrospectively over and above the normal rates of tax on such profits**, called **windfall tax**.
- One area where such taxes have routinely been discussed is **oil markets**, where price fluctuation leads to volatile or erratic profits for the industry.

14) LEADS 2025

News:

- The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** has released the **Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2025** report, which **benchmarks logistics performance across States and Union Territories**.
- The **seventh edition** of the report introduced a revised **four-tier classification of States and Union Territories based on logistics performance** (Exemplars, High Performers, Accelerators, Growth-Seekers), with **Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram and Delhi** placed as “**Exemplars**” in their respective categories.

15) Ecocide

News:

- Ecocide refers to the **widespread harms caused to the environment by human actions**, usually on a major industrial scale or affecting a huge area.
- The term was coined in 1970 to describe massive, long-term environmental devastation, particularly caused by the herbicide's use in the Vietnam War.
- **Vietnam** became the world's first country to codify ecocide in its domestic law in 1990. Since then, the use of the term has become more widespread, with many countries — such as Russia, Ukraine, Chile, France and Belgium — incorporating ecocide (or its equivalent) into their laws.

16) JANANI Platform

News:

- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has launched **JANANI (Journey of Antenatal, Natal and Neonatal Integrated Care)**, a **digital platform** designed to **comprehensively monitor and maintain digital health records of women during their reproductive age**.
- The platform aims to ensure **seamless tracking of maternal and child health services**, covering antenatal care, delivery preparedness, delivery, postnatal care, newborn care, home-based newborn and young child care, and family planning.

17) Cell Broadcast System

News:

- The government has launched the **Cell Broadcast System (CBS)** to **strengthen India's emergency communication systems and enhance public safety infrastructure**.
- CBS is an **indigenous technology** developed by the **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)** under the Department of Telecommunications, in collaboration with the **National Disaster Management Authority** and the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- CBS offers **precise geo-targeting capabilities**, enabling alerts to be **disseminated at the level of individual cell towers or clusters**, while also **allowing scalability to cover larger geographic areas**.
- It **overcomes the limitations of traditional SMS-based systems**, ensuring that critical information can be disseminated quickly and efficiently to large populations within targeted areas.
- The system enables **near real-time, multilingual alerts** that provide critical time for protective action in disasters such as flash floods and gas leaks, reaching users within seconds without any queuing delays.



18) National Florence Nightingale Awards 2026

News:

- President Droupadi Murmu conferred the **National Florence Nightingale Awards 2026** to fifteen Nursing professionals at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- The Award was instituted by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in **1973**.
- This award is given as a mark of recognition for the **meritorious services** rendered by the **nurses and nursing professionals** to society.
- Each award includes a **Certificate of Merit**, a **cash prize of one lakh rupees** and a **medal**.

19) PM Modi Receives Sweden's Royal Order Of Polar Star, Commander Grand Cross

News:

- **Sweden** has conferred the **Royal Order of Polar Star, Commander Grand Cross** upon **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** in recognition of exceptional public service and contribution towards strengthening relations with Sweden.
- The award is the **utmost recognition and honour that can be conferred upon a Head of Government**.



PRACTICE WITH PYQS

1. Belt and Road Initiative' is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of (2016)

- A. African Union
- B. Brazil
- C. European Union
- D. China

2. Consider the following statements: (2023)

1. Ballistic missiles are jet-propelled at subsonic speeds throughout their flights, while cruise missiles are rocket powered only in the initial phase of flight.
2. Agni-V is a medium-range supersonic cruise missile, while BrahMos is a solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

3. Consider the following countries: (2015)

1. China
2. France
3. India
4. Israel
5. Pakistan

Which among the above are Nuclear Weapons States as recognized by the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
- C. 2, 4 and 5 only
- D. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

4. Which one of the following National Parks has a climate that varies from tropical to subtropical, temperate and arctic? (2015)

- A. Khangchendzonga National park
- B. Nandadevi National Park
- C. Neora Valley National Park
- D. Namdapha National park



5. Consider the following substances: (2025)

- I. Ethanol
- II. Nitroglycerine
- III. Urea

Coal gasification technology can be used in the production of how many of them?

