

OFFICERS' PULSE



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2025

Financing Sustainable Development
to 2030 and Mid-Century

Includes the SDG Index and Dashboards

June 2025 (Digest)

CURRENT AFFAIRS
MONTHLY

The **PULSE** of UPSC at your fingertips.

Foreword

Officers Pulse Digest is a comprehensive monthly current affairs magazine that serves as a complete resource for UPSC CSE Prelims. It includes significant topics from sources like **The Hindu, Indian Express, Business Standard, Yojana, Kurukshetra, Down to Earth**, and more.

Note:

Sentences highlighted in orange are statements from previous year questions.

Sample:

ENVIRONMENT

1) PULICAT LAKE

About Pulicat Lake

- Pulicat Lake is located on the **Coromandel Coast**, between the states of **Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh**, with the major part of the lake located in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is the **second largest brackish water lagoon** (after **Chilika Lake** in Odisha) in India.
 - *A lagoon is a shallow body of water separated from a larger body of water by a narrow landform, such as reefs, barrier islands.*
- The lake is separated from the **Bay of Bengal** by **Sriharikota island**, home to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre.
- It is a unique **Ecotone** that supports rich biodiversity, from aquatic life such as **mudskippers, seagrass beds**, and **oyster reefs** to more than 200 avian species (birds), including migratory birds such as **Eurasian curlews, bar-tailed godwits, sand plovers**, and **flamingos**.
 - *An ecotone is a transitional area between two Ecosystems.*
- **Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary** is located within the lake and hosts a rich biodiversity of birds and aquatic life.

Although “Officers Pulse- Digest” is primarily oriented towards Prelims, reading “Officers Pulse- In depth” along with it is crucial for effectively tackling the Prelims examination.

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SCHEMES

1) ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA

About the Scheme

- Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal) is a **Central Sector Scheme** with focus on **community participation** and **demand side interventions for sustainable groundwater management**.
- The scheme is implemented in **identified water stressed areas of seven States** in the country viz. **Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh**.
- The scheme, partly funded by the **World Bank**, is being implemented from **2020** for a period of 5 years by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- It envisages **people's participation** through the formation of water budgeting, preparation & implementation of Gram-panchayat-wise water security plans, etc.
- It also aims at bringing about **behavioural change at the community level** through awareness programs and capacity building for fostering sustainable groundwater management.



Why in News?

- The Centre has stressed the need to **scale up the Atal Bhujal Yojana across India**, citing its success in improving community-based groundwater management and raising awareness about water conservation.
- A third-party impact assessment by the **Quality Council of India** (*Refer Pulse Digest May 2025 edition*) found that the scheme has led to **increased community participation**, especially among women, **improved local knowledge** and a **shift towards more water-efficient crops and farming practices**, resulting in broader socio-economic benefits.

2) PRIME MINISTER'S EMPLOYMENT GENERATION PROGRAMME

About PMEGP

- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is a **central sector scheme** administered by the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** since 2008-09.
- It is a major **credit-linked subsidy programme** aimed at **assisting first generation entrepreneurs for setting up micro enterprises** in the **non-farm sector**.
- At the national level, the Scheme is being implemented by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** as the single nodal agency.
 - *KVIC is a **statutory organization** under the administrative control of the **Ministry of MSME**.*
- Under the scheme, loans are being provided by all Public Sector Banks, selected Private Sector Banks and Co-operative Banks with **margin money subsidy** (*refers to the amount that the government contributes to beneficiaries availing PMEGP loan*) being given by the Ministry of MSME through KVIC.

Categories of beneficiaries under PMEGP	Beneficiary's own contribution (of project cost)	Rate of Subsidy	
		Urban	Rural
General Category	10%	15%	25%
Special Category (including SC/ST/OBC /Minorities/ Women, Ex-Servicemen, Physically handicapped, NER, Hill, and Border areas etc)	5%	25%	35%

Scope

- The scheme is applicable to all viable projects in **rural as well as urban areas**, under the **Micro enterprises sector**.
- The maximum cost of the project admissible under the manufacturing sector is **Rs.25 lakhs** and the business/services sector is **Rs.10 lakhs**.
- **Only one person from a family** is eligible for obtaining financial assistance under the scheme.
- Assistance under the Scheme is available **only for new projects**.

Eligible Entrepreneurs / Borrowers

- Any individual, **above 18 years of age**;
- The beneficiaries should have **passed at least VIII standard**, for setting up of project costing above Rs.10 lacs in the Manufacturing Sector and above Rs. 5 lacs in the business /Service Sector,
- Self Help Groups;
- Institutions registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860;
- Production Co-operative Societies;
- Charitable Trusts.

Why in News?

- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has recently disbursed margin money subsidy of Rs 300 crore to 8794 beneficiaries across the country under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme.

3) NAVYA SCHEME

What's in the news?

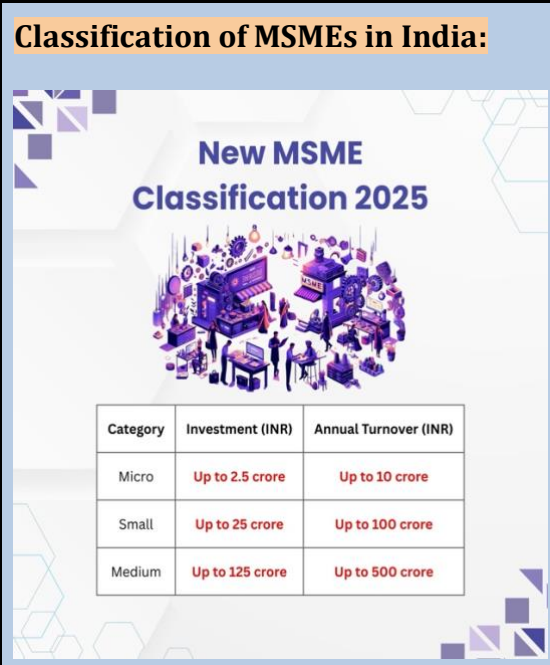
- The Government of India has launched **NAVYA (Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls)** aimed at **empowering adolescent girls through targeted vocational training**.
- NAVYA is a **joint pilot programme** by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** and the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**.

About the Scheme

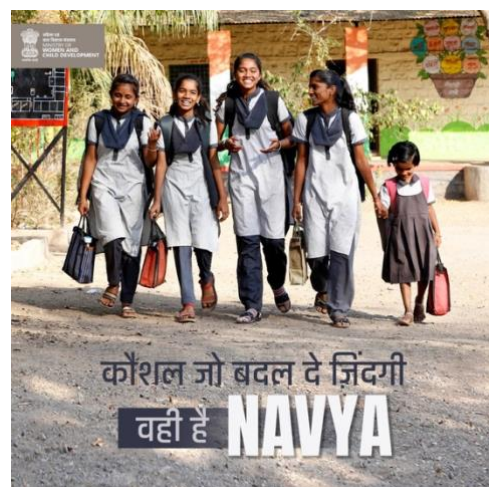
- It aims to **empower adolescent girls aged 16 to 18 years**, who have **completed at least Class 10**, by providing them with **vocational training** mainly in **non-traditional job roles**.
 - Under the programme, adolescent girls will be trained in skills such as graphic design, telecom and financial services, smartphone and drone assembly, solar PV and CCTV Installation, and hand embroidery - empowering them for emerging opportunities in a rapidly evolving job market.
- The pilot programme will initially be implemented across **27 districts in 19 states**, with a **focus on aspirational districts and those in the North-Eastern region**.

Classification of MSMEs in India:

New MSME Classification 2025



Category	Investment (INR)	Annual Turnover (INR)
Micro	Up to 2.5 crore	Up to 10 crore
Small	Up to 25 crore	Up to 100 crore
Medium	Up to 125 crore	Up to 500 crore



- Training under NAVYA will be implemented using existing resources from flagship schemes of MSDE like **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** and **PM Vishwakarma Yojana**.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana:

- PMKVY is the flagship scheme of the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship** to **enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training**.
- Launched in 2015, PMKVY is implemented by **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**.
- Under PMKVY, individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under **Recognition of Prior Learning**:
- Skill training is based on the **National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF)** and industry led standards.

PM Vishwakarma:

- PM Vishwakarma is a **Central Sector Scheme** launched in **2023** to **provide end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople who work with their hands and tools**.
- **The Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise** is the nodal ministry of the scheme.
- The prime focus of PM Vishwakarma is at improving the **quality** as well as the **reach of products and services** of artisans and craftspeople and to ensure that they are **integrated with the domestic and global value chains**.
- The scheme will provide support to artisans and craftspeople of **rural and urban areas** across India.

4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. JIYO PARSI

About

- Jiyo Parsi is a unique **Central Sector Scheme for arresting the population decline of the Parsi Community**.
- The scheme was launched in 2013-14.
- The objective of the scheme is to **reverse the declining trend of Parsi Population** by adopting scientific protocol and structured interventions to stabilize their population in India.
- The scheme has the following **three components**:
 - a) Under **Medical Component**, financial assistance is provided to Parsi Couples for medical treatment under standard medical protocol;
 - b) Under **Health of Community Component**, financial assistance is provided to Parsi Couples for child care and assistance of elderly people and
 - c) Under **Advocacy Component**, advocacy/outreach programmes are conducted to generate awareness among the Parsi Population.

4.2. POSHAN ABHIYAN

About

- POSHAN Abhiyan (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme For Holistic Nourishment) is a Government of India's flagship initiative which **focuses on advancing nutritional outcomes for children under six years, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers** holistically.
- It was launched in 2018.