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

6. Which of the following statements with regard to the persons with disabilities in India is/are correct? (2026)

1. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, an Act passed by the Parliament of India in 2018, mandates reservation in education and employment, places a legal duty on Governments to ensure accessibility and non-discrimination.
2. The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan focuses on achieving universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities across three key domains - built infrastructure, transport systems and information and communication technology.
3. The National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) is a public sector organisation set up by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs as a not-for-profit company to promote entrepreneurship among Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Select the answer using the code given below:

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

7. Which of the following grants/grant direct credit assistance to rural households? (2013)

1. Regional Rural Banks
2. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
3. Land Development Banks

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

8. Which of the following statements with regard to India's indigenous new high resolution weather model, the 'Bharat Forecast System,' is/are correct? (2026)

1. Its objective is to generate forecasts at the Panchayats cluster level.
2. It was developed by IIT Delhi.

Select the answer using the code given below:



- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

9. Regarding 'Atal Pension Yojana', which of the following statements is/are correct? (2016)

1. It is a minimum guaranteed pension scheme mainly targeted at unorganized sector workers.
2. Only one member of a family can join the scheme.
3. The same amount of pension is guaranteed for the spouse for life after the subscriber's death.

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

10. Which one of the following revolts was made famous by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his novel Anand Math? (2006)

- A. Bhil uprising
- B. Rangpur and Dinapur uprising
- C. Bishnupur and Birbhum rebellion
- D. Sanyasi rebellion

11. Consider the following animals: (2021)

1. Hedgehog
2. Marmot
3. Pangolin

To reduce the chance of being captured by predators, which of the above organisms rolls up/roll up and protects/ protect its/their vulnerable parts?

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

12. 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



13. India is a member of which of the following? (2008)

1. Asian Development Bank
2. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
3. Colombo Plan
4. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

Select the correct answer using the codes given below

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

14. The crop is subtropical in nature. A hard frost is injurious to it. It requires at least 210 frost-free days and 50 to 100 centimeters of rainfall for its growth. A light well-drained soil capable of retaining moisture is ideally suited for the cultivation of the crop. Which one of the following is that crop? (2020)

- A. Cotton
- B. Jute
- C. Sugarcane
- D. Tea

15. Which one of the following sets is correctly matched? (1995)

1. Diphtheria, Pneumonia and Leprosy: Hereditary
2. AIDS, Syphilis and Gonorrhoea: Bacterial
3. Colour blindness, Haemophilia and Sickle cell anaemia: Sex linked
4. Polio, Japanese B encephalitis and Plague: Viral

Select the correct answer

- A. Only 2
- B. Only 3
- C. 1 and 4
- D. None of these

16. What is the Cas9 protein that is often mentioned in the news? (2019)

- A. A molecular scissors used in targeted gene editing
- B. A biosensor used in the accurate detection of pathogens in patients
- C. A gene that makes plants pest-resistant
- D. A herbicidal substance synthesized in genetically modified crops

17. With reference to the history of India, "Ulgulan" or the Great Tumult is the description of which of the following events? (2020)

- A. The Revolt of 1857
- B. The Mappila Rebellion of 1921
- C. The Indigo Revolt of 1859-60



D. Birsa Munda's Revolt of 1899-1900

18. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013 consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidized food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and or six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

19. Which of the following are the sources of income for the Reserve Bank of India? (2025)

- I. Buying and selling Government bonds
- II. Buying and selling foreign currency
- III. Pension fund management
- IV. Lending to private companies
- V. Printing and distributing currency notes

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. I and II only
- B. II, III and IV
- C. I, III, IV and V
- D. I, II and V

20. Consider the following statements: (2021)

1. The Governor of the Reserve bank of India (RBI) is appointed by the Central Government.
2. Certain provisions in the Constitution of India give the Central Government the right to issue directions to the RBI in public interest.
3. The Governor of the RBI draws his power from the RBI Act.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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



Answers:

1. D
2. D
3. A
4. D
5. B
6. B
7. C
8. A
9. C
10. D
11. D
12. D
13. A
14. A
15. D
16. A
17. D
18. B
19. A
20. C