- The Poshan Abhiyaan aims to achieve **measurable progress in reducing malnutrition** across India.
- Some key targets include:
 - Prevent and reduce **stunting** (low height-for-age) in **children** (0- 6 years)
 - Prevent and reduce **under-nutrition** (**underweight** prevalence) in **children** (0-6 years)
 - Reduce the prevalence of **anaemia** among **young Children** (6-59 months)
 - Reduce the prevalence of **anaemia** among **Women and Adolescent Girls** in the age group of 15-49 years
 - Reduce **Low Birth Weight** (LBW)



Strategic Pillars of Poshan Abhiyaan

- The Abhiyaan operates through **four strategic pillars**:
 - Access to Quality Services
 - Cross-Sectoral Convergence
 - Leveraging Technology
 - Jan Andolan (People's movement).

Poshan Tracker:

- Poshan Tracker is a **mobile based application** rolled out by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** in 2021 through National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Poshan Tracker is an important governance tool.
- The Tracker provides **real-time monitoring of the nutritional status** of pregnant women, lactating mothers, children 0-6 years, and adolescent girls.

4.3. PRADHAN MANTRI JAN VIKAS KARYAKRAM

About PMJVK

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** which aims to **address development gaps in identified Minority Concentration Areas** by **building socio-economic infrastructure and providing essential amenities**.
- Originally launched as the **Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP)**, the scheme was restructured as PMJVK in **2018** and implemented in 1300 identified blocks, towns, and district headquarters across the country.
- In **2022-23**, the scheme was revised to **expand its implementation to all districts across the country**, with the **condition** that projects under PMJVK can be proposed in areas where the **minority population is 25% or more** in the catchment area of 15 KM radius.
- The **Ministry of Minority Affairs** monitors the status of implementation of projects sanctioned under PMJVK.
 - Under PMJVK, **80% of the resources** would be utilized for projects related to **education, health and skill development** of which **at least 33-40%** will be earmarked for creation of assets/facilities for **women/girls**.

Minority Communities notified by the Central Government:

- At present **6 communities** namely **Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains** have been notified as Minority Communities under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992
- As per the **Census 2011**, the percentage of minorities in the country is about **19.3%** of the total population of the country. The population of Muslims is 14.2%; Christians 2.3%; Sikhs 1.7%, Buddhists 0.7%, Jain 0.4% and Parsis 0.006%.

4.4. PRADHAN MANTRI SWASTHYA SURAKSHA YOJANA

About the Scheme

- Government of India is implementing Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) which aims at **correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable tertiary healthcare services and to augment facilities for quality medical education** in the country.
- It was launched in **2006** as a **Central Sector Scheme**.
- PMSSY has two components:-
 - **Setting up of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS); and**
 - **Upgradation of existing Government Medical Colleges/Institutions (GMCIs).**

INITIATIVES

1) PRAGATI

About the platform

- PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation) is an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based multi-purpose and multi-modal platform launched in **2015** by the **Prime Minister's office (PMO)**.
- It is aimed at **addressing common man's grievances** and simultaneously **monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects** of the Government of India as well as projects flagged by State Governments.
- It is also a robust system for bringing **e-transparency and e-accountability** with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.
- It also promotes **cooperative federalism** as it brings on one platform the Secretaries of Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States.



Who designed it?

- The system has been designed in-house by the **PMO team with the help of National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.

Key features of PRAGATI application

- It is a **three-tier system (PMO, Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries of the States)**.
- The Prime Minister will hold a **monthly programme** where he will interact with the Government of India Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries through video-conferencing enabled by data and geo- informatics visuals.

National Informatics Centre:

- The National Informatics Centre under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** is the technology partner of the Government of India.
- It was established in 1976 with an objective to **provide technology-driven solutions to Central and State Governments** in various aspects of development.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 48th meeting of PRAGATI recently.

2) CPGRAMS

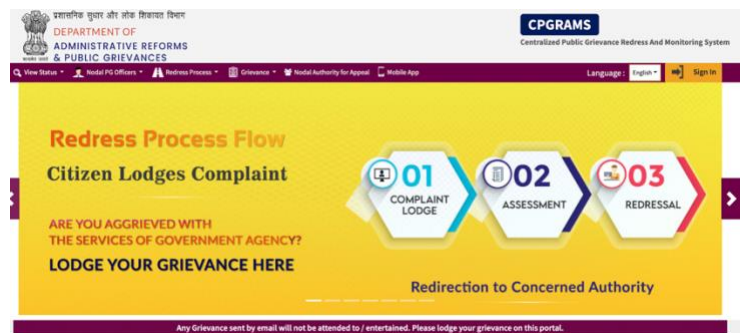
About

- 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 online web-enabled system was developed by the **National Informatics Centre** in association 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 Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) has released the CPGRAMS 34th monthly report for States/UTs for May, 2025.



3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. BHASHINI

About

- 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 Section 8 Company** of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
 - *A company is referred to as a "Section 8" company when it is registered as a **non-profit organization (NPO)**, i.e., when it has the motive of promoting arts, commerce, education, charity, protection of the environment, sports, science, etc.*



3.2. PM GATISHAKTI

About the Project

- In 2021, the Government of India **launched the "PM GatiShakti — National Master Plan"** for **infrastructure development** aimed at **boosting multimodal connectivity** and **driving down logistics costs**.
- PM GatiShakti is a **digital platform that connects 16 ministries** — including Roads and Highways, Railways, Shipping, Petroleum and Gas, Power, Telecom, Shipping, and Aviation - with a view to **ensuring holistic planning and execution of infrastructure projects**.
- The plan has been developed as a **Digital Master Planning tool** by **BISAG-N (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics)**.



- *BISAG-N is an autonomous scientific society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** to undertake technology development in the area of geo-spatial technology.*
- The GatiShakti portal will offer **200 layers of geospatial data**, including on existing infrastructure such as roads, highways, railways, and toll plazas, as well as geographic information about forests, rivers and district boundaries to **aid in planning and obtaining clearances**.
- The portal will also allow various government departments to **track**, in real time and at one centralised place, the **progress of various projects**, especially those with multi-sectoral and multi-regional impact.
- By incorporating infrastructure schemes under various ministries and state governments, and economic zones, the GatiShakti platform aims to **boost last-mile connectivity and bring down logistics costs with integrated planning and reducing implementation overlap**.

3.3. DEEP OCEAN MISSION

About the Mission

- With a view to **explore deep ocean for resources and develop deep sea technologies for sustainable use of ocean resources**, the Government of India launched the Deep Ocean Mission as a **central sector scheme** in **2021**.
- The initiative is spearheaded by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** in collaboration with ISRO, DRDO, Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Indian Navy.
- The **entire initiative** is based on **indigenous technology, developed and manufactured entirely in India**, showcasing the nation's self-reliance in cutting-edge science.

Major Components of the Mission:

1. **Development of Technologies for Deep Sea Mining, and Manned Submersible**
 - Under this component, a manned submersible (**Matsya 6000**) will be developed for safely carrying humans to a depth of 6000 metres in the ocean.
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.**



The United Nations (UN) has declared the decade **2021-2030** as the **Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development**.

ENVIRONMENT

1) UN OCEANS CONFERENCE

What's in the news?

- The third edition of the United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC) was recently concluded in **Nice, France**.
- The Conference aims to support urgent action to **conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources** for sustainable development and identify further ways and means to support the **implementation of SDG 14** ('Life Below Water').
- Co-hosted by **France and Costa Rica**, the **overarching theme** of the Conference is "**Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean**".



**UNITED NATIONS
OCEAN CONFERENCE
NICE, FRANCE 2025**

Key Outcomes

Nice Ocean Action Plan:

- Nations gathered at the conference adopted a **political declaration**, stressing that the ocean plays an essential role in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.
- The declaration, along with **voluntary commitments** made by some countries, forms the "**Nice Ocean Action Plan**" which is intended to be an ambitious roadmap for all states in the context of SDG 14.

- **Oceans**, which cover approximately **71% of the Earth's surface**, are the **world's largest carbon sinks**, having **absorbed around 90% of the excess heat** in the Earth system generated by rising greenhouse gas levels.
- More than **3 billion people** depend directly on the ocean for their livelihood.
- But **rising global temperatures, insufficient protection and excessive exploitation of marine resources** are threatening them, leading to a decline in ocean health that poses risks for marine ecosystems, humans and Earth's health.
- Despite its significance, the oceans are **underfunded**. Oceans receive **less than 1 per cent of all climate finance**.

High Seas Treaty:

- UNOC was also seen as a platform to catalyse ratifications for the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement**, or **High Seas Treaty**, adopted in 2023, after two decades of negotiations.

What are the High Seas?

- **Parts of the sea that are not included in the territorial waters or the internal waters of a country** are known as the **high seas**, according to the **1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas**.
- It is the **area beyond a country's Exclusive Economic Zone which extends up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline and till where a nation has jurisdiction over living and non-living resources**.
- **No country is responsible for the management and protection of resources on the high seas**.

How important are the high seas?

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

- Implementing the BBNJ treaty is crucial for achieving the **"30x30" Target** of the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** which aims at **conserving at least 30 per cent of land and water by 2030**.
 - 50 countries have ratified the treaty, short of the 60-mark needed for the treaty to enter into force.
 - **India** has signed the BBNJ treaty but has not yet ratified it.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework:

- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is a landmark international agreement adopted in **2022** at the **15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity**.
- The most significant part of the framework is a commitment to **protect 30% of land and water considered important for biodiversity by 2030**, known as the **30×30 target**.
- The framework features **23 targets to be met by 2030** and **four global goals** to preserve biodiversity for current and future generations.
- The **four overarching goals** are:
 - halt human-induced species extinction,
 - sustainable use of biodiversity,
 - equitable sharing of benefits, and
 - closing the biodiversity finance gap of \$700 billion per year.

2) TWO NEW RAMSAR SITES IN RAJASTHAN

About

- The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance** signed in **1971**, is an international treaty for the **conservation and sustainable use of wetlands**.
- It is named after the **Iranian city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea**.
- It is the **only global treaty to focus on a single ecosystem (wetlands)**.
- At present, more than 170 nations are signatories (including **India**) to the Ramsar Convention.

Wetlands:

- According to the Ramsar convention, **wetlands are defined as** "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres".
- This definition **includes all lakes, rivers, underground aquifers, swamps, marshes, and other major water bodies**.
- Wetlands help **regulate climate conditions through carbon sequestration**, that is, carbon storage from the atmosphere. The plant communities and soil in wetlands **capture carbon instead of releasing it** to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, one of the major drivers of global warming.

- Wetlands are **among the most productive ecosystems in the world**, comparable to rainforests and coral reefs. An immense variety of species of microbes, plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish and mammals can be part of this ecosystem.
- A contracting party agrees to **nominate at least one wetland** in its territory to the List of Wetlands of International Importance based on enumerated criteria.
 - To be Ramsar site, it **must meet at least one of the nine criteria** defined by the Ramsar Convention, including supporting vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities; or regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds; or is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks are dependent upon.
- Contracting Parties are committed to the **Convention's three pillars**:
 1. Work towards the **wise use** of all their wetlands.
 - a. *Wise use means the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland and allowance of sustainable use for the benefit of people and the environment.*
 2. **Designate suitable wetlands** for the list of Wetlands International Importance and ensure their effective management.
 3. **Cooperate internationally** on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.

Montreux Record

- The Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites on the List of Ramsar wetlands of international importance where **changes in ecological character** have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
- It is maintained as **part of the Ramsar List**.
- Currently, **Keoladeo National Park** (Rajasthan) and **Loktak Lake** (Manipur) from India are being kept under the record for taking appropriate steps for ecological restoration.
- **Chilika lake** (Odisha) was placed in the record but was later removed from it.

Why in News?

- **Two more wetlands from India** have been added to the **list of Ramsar sites**, taking the number of such sites in the country to **91**.
- The latest to join the list of Ramsar sites in India are **Khichan** in Phalodi and **Menar** in Udaipur, **both in Rajasthan**.

3) NATIONAL BOARD FOR WILDLIFE

About NBWL

- The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is a **statutory board** set up in **2003** by an amendment to the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- It is the **apex body for wildlife conservation** in India. The Board is responsible for promotion of conservation and development of wildlife and forests.
- NBWL is chaired by the **Prime Minister of India**.
 - The NBWL has **47 members** including the chairperson. The committee includes **government officials** as well as **“non-official members”, or independent experts**.
- Every new government constitutes a new board, based on the provisions of the WLPA, with the new PM as the chair.
- The **Standing Committee** of NBWL is chaired by the **Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, who is also the **vice chairperson of the NBWL**.

Powers of NBWL

- The NBWL **advises the central and state governments** on the ways and means of promoting wildlife conservation and controlling poaching and illegal trade of wildlife and its products.
- It can also make **recommendations on setting up of national parks and other protected areas** and on matters relating to restriction of activities in those areas.
- The NBWL has **special responsibilities with respect to tiger reserves**, specifically, to **ensure that no tiger reserves or areas linking different tiger reserves are diverted towards ecologically unsustainable use**, without prior approval.
- The NBWL has the power to **approve projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries**.
- **No alteration** of the **boundaries of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries** can be done **without the permission of the NBWL**.
- The Wildlife Protection Act mandates that **without the approval of the Board, de-reservation of Tiger Reserves, construction of tourist-lodges and destruction/diversion of wildlife habitat cannot take place**.

Why in News?

- The **Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife**, headed by Union Environment Minister, has approved a proposal to **alter the boundaries of the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan** by increasing the area of its critical tiger habitat (CTH), while slightly reducing its buffer zone.
 - The reconfiguration aims to resolve longstanding legal and management challenges caused by the fragmentation of the existing CTH, which is larger than the officially-notified Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary.

Sariska Tiger Reserve

- Sariska Tiger Reserve is a protected area in **Rajasthan**, cradled in the valley of the **Aravalli Range**.
- The forests are of a **typical dry deciduous type** with **Dhok** as the dominant tree species.
- Sariska is very rich in wild animals such as **Panther, Hyena, Jackal, Jungle cat, caracal, etc.**
- Around 2004, Sariska became the **first tiger reserve** in India to witness a **local extinction of tigers** — from 28 to zero — due to **poaching**.
- Subsequently, tigers were **relocated from Ranthambore** and it took years of concerted conservation efforts to revive the population. Currently, the tiger population in Sariska stands at 49.

- A tiger reserve includes **two parts**:
 - Core or critical tiger habitat
 - Buffer or peripheral area.
- Critical tiger habitat is to be **kept free of human activity and presence** to aid tiger conservation and tiger breeding.
- Buffer zone acts as the area **peripheral to CTH** providing supplementary habitat for dispersing tigers, besides offering **scope for co-existence of human activity**.

FLORA & FAUNA

1) DHOLES RETURN TO ASSAM'S KAZIRANGA LANDSCAPE

About

- **Asiatic wild dogs** (*Cuon alpinus*), known across south Asia as 'dholes', are **highly social carnivores** that live in close-knit packs of 2-25 individuals.
- They are called "**whistling dogs**" for their eerie, high-pitched calls to communicate.
- Listed as '**Endangered**' on the **IUCN Red List** and protected under **Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the dhole once ranged widely across **Central, East, and Southeast Asia**.
- The species now occupies **less than 25 per cent of its historical global range**, primarily due to **threats like retaliatory killings, habitat loss, and a decline in prey availability**.
- Today, its distribution is **much more fragmented**, with confirmed populations in parts of **India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Southeast Asia**.



Why in News?

- The dhole, or Asiatic wild dog, believed to have been locally exterminated, has made a confirmed return to **Assam's Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape (KKAL)**, according to a new study by scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
 - **KKAL** is a vast area in **Assam encompassing Kaziranga National Park and other protected areas**. It is known for its rich biodiversity and significant populations of endangered species like the one-horned rhinoceros, Bengal tiger, and Asian elephant.
 - **WII** is an **autonomous institution** established in 1982 under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- The last confirmed sighting of dholes in northeast India was reported from **Nagaland in 2011**.

2) GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN

About

- The **Ganges river dolphin** (*Platanista gangetica*), commonly known as *susu*, is a **freshwater dolphin species** native to the **Indian subcontinent**.
- They primarily inhabit the **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna** and **Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems** in **India, Bangladesh, and Nepal**.
- One of the most notable features of Gangetic River Dolphins is their reduced eyesight. They are **essentially blind**, as their eyes lack a lens and are only capable of detecting light and dark.
 - Gangetic River Dolphins use **echolocation** to **navigate** their environment, **locate prey**, and **communicate**.



Echolocation is a technique used by **bats, dolphins and other animals** to **determine the location of objects using reflected sound**. This allows the animals to move around in pitch darkness, so they can navigate, hunt, identify friends and enemies, and avoid obstacles.

- **Females are larger** than males and **give birth once every two to three years to only one calf**.
- Gangetic dolphins are **indicator species**, and serve as a reliable indicator of the health of the entire river ecosystem.
- **The Indian government has declared the Ganges river dolphin as the National aquatic animal.**
- **Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary**, located in **Bihar**, is dedicated to the conservation of the species.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - IUCN Red List: **Endangered**; CITES: **Appendix I**; Wildlife Protection Act (2022): **Schedule I**.

Why in News?

- Members of several organisations staged protests in southwestern Assam to oppose a hydropower project planned on the **Kulsi River**, a **natural habitat of the endangered Ganges river dolphin**.
 - The Kulsi River is a **tributary of the Brahmaputra**. The river originates from **West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya**.



The Ganges river dolphin is known as the “**Tiger of the Ganges**” for the role it plays as a top predator, and because it is an ecosystem indicator species – much like a tiger is in a forest.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. GHARIALS

About

- Gharials (*Gavialis gangeticus*), also known as **gavials**, are a type of **freshwater crocodile species**.
- They are distinguished by their **long, thin snouts** lined with numerous sharp, **interlocking teeth**.
- **Males** are significantly **larger than females**.
- **Males** develop a **bulbous growth** at the tip of their **snout**, called “**ghara**” which is absent in females.
 - The **ghara** partially covers the crocodile's nostrils and acts as a **vocal resonator**, creating a loud, buzzing sound **helping males attract a mate**.
- They are **piscivorous in their diet** as they primarily feed on **fish**.
- They are considered as **indicator species** for healthy river ecosystems.
 - Indicator species are organisms whose presence, absence, or abundance **reflects the overall health of an ecosystem**.



Geographical Distribution:

- **Historically**, gharials were found in the river system of **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and southern part of Bhutan and Nepal**.

- Today, their major population occurs in **three tributaries of the Ganga River: the Chambal and the Girwa Rivers in India and the Rapti-Narayani River in Nepal.**

Conservation Status:

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

ECONOMY

1) MPC CUTS REPO RATE BY 0.5% TO BOOST GROWTH

About MPC

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is a committee of the RBI which is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy interest rate (**repo rate**) to **contain inflation within the specified target level**.
- The **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934** was amended in **2016** to provide the **statutory and institutionalised framework** for MPC.
- The MPC has **six members: RBI Governor (Chairperson)**, RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy, one official nominated by the RBI Board and remaining 3 members would represent the Government.
- The MPC is required to meet **at least four times in a year**. The **quorum** for the meeting is **four members**.
- The MPC makes decisions based on **majority vote**. In case of a tie, the **RBI governor will have a second or casting vote**.
- Each Member of MPC writes a **statement** specifying the reasons for voting in favour of, or against the proposed resolution.

Under the **flexible inflation targeting (FIT) framework**, the RBI targets to contain **Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation within 4 percent with a tolerance band of (+/-) 2 percent** for the period April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2026.

Why in News?

- In a bid to spur growth, the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee has decided to **slash the policy repo rate by 50 basis points (bps) to 5.50%**.
 - *One basis point is equal to 0.01%.*
- This will **reduce the interest burden for borrowers** but will also **cut the interest earned on savings** by depositors.



Repo Rate:

- The Repo Rate is the **interest rate at which the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) loans money to commercial banks**.
- It is an essential **monetary policy tool**, affecting the **money supply and overall economic activity**.
- When the **repo rate goes up, borrowing costs more** for commercial banks, thus **increasing lending rates** for consumers and companies, **discouraging borrowing and spending** to manage inflation.
- On the other hand, a **reduction in the repo rate reduces the cost of borrowing** for banks, **spurring borrowing and spending**, thereby fostering economic growth through higher consumption and investment.

- Separately, the RBI also decided to **reduce the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 100 bps over the course of this year to 3%**.
 - This move is expected to infuse approximately **₹2.5 lakh crore** into the banking system.

Cash Reserve Ratio:

- CRR is the **specified minimum fraction of total deposits**, which **commercial banks have to hold as reserves either in cash or as deposits with the RBI**.
- The aim here is to **ensure that banks do not run out of cash to meet the payment demands** of their depositors.
- CRR is a crucial **monetary policy tool** and is used for **controlling money supply** in an economy.
- **Increasing the CRR reduces the funds** available with commercial banks for lending, leading to a **contraction in the money supply**. Conversely, **decreasing the CRR increases the lendable resources** of banks, resulting in an **expansion of the money supply**.

- The MPC also decided to change its **policy stance from accommodative to neutral**, leaving it free to raise repo rates as per economic conditions.

- An **accommodative stance** refers to a monetary policy approach where the **central bank is inclined to increase the money supply to stimulate economic growth**.
- A **neutral stance** indicates that the RBI **maintains flexibility** in adjusting policy rates based on prevailing economic conditions.
 - This means that the central bank is **open to either increasing or decreasing interest rates**, depending on data related to inflation and economic growth.

2) FINANCIAL STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

About FSDC

- Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) is an apex-level **non-statutory body** constituted in **2010** to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability.
- **It is chaired by the Union Finance Minister of India.**
- Its members include the heads of financial sector regulators (RBI, SEBI, PFRDA, IRDA), Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and Chief Economic Adviser.
- **The Council monitors macro prudential supervision of the economy**, including functioning of large financial conglomerates, and **addresses inter-regulatory coordination and financial sector development issues**.
- It also focuses on **financial literacy and financial inclusion**.
- **No funds are separately allocated** to the Council for undertaking its activities.

Why in News?

- The 29th meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council was held in Mumbai.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. NATIONAL INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

About NIIF

- National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) is an **Indian-government backed entity** established in **2016** to **provide long-term capital to the country's infrastructure sector**.
- The NIIF aims to maximize the economic impact mainly through **infrastructure development** in commercially viable projects.
- The Indian government has a **49 per cent** stake in NIIF with the **rest held by foreign and domestic investors**.
- NIIF got registered with SEBI as an **Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)**.
- The **Governing Council** of NIIF is chaired by the **Union Finance Minister**.
- NIIF currently manages **four funds** each with its distinctive investment mandate.
 - **Master Fund**
 - It primarily invests in operating assets in core infrastructure sectors such as transportation and energy.
 - **Private Markets Fund**
 - This fund invests in funds managed by third-party managers in infrastructure and associated sectors.
 - **Strategic Fund**
 - This fund is aimed at growth and development-stage investments in large scale projects in a broad range of sectors of economic and commercial importance.
 - **India-Japan Fund**
 - This is **NIIF's first bilateral fund**. IJF invests in environment preservation in India and also seeks to enable opportunities for collaboration between Indian and Japanese companies.



AIFs are privately pooled funds that are exclusively governed under the framework of SEBI(AIF) Regulations, 2012

They don't come under any other framework established by legislation rather by these regulations

The RBI may indirectly control investments into AIFs by regulated entities through setting caps or limits to avoid large scale financial collapse

3.2. UNIFIED PENSION SCHEME

What is UPS?

- The Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) has been introduced as an **option under the National Pension System (NPS)** by the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** for the **Central Government employees covered under NPS**.
 - *PFRDA, is a **statutory regulatory body** established by an Act of Parliament, to promote, develop and regulate the pension sector in India.*
 - *Created in **2003**, PFRDA was initially designed for government employees exclusively, but its services were subsequently expanded to include **all Indian nationals and NRIs, including self-employed persons**.*
- UPS became operational with effect from **April 1, 2025**.

National Pension System:

- NPS was introduced by the **Central Government** in **2004** to help the individuals have **income in the form of pension** to take care of their retirement needs.
- **PFRDA** regulates and administers NPS under the **PFRDA Act, 2013**.
- NPS is a **market-linked defined contribution scheme** that helps one save for retirement.

Eligibility:

- NPS is **mandatory for Central Government employees**, who joined service on or after **January 1, 2004**, except for those in the **armed forces** and is also extended to the **employees of Central Autonomous Bodies** from the said date.
- It is also **available to all State Government employees/employees of State Autonomous Bodies**, if the respective State/UT opted for it.
- NPS can be **voluntarily adopted by the corporates** for their employees and contributions are made to the NPS account as per the terms of employment.
- NPS **voluntary model** is **available to all the citizens of India** including those residing abroad, between the age of **18 and 70 years**.

Features of Unified Pension Scheme

- **Assured pension:** The scheme assures **50% of the average basic pay** drawn over the last 12 months prior to retirement. This applies to employees with **minimum qualifying service of 25 years**.
 - In the case of retirement after a **minimum 10 years of service**, the UPS provides for an **assured minimum pension of Rs 10,000 per month**.
- **Contributory in nature:** UPS is **contributory in nature**, wherein **employees will be required to contribute 10%** of their basic salary and dearness allowance while the **employer's contribution (the Central government) will be 18.5%**.
- **Assured family pension:** Upon a retiree's death, their immediate family would be eligible for **60% of the pension last drawn** by the retiree.
- **Inflation indexation** will apply to the assured pension. This will be in the **form of dearness allowance (DA)** based on the **All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers**.
 - *Inflation indexation is a way to adjust income payments and investment purchase prices to account for inflation.*
- **Lump sum payment:** This will be in **addition to gratuity**, and will be calculated as **1/10th of the monthly salary** (pay plus dearness allowance) on the date of retirement for every six months of service completed.

Who is eligible for the UPS?

- The **Central Government employees**, who are covered under NPS, are eligible to submit their option for UPS under National Pension System.

How does UPS differ from NPS?

	Unified Pension Scheme	National Pension System
Assured Pension	UPS provides an ' Assured Pension ', based on the average basic pay and years of service of the employee.	NPS does not provide a guarantee of assured pension or a minimum pension. The payouts are based on the returns generated by the contributions in the market.
Family Pension	UPS assures a family pension which will be given till the	NPS has no such option .

	presence of funds in the contributed account.	
Government Contribution	In UPS, employees contribute 10 percent of their basic pay and the government contributes 18.5 percent.	In NPS, the Government contribution was less at 14 percent and the employee contribution was the same 10 percent.
Inflation	In UPS, pension will be adjusted based on the level of inflation.	NPS does not have any adjustments based on inflation.

AGRICULTURE

1) WORLD'S LARGEST GRAIN STORAGE SCHEME

About

- In order to create **decentralized food grain storage capacity** in the country, the Government of India in 2023 approved the **World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in the Cooperative Sector**, which has been rolled out as a Pilot Project.
- It entails creation of **various agri infrastructure at the level of Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS)** such as decentralized godowns, custom hiring center, processing units, sorting and grading facilities, cold storage units, etc. through convergence of various existing schemes of the Government of India.
 - A PACS is a basic unit and smallest co-operative credit institution in India. It works on the grassroots level.
- The Plan **addresses transportation and distribution challenges** by enabling local storage of grains at the PACS level, minimizing long-distance transportation costs and losses.
- Additionally, by **integrating PACS with agri-marketing and procurement systems, direct access to storage facilities** is ensured for farmers, **reducing their dependence on intermediaries**.

Why in News?

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah chaired a review meeting of the world's largest cooperative food grain storage scheme in New Delhi.

2) NATIONAL TURMERIC BOARD

What's in the news?

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah has inaugurated the **headquarters of the National Turmeric Board in Nizamabad, Telangana**.

About Turmeric:

- Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is **native to Southeast Asia** and is grown commercially in the region, primarily in India.
- Turmeric, also known as **Golden spice of India**, can be grown in **diverse tropical conditions from sea level to 1500 m above sea level**, at a **temperature range of 20-35°C** with an **annual rainfall of 1500 mm or more**, under rainfed or irrigated conditions.
- Though it can be grown on different types of soils, it **thrives best in well-drained sandy or clay loam soils with a pH range of 4.5-7.5 with good organic status**.

Turmeric in India:

- **India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of turmeric in the world.**
- **More than 30 varieties of Turmeric are grown in India** and it is grown in over 20 states in the country.
- **The largest producing states of Turmeric are Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.**
- **The leading export markets for Indian Turmeric are Bangladesh, UAE, USA and Malaysia.** With the focused activities of the Board, it is expected that turmeric exports will reach **USD 1 Billion by 2030** (from 227 million USD in 2023-24).

About the Board

- The National Turmeric Board will focus on the **development and growth of turmeric and turmeric products in the country.**
- It will especially focus on **capacity building and skill development** of turmeric growers for harnessing greater benefits out of value addition.
- The Board will also promote **quality and food safety standards and adherence** to such standards.
- The Board shall have a **Chairperson** to be appointed by the Central Government, **members** from various Departments of the Union Government and State Government representatives.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) G7 SUMMIT

About G7

- The Group of Seven (G7) is an **informal group of seven of the world's most industrialized and developed economies**.
- Their political leaders come together annually to discuss important global economic, political, social and security issues.
- The G7 draws its roots from a meeting between the current G7 members, excluding Canada, that took place in **1975**.
- Unlike the United Nations or NATO, the G7 is **not a formal institution with a charter and a secretariat**.
- The **presidency**, which **rotates annually among member states**, is responsible for setting the agenda of each year's summit.

Members

- The G7 member countries are the **United States, Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Italy, and Canada**.
- The **European Union** is a “non-enumerated” member and **does not assume the rotating G7 presidency**.
- **Russia** belonged to the forum from 1998 through 2014, when the bloc was known as the **G8**, but was **suspended** following its annexation of Crimea.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently attended the **51st Group of Seven Summit in Canada**.
- Although **India is not a member of the group**, it has been invited as an "outreach partner" to the summit multiple times since 2003.



2) SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE 2025

About

- The Shangri-La Dialogue is **Asia's premier defence and security summit** that 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 22nd edition of the Shangri-La Dialogue was recently held in Singapore.



ORGANISATIONS

1) IREDA

About

- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) is a **Navratna Government of India Enterprise** under the administrative control of **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**.
- IREDA was established as a **Non-Banking Financial Institution** in 1987 with the motto: 'ENERGY FOR EVER'.
- The main objective of IREDA is to give **financial support** to specific projects and schemes for generating electricity and / or energy through **new and renewable sources and conserving energy through energy efficiency**.

Why in News?

- IREDA has successfully raised ₹2,000 crore through a **Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP)**.
 - QIP is a way to **issue shares to the public without going through standard regulatory compliance**.
 - The only parties eligible to purchase QIPs are **qualified institutional buyers (QIBs)**, a special group of institutional investors recognised for their financial expertise and ability to make large-scale investments.

Navratnas are the **second category** of the central government-owned 'Ratna' companies, **placed between the Maharatnas and the Miniratnas**.

The **Department of Public Enterprises** of the **Ministry of Finance** picks the CPSEs for Navratna status based on criteria including profitability, net worth, earning, inter-sectoral performance, etc.

2) NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS

About

- **National Council for Older Persons (NCOP)** was constituted in 1999 under the **Chairpersonship of the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment** to advise the Government in the formulation and implementation of policy for the aged.
- In 2012, the NCOP was reconstituted in order to encourage more participation from every region and **renamed as National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSrC)**.
- The Council is **mandated to meet at least twice a year**.
- The **mandate of NCSrC** is to **advise the Central and State Governments** on the issues related to the welfare of senior citizens and enhancement of their quality of life, with special reference to the following:-
 - Policies, programmes and legislative measures;
 - Promotion of physical and financial security, health and independent and productive living; and
 - Awareness generation and community mobilization.

Why in News?

- The 4th meeting of the National Council for Senior Citizens was held in New Delhi, under the chairmanship of Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr. Virendra Kumar.



According to the **2011 Census**, senior citizens accounted for **8.23% of the nation's population** at the time. According to the government's projections, they will account for about **12.16% of the country's population in 2026**.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY

About

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is functioning as the **Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency** in the country.
- It is mandated to investigate all the **offences**:
 - **affecting the sovereignty, security and integrity of India, friendly relations with foreign states, and**
 - **the offences under the statutory laws enacted to implement international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions of the United Nations, its agencies and other international organisations.**
 - These include **terror acts and their possible links with crimes** like smuggling of arms, drugs and fake Indian currency and infiltration from across the borders.
- The agency has the **power to search, seize, arrest and prosecute** those involved in such offences.
- Headquartered in **Delhi**, the NIA has its branches in several parts of the country.

When did the NIA come into being?

- The agency came into existence on **December 31, 2008** (following the **26/11 Mumbai terror attack**) under the **NIA Act, 2008**.
- NIA was created mainly to specialize in investigations into **incidents of terrorist attacks and bomb blasts** in various parts of the country.
 - Majority of such incidents were found to have **complex inter-state and international linkages** while at the same time being **linked to drug and arms smuggling** among other activities.
- The NIA Act was amended in **2019** to **enlarge the mandate** of the NIA by inclusion of **offences related to human trafficking, manufacture/sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism and offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908** and expanded its **jurisdiction beyond India**.



How wide is the NIA's jurisdiction?

- The law under which the agency operates extends to:
 - **whole of India** and also applies to **Indian citizens outside the country**;
 - **persons in the service of the government** wherever they are posted;
 - **persons on ships and aircraft registered in India** wherever they may be;
 - **persons who commit a scheduled offence beyond India** against the **Indian citizen or affecting the interest of India**.

3.2. ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

About OIC

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the **second largest inter-governmental organization** after the United Nations with a membership of **57 states**.
 - **India is neither a member nor an observer of the OIC.**



- Established in 1969, the organization claims to be the **collective voice of the Muslim world** to promote international peace and harmony.
- The OIC has **observer status at the United Nations**.
- Its Headquarters is in **Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**.

3.3. NATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING AUTHORITY

About NFRA

- The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) was constituted in **2018** under the **Companies Act, 2013** to continuously **improve the quality of all corporate financial reporting in India**.
- Functions and Duties:
 - **Recommend accounting and auditing policies and standards** to be adopted by companies for approval by the Central Government;
 - **Monitor and enforce compliance** with accounting standards and auditing standards;
 - **Oversee the quality of service of the professions** associated with ensuring compliance with such standards and suggest measures for improvement in the quality of service;
- The Authority consists of a **chairperson and three full time members appointed by the Central Government**.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1) AXIOM-4 MISSION

What's in the news?

- The Axiom-4 Mission (Ax-4), a **commercial flight operated by US-based private firm Axiom Space**, was successfully launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.
- The mission is a **collaboration between NASA, ISRO, European Space Agency (ESA) and SpaceX** (an American space technology company) and includes astronauts from **four countries - India (Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla)**, the United States, Poland, and Hungary.
- The mission, launched atop a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket**, will carry the **SpaceX Dragon spacecraft** to the **International Space Station (ISS)** where astronauts will carry out significant scientific research.



International Space Station:

- The International Space Station is a **multi-nation construction project** that is the **largest single structure humans ever put into space**.
- The ISS is in a **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** about 400 km to 420 km above Earth's surface.
- Its main construction was completed between 1998 and 2011, although the station continually evolved to include new missions and experiments.
- The ISS includes contributions from 15 nations. **NASA** (United States), **Roscosmos** (Russia) and the **European Space Agency** are the major partners of the space station who contribute most of the funding; the other partners are the **Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency** and the **Canadian Space Agency**.
- The ISS serves as a **microgravity and space environment research laboratory** in which crew members conduct experiments in biology, human biology, physics, astronomy, meteorology, and other fields.

About the Mission

- The four mission astronauts will conduct about **60 scientific studies and activities, representing 31 countries**, including the US, India, Poland, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Nigeria, UAE, and nations across Europe.
- The experiments aim to **advance our understanding of microgravity** and its effects on **various biological processes**. Additionally, experiments will explore the **potential for crop growth in space**.
- The mission will also study **Tardigrades**, also known as **'water bears'**, a phylum of eight-legged segmented micro-animals, discovered by German zoologist Johann August Ephraim Goeze in 1773.
 - **Harmless to humans**, tardigrades are known for their **ability to survive in extreme conditions**, and earlier studies have suggested they may provide **useful insights for improving human stress and radiation tolerance**.

How does India stand to gain?

- **Gp Capt Shukla's** inclusion on the Ax-4 Mission marks the **return of India's first astronaut to space** after **Rakesh Sharma's** participation in the **Soviet InterKosmos mission in 1984** and the **first Indian to travel to the ISS**.
- The Ax-4 Mission is being viewed as a **"precursor"** to the country's own **Gaganyaan-1**, India's first indigenous human spaceflight mission.

2) POLIOMYELITIS

About

- Poliomyelitis (polio) is a **highly infectious viral disease** caused by the **Polio virus** which mainly affects young children.
- There are **three wild types of poliovirus (WPV) – type 1, type 2, and type 3.**
 - *Although symptomatically similar, genetic and virologic differences classify them as distinct viruses, each requiring separate eradication efforts.*

Transmission

- Poliovirus is **very contagious**. The virus is **transmitted by person-to-person spread** mainly through the **fecal-oral route** or, less frequently, by a **common vehicle** (e.g. contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system.

Characteristics of the disease

- Initial symptoms are fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness of the neck and pain in the limbs.
- One in 200 infections leads to **irreversible paralysis** (usually in the legs).

Prevention and Treatment

- There is **no cure for polio**, it can only be prevented by **immunization**.

Polio vaccine

- There are two vaccines used to protect against polio disease, **oral polio vaccine (OPV) and inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV).**

	Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV)	Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine (IPV)
Form	Administered orally as liquid drops.	Given as an injection.
Composition	Contains weakened (attenuated) live virus strains.	Contains inactivated (killed) poliovirus strains , which cannot cause disease.
How it works	OPV contains weakened but live poliovirus strains that stimulate an immune response in the gut , where the virus typically multiplies. This vaccine is effective in stopping transmission within communities.	IPV triggers an immune response in the bloodstream , providing strong protection against paralytic polio.
Advantages	Easy to administer, provides community-level protection, and is more cost-effective.	Safe with no risk of vaccine-derived infections.
Limitations	In rare cases, the weakened virus can mutate and cause vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV) , leading to outbreaks in under-immunized communities.	More expensive and requires trained healthcare workers for administration. It does not stop the transmission of the virus in the community as effectively as OPV.

Polio eradication

- In **2014, India was officially declared polio-free**, along with the rest of the South-East Asia Region.

- In 2015, **wild poliovirus type 2** was declared as globally eradicated, followed by the official global eradication of **wild poliovirus type 3** in 2019.
- With two of the three wild polioviruses eliminated, only **type 1 wild poliovirus** is still in circulation and is **restricted** to rural pockets of just two countries — **Afghanistan and Pakistan**.

Why in News?

- Pakistan's polio eradication campaign faced a significant setback as a northern region detected its first case in seven years, marking the nation's 11th infection this year despite multiple vaccination initiatives.

3) DNA PROFILING

About

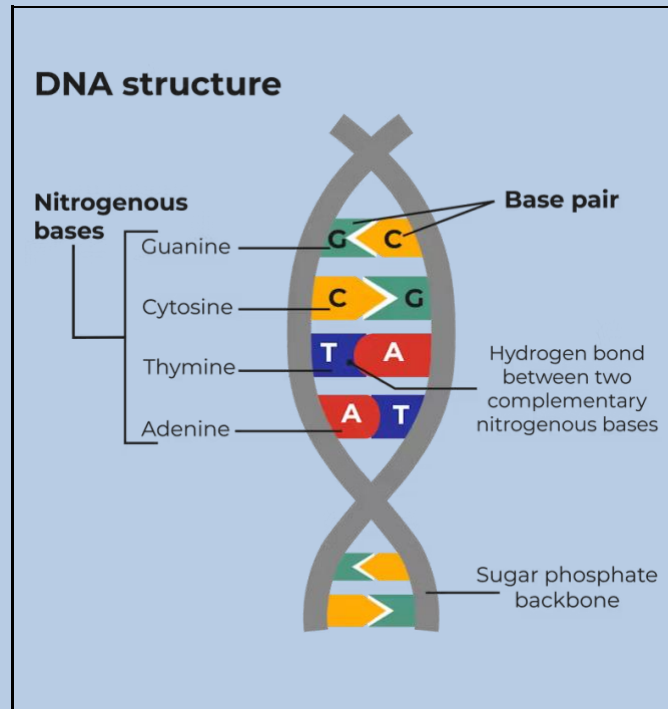
- DNA Profiling (also known as **DNA fingerprinting** or **genetic fingerprinting**) is a **forensic technique used to identify individuals by analyzing unique characteristics of their DNA**.
- While human DNA is **99.9% identical**, the remaining **0.1%** includes unique sequences called **Short Tandem Repeats (STRs)** or **Microsatellites**, which are crucial for DNA Profiling.
- **DNA can be obtained from any biological material** since the same DNA sequence is present in every cell of the body.
- Common sources include **saliva, semen, vaginal fluids, blood, body tissues, teeth, hair, and bones**. However, the **amount of DNA varies** across these materials.
 - Blood and saliva are rich in DNA, while teeth and hair roots contain less DNA, making them less ideal for extraction.



- The first case in India to use DNA evidence was a **paternity dispute case in 1991, Kunhiraman vs Manoj**.
- The Kerala High Court accepted DNA fingerprinting evidence as infallible evidence in a court of law for the first time in India.

DNA:

- DNA is **deoxyribonucleic acid**, and it is **genetic material present in the nuclei of cells** in living organisms.



- It is **double helixed** in structure, supercoiled to form chromosomes along with intercalated proteins.
- **All information about internal organization, physical characteristics, and physiological functions of the body is encoded** in DNA molecules in a language (sequence) of alphabets of four nucleotides or bases : **Adenine (A), Guanine (G), Thymine (T), and Cytosine (C)**, along with the **sugar phosphate backbone**.

Applications of DNA Profiling

1. **Criminal Investigations:** Used to match DNA from crime scenes (e.g., blood, hair) with suspects, helping to identify or exclude individuals involved in a crime.
2. **Paternity and Maternity Testing:** Confirms biological relationships, establishing parentage for legal, medical, or personal reasons.
3. **Identification of Missing Persons:** Helps in identifying unknown or missing individuals, especially in cases of natural disasters, accidents, or war.
4. **Identification of racial groups:** DNA fingerprinting helps identify genetic differences among racial groups, which can provide insights into human evolution and migration patterns.



- The Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD) is an **autonomous organization funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology**.
- Located in **Hyderabad**, the mandate of CDFD is to carry out basic and applied research in DNA fingerprinting and related analysis, to establish DNA diagnostic methods for detecting genetic disorders and develop probes for such detection, and provide training in DNA fingerprinting techniques.

5. **Diagnosis of inherited disorders:** DNA fingerprinting is useful in diagnosis of inherited disorders which include Huntington's diseases, sickle cell anemia, thalassemia, cystic fibrosis, hemophilia etc.,

DNA Barcoding vs DNA Fingerprinting:

- DNA barcoding is a **method of specimen identification using short, standardized segments of DNA.**
- While **DNA Fingerprinting identifies individuals within a species, DNA Barcoding distinguishes between species.**
 - DNA barcoding identifies species by analyzing unique gene sequences, helping **distinguish between closely related species.**

Applications of DNA Barcoding:

- It supports **biodiversity monitoring and conservation efforts** by tracking species populations and detecting illegal wildlife trade.
- **It ensures the authenticity of food products** by identifying adulteration in processed foods.

Why in News?

- Following the tragic crash of Air India Flight in Ahmedabad recently, where over 270 people died, authorities have relied heavily on DNA fingerprinting to identify remains of the victims.

4) FUNGICIDES VS ANTIFUNGALS

About

- While both fungicides and antifungal medications **target and control fungal growth**, they **differ primarily in their application and context.**

Fungicides

- Fungicides are substances, either chemical or biological, **used to kill parasitic fungi and their spores**, typically applied in **agriculture** to protect plants from fungal diseases like mildew, blights, and rusts.
- They are **crucial for maintaining crop yield and quality.**
- **Overuse or improper application** can lead to **soil and water contamination, harm to beneficial organisms**, and the development of **fungicide resistance in fungal populations.**

Antifungals

- Antifungal medications, also called **antimycotic medications**, are used to **treat and prevent fungal infections in humans and animals.**
 - **Azoles, Polyenes, and Allylamines** are some groups of antifungal medications.
- Similar to fungicide resistance, **overuse and misuse of antifungal medications** can contribute to the **development of drug-resistant fungal infections**, posing a significant threat to global health.

Why in News?

- **Candida tropicalis infections** are rising in India due to **strains becoming increasingly resistant to azole antifungal drugs.**
 - *Candida tropicalis* is a **fungal pathogen** commonly found in **tropical regions**, including India.
- A new study linked this resistance to **widespread agricultural use of tebuconazole**, a structurally similar fungicide.

5) CANCER

About

- Cancer is a life-threatening disease marked by the **uncontrolled proliferation of abnormal cells**.
- **Mutations in genes** interfere with the normal processes that **regulate cell division and cell death**. As a result, abnormal cells begin to grow uncontrollably, leading to the formation of cancerous cells.
- When these cells accumulate, they can form a **tumour**, which may eventually spread to other parts of the body.

Causes

- The primary causes include
 - **Genetic predispositions like gene mutations**
 - **Lifestyle factors** such as tobacco use and poor dietary habits
 - **Environmental exposures to carcinogens** like air pollution and UV radiation, and
 - Certain **viral infections** including **Human Papilloma Virus and Hepatitis B/C** that are known to trigger specific cancers.

Symptoms and Manifestations

- Cancer symptoms **vary widely depending on the type, location, and stage of the disease**. While some cancers show early warning signs, others remain asymptomatic until advanced stages.
- Common cancer symptoms include **unexplained weight loss, prolonged fatigue, and location-specific indicators**.

Treatment

- The three major forms of treatment for any cancer are **surgery** (removing the cancer), **radiotherapy** (delivering ionising radiation to the tumour), and **systemic therapy** (administering medicines that act on the tumour).
- **Systemic therapy's earliest form** was **chemotherapy**. When administered, chemotherapy preferentially acts on cancer cells as they have rapid unregulated growth and poor healing mechanisms. Chemotherapeutic drugs have **modest response rates** and **significant side-effects** as they affect numerous cell types in the body.
- The next stage in its evolution was **targeted agents**, a.k.a. **immunotherapy**: the drugs bind to specific targets on the cancer or in the immune cells that help the tumour grow or spread. This method often has **fewer side-effects** as the impact on non-tumour cells is limited. However, it is **effective only against tumours that express these targets**.

Why in News?

- Recent reports revealed that **substandard versions of critical chemotherapy drugs** have been distributed to over 100 countries, including India.
- **Cisplatin, Oxaliplatin, Cyclophosphamide, Doxorubicin, Methotrexate and Leucovorin** are among the drugs under investigation.
 - All of them are classed as **essential medicines** by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.

Essential Medicines:

- Essential medicines are those that **effectively and safely treat the priority healthcare needs of the population**.
 - They are selected by taking into consideration public health relevance, evidence of benefits and harms, and with consideration of costs, affordability and other relevant factors.

- **Every 2 years** since 1977, WHO has published the **WHO Model List of Essential Medicines** as a register of minimum medicine needs for every health-care system.
- Over 150 countries including India have adopted **National Lists of Essential Medicines based on the WHO Model List**.

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

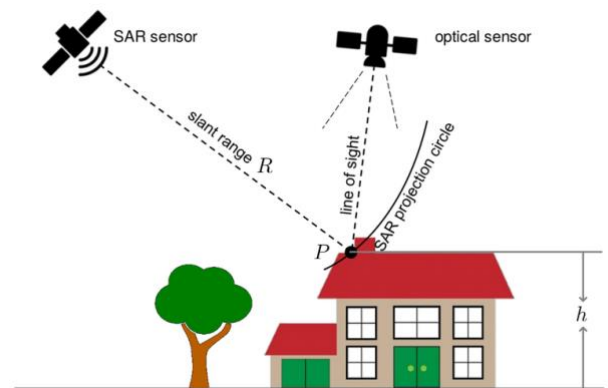
6.1. SYNTHETIC APERTURE RADAR

About

- Synthetic aperture radar (SAR) is a **type of active data collection** where an instrument sends out a **pulse of energy** and then **records the amount of that energy reflected back** after it **interacts with Earth**.
- Unlike **optical imagery**, which is a **passive data collection technique** based on emitted energy, **SAR imagery** is created from the **reaction of an emitted pulse of energy with physical structures** (like mountains, forests, and sea ice) and **conditions** like soil moisture.

Benefits of SAR

- Since **microwaves penetrate clouds, smoke, and even light rainfall**, SAR can **collect data 24/7**.
 - If a SAR unit is mounted on an orbiting satellite, it can map swaths of land hundreds of kilometres wide in a single overpass.
- Different materials like soil, vegetation, water, and metals reflect microwaves differently, allowing SAR to **detect changes invisible to optical sensors**.
 - It is a way to make **sharp pictures** even when it's **dark or cloudy**.
- These capabilities are valuable for **monitoring vegetation structure and land use, detecting surface deformation and movement in land** (e.g., earthquakes, landslides) and **ice** (e.g., glacier movement), **flooding, soil moisture**, etc.



POLITY

1) FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006

About the Act

- The **Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006** is a people-centric law for forests, which **recognises the rights of forest-dwelling communities to use and manage forest resources.**

Rights under FRA

- **Title rights** – Ownership to land that is being farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a **maximum of 4 hectares**; ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family, meaning that no new lands are granted.
- **Use rights** – to minor forest produce (also including ownership), to grazing areas, to pastoralist routes, etc.
- **Relief and development rights** – to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.
- **Forest management rights** – to protect forests and wildlife.

Objective of the Act

- To **undo the historical injustice** occurred to the forest dwelling communities;
- To **ensure land tenure, livelihood and food security** of the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers;
- To **strengthen the conservation regime of the forests** by including the responsibilities and authority of Forest Rights holders for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance.

Eligibility

- To qualify as **Other Traditional Forest Dweller (OTFD)** and be eligible for recognition of rights under FRA, **two conditions** need to be fulfilled:
 - **Primarily resided** in forest or forests land for **three generations (75 years)** prior to 13-12-2005, and
 - **Depend** on the forest or forest land for **bonafide livelihood needs.**
- To qualify as a **Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribe (FDST)** and be eligible for recognition of rights under FRA, **three conditions** must be satisfied by the applicant/s, who could be **“members or community”**:
 - Must be a **Scheduled Tribe** in the area where the right is claimed; and
 - **Primarily resided** in forest or forests land prior to 13-12-2005; and
 - **Depend** on the forest or forest land for **bonafide livelihood needs.**
- The FRA provides that a forest right conferred under the Act shall be **heritable but not alienable or transferable**, and shall be registered jointly in the name of both the spouses in case of married persons and in the name of the single head in the case of a household headed by a single person.

Process of recognition of rights

- The Act provides that the **gram sabha, or village assembly, will initially pass a resolution** recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised.
- This resolution is then screened and approved at the **level of the sub-division** (or taluka) and subsequently at the **district level.**
- The **screening committees** consist of three government officials (Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare departments) and three elected members of the local body at that level. These committees also hear appeals.

- The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Rules, 2008 provide for **constitution of Forest Rights Committee** by the **Gram Sabha** for assisting it in its functions to –
 - prepare a list of claimants on forest rights;
 - verify claims as provided in the rules;
 - present their findings on the nature and extent of the claim before the Gram Sabha for its consideration;
 - prepare the claims on behalf of Gram Sabha for community forest rights in the prescribed form.

Why in News?

- In a first since the Forest Rights Act came into being in 2006, the **Union government** has started **funding structural mechanisms** to **facilitate the implementation of the law**.
 - **Implementation of the FRA**, for the last 19 years, has been the **domain of State and union territory governments**.
- Under the **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyaan (DAJGUA)**, the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs has sanctioned setting up of **district-level and state-level FRA cells** to assist claimants and Gram Sabhas to prepare all paperwork for the FRA claims.



- As of March 2025, 14.45% of the 51.11 lakh FRA claims across 21 States/union territories remain pending.
- Of the around 43 lakh claims that have been disposed of, over 42% were rejected.

DAJGUA:

- The Government of India launched the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA) in **2024** to **drive inclusive and sustainable development in tribal regions**.
- This ambitious program will cover around 63,000 villages, benefiting over **5 crore tribal citizens** across 30 States and Union Territories.
- DAJGUA aims to **address critical gaps in social infrastructure, healthcare, education, and livelihoods** through 25 targeted interventions implemented by 17 line ministries.
- **By fostering convergence and expanding outreach**, the initiative is committed to ensuring holistic development for tribal communities.
 - One component of the DAJGUA programme is to **speed up FRA implementation**.

2) SIXTEENTH FINANCE COMMISSION

About Finance Commission

- The Finance Commission is a **constitutional body** set up under **Article 280** of the Constitution.
- Under Article 280, the **President of India** is required to constitute a Finance Commission at an **interval of five years or earlier**.
- The **First Finance Commission** was constituted in **1952** under the chairmanship of **K.C. Neogy**.

What are the qualifications for Members?

- The Finance Commission has a **chairman and four members** appointed by the **President**.
- The **Chairman** of the Commission is selected from among persons who have had **experience in public affairs**, and the **four other members** are selected from among persons who--
 - are, or have been, or are qualified to be appointed as **Judges of a High Court**; or

- have **special knowledge of the finances and accounts of Government**; or
- have had **wide experience in financial matters and in administration**; or
- have **special knowledge of economics**.

What are the functions of the Finance Commission?

- It is the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to—
 - the **distribution of tax proceeds** between the Union and the States and the share of each state.
 - the **principles which should govern the grants-in-aid** of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India;
 - the **measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State** to supplement the resources of the **Panchayats** in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State;
 - the **measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State** to supplement the resources of the **Municipalities** in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State;
 - any other matter referred to the Commission by the **President** in the interests of sound finance.

16th Finance Commission

- In 2023, the Government of India, with the approval of the President of India, constituted the **Sixteenth Finance Commission**, in pursuance to **Article 280** of the Constitution.
- **Dr Arvind Panagariya**, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog has been named as **Chairman**.
- The Commission has been requested to make its report available by 31st October, 2025 covering a period of five years commencing on the 1st day of April, 2026.

Why in News?

- The President has appointed Rabi Sankar, Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as a part-time Member of the 16th Finance Commission (XVIFC).
- The XVIFC was constituted in 2023, with **Dr. Arvind Panagariya**, former Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog, as its **chairman**.
- The XVIFC is mandated to submit its recommendations by 31st October, 2025, for the award **period of five years commencing from 1st April, 2026**.

3) ECI STARTS PROCEEDINGS TO DELIST RUPPS

Registered Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs)

- Either **newly registered parties** (under **Section 29A** of the **Representation of Peoples Act, 1951**) or those which have **not secured enough percentage of votes** in Assembly or General Elections to become a State party or those which have **never contested in elections** since being registered are considered **Registered Unrecognized Political Parties**.
- Such parties **don't enjoy all the benefits** extended to the recognised parties.

Benefits of registration with the Election Commission of India (ECI)

- The **candidates** set up by a political party registered with the ECI will get **preference in the matter of allotment of free symbols** vis-à-vis purely independent candidates.
- Further, registered political parties, in course of time, can get recognition as '**State Party**' or '**National Party**' subject to the fulfillment of the conditions prescribed in the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**.
- Recognized State and National parties enjoy **additional privileges**.

Provisions for recognised party status

National Party

- As per the Election symbols order, a registered political party needs to **fulfil at least one of the following three conditions** to be recognised as a national party:

- It needs to win a minimum **two percent of seats** in the Lok Sabha from **at least three different states**.
- It needs to get **at least six percent of votes in four states** in Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, in addition to **winning four Lok Sabha seats**.
- It needs to get **recognised as a state party in four or more states**.

State Party

- In order to be recognised as a state party, a political party needs to **fulfil at least one of the four criteria**.
- A political party will be recognised as a state party:
 - If it wins **three percent of the total seats** in the Legislative Assembly of the state (subject to a minimum of three seats).
 - If it **wins one Lok Sabha seat for every 25 Lok Sabha seats** allotted for the state.
 - If it gets **at least six percent of votes** in a state during a Lok Sabha or Assembly election. In addition, it also needs to win **at least one Lok Sabha or two Legislative Assembly seats**.
 - If it wins **at least eight percent votes** in a state during the Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly elections.

Benefits of being a recognised state party or national party

- If a party is recognised as a 'State Party', it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its **reserved symbol to the candidates set up by it in the States in which it is so recognised**, and if a party is recognised as a 'National Party' it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its **reserved symbol to the candidates set up by it throughout India**.
- Recognised 'State' and 'National' parties **need only one proposer** for filing the nomination and are also entitled for **two sets of electoral rolls** free of cost and **broadcast/telecast facilities** over Akashvani/Doordarshan during general elections.

Why in News?

- The Election Commission of India has started proceedings for the **delisting of 345 Registered Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs)** which have failed to fulfil the essential condition of contesting even a single election for the last six years since 2019 and the offices of these parties could not be physically located anywhere.
- This exercise has been conducted with the aim of cleaning up the political system.

4) ZONAL COUNCILS

About

- The idea of creation of Zonal Councils was mooted by the first Prime Minister of India, **Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru** in **1956**.
- He suggested that the States proposed to be reorganised may be grouped into four or five zones having an Advisory Council **"to develop the habit of cooperative working"** among these States.

Composition of Zonal Councils

- In the light of the vision of Pandit Nehru, **five Zonal Councils** were set up by the **States Re-organisation Act, 1956**. The present composition of each of these Zonal Councils is as under:
 - The **Northern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh;
 - The **Central Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh;

- The **Eastern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal;
- The **Western Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli;
- The **Southern Zonal Council**, comprising the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.
- The **North Eastern States** i.e. (i) Assam (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (iii) Manipur (iv) Tripura (v) Mizoram (vi) Meghalaya and (vii) Nagaland are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the **North Eastern Council**, set up under the **North Eastern Council Act, 1972**.
- The State of **Sikkim** has also been included in the North Eastern Council vide North Eastern Council (Amendment) Act, 2002.

Organisational Structure of Zonal Councils

- **Chairman** - The **Union Home Minister** is the Chairman of each of these Councils.
- **Vice Chairman** - The **Chief Ministers of the States** included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by **rotation**, each holding office for a period of **one year** at a time.
- **Members** - **Chief Minister and two other Ministers** as **nominated by the Governor** from each of the States and **two members from Union Territories** included in the zone.
- **Union Ministers** are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.



Role & Objective of the Zonal Councils

- The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are as under :
 - Bringing out **national integration**;
 - Arresting the growth of **acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies**;
 - Enabling the Centre and the States to **co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences**;
 - Establishing a **climate of co-operation** amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.
- Being **advisory bodies**, there is full scope for free and frank exchange of views between Centre and States and amongst States in meetings.

Functions of the Councils

- A Zonal Council **may discuss, and make recommendations** with regard to:
 - any matter of **common interest in the field of economic and social planning**;
 - any matter concerning **border disputes, linguistic minorities or inter-State transport**;
 - any matter connected with or arising out of, the **re-organization of the States under the States Reorganisation Act**.

Why in News?

- The 25th Meeting of the Central Zonal Council was held recently.

5) LOKPAL NEW MOTTO

About

- The **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013** provided for the establishment of **Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for States**.
- These institutions are **independent statutory bodies** without any constitutional status. They perform the function of an **"ombudsman"** and inquire into **allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries** and for related matters.
- The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act extends to the **whole of India** and shall **apply to Indian public servants in and outside India**.

Members

- Lokpal is a **multi-member body** that consists of **one chairperson and a maximum of 8 members**.
- **Chairperson** of the Lokpal should be either the **former Chief Justice of India or the former Judge of Supreme Court or an eminent person** with impeccable integrity and outstanding ability, having special knowledge and expertise of minimum 25 years in the matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, finance including insurance and banking, law and management.
- Out of the maximum eight members, **half will be judicial members and minimum 50% of the Members will be from SC/ ST/ OBC/ Minorities and women**.
- The **judicial member** of the Lokpal shall either be a **former Judge of the Supreme Court or a former Chief Justice of a High Court**.
- The term of office for Lokpal Chairman and Members is **5 years or till the age of 70 years**.
- The members are appointed by the **President** on the recommendation of a **Selection Committee**.
 - The **five-member Lokpal selection committee** includes the **Prime Minister, the Speaker and the Chief Justice of India**, along with the **Leader of Opposition** and an **eminent jurist** selected by other members.
- The **Chairperson or a Member shall not be—**
 - a **member of Parliament or a member of the Legislature** of any State or Union territory;
 - a **person convicted** of any offence involving **moral turpitude**;
 - a **person of less than forty-five years of age**, on the date of assuming office as the **Chairperson or Member**, as the case may be;
 - a **member of any Panchayat or Municipality**;
 - a **person** who has been **removed or dismissed from the service of the Union or a State**, and **shall not hold any office of trust or profit** or be **affiliated with any political party** or **carry on any business or practise any profession** and, accordingly, before he enters upon his office, a person appointed as the Chairperson or a Member, as the case may be, shall, if—
 - he holds any office of trust or profit, **resign** from such office; or
 - he is carrying on any business, **sever his connection** with the conduct and management of such business; or
 - he is practising any profession, **cease to practise** such profession.

Jurisdiction

- The Lokpal has jurisdiction to inquire into allegations of corruption against anyone
 - **who is or has been Prime Minister**,
 - a Minister in the Union government,
 - a Member of Parliament,
 - officials of the Union government under Groups A, B, C and D,

- chairpersons, members, officers and directors of any board, corporation, society, trust or autonomous body either established by an Act of Parliament or wholly or partly funded by the Centre,
- any society or trust or body that receives foreign contribution above ₹10 lakh.
- It should be noted that the Lokpal **cannot inquire into any corruption charge against the Prime Minister if the allegations are related to** international relations, external and internal security, public order, atomic energy and space, **unless a full Bench of the Lokpal, consisting of its chair and all members, considers the initiation of a probe, and at least two-thirds of the members approve it.**
- Such a hearing should be held in camera, and if the complaint is dismissed, the records shall not be published or made available to anyone.

How can a complaint be made and what happens next?

- A complaint under the Lokpal Act should be in the prescribed form and must pertain to an offence under the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** against a public servant.
- When a complaint is received, the Lokpal may order a **preliminary inquiry by its Inquiry Wing, or refer it for investigation by any agency**, including the CBI, if there is a prima facie case.
- The Lokpal, with respect to Central government servants, may refer the complaints to the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)**.
- Lokpal has **powers of confiscation** of assets, proceeds, receipts and benefits arisen or procured by means of corruption in special circumstances.
- A complaint can be entertained **only in respect of acts committed within a period of seven years** from the date on which the offence mentioned in the complaint is alleged to have been committed.

Why in News?

- Lokpal of India has adopted a new Motto - **“Empower Citizens, Expose Corruption”** - replacing the old one.



6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) ACT

About the Act

- The **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989** aims to **eliminate atrocities that are occurring against members of the SCs and STs** while at the same time providing **protection, compensation and rehabilitation to victims**.
- The Act and its 1995 Rules were specifically enacted to prevent and **protect SC/STs from atrocities committed against them by non-SCs/STs**, because existing laws were found inadequate to prevent and eliminate these offenses.
- The provisions of SC/ST PoA Act & Rules can be divided into **three different categories**.
 - The first category establishes **criminal liability for a number of specifically defined atrocities**, and extends the scope of certain categories of penalizations given in the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
 - The second category contains provisions for **relief and compensation for victims of atrocities**.
 - The third category contains provisions that **establish special authorities** for the implementation and monitoring of the Act.

- It **comprehensively defines atrocities** to include egregious acts such as physical assaults, sexual offenses, economic and social boycotts, and acts intended to humiliate or degrade individuals based on their caste or tribal identity.
- Central to the Act's implementation are the **specialized courts** established for expeditious trial of cases involving SC/ST atrocities, ensuring swift justice delivery.
- **Criminal liability** can only be established if the offense is **committed by a person other than a member of SC/ST against a person who belongs to the SC/ST group**.

6.2. POLICE CUSTODY VS JUDICIAL CUSTODY

About

- Police custody is the **custody of a suspect with the police** in the lock up at the police station, to detain the suspect.
- The **officer in charge** of the case is required to **produce the suspect before the appropriate magistrate within 24 hours** (these 24 hours **exclude** the time of necessary journey from the police station to the court).
- Then the Magistrate can either release him on **bail** or he can either send him to **judicial custody or to police custody**.
 - If the accused is **juvenile**, his age is to be ascertained and if he finds that he is juvenile, then he will be directed to be produced before **Juvenile Justice Board**.

Police custody	Judicial custody
Police Custody means that police have the physical custody of the accused.	Judicial Custody means an accused is in the custody of the concerned Magistrate.
The accused is lodged in police station lockup.	The accused is lodged in the jail.
During this detention, the police officer in charge of the case may interrogate the suspect.	During Judicial Custody, the police officer in charge of the case is not allowed to interrogate the suspect. However, the court may allow the interrogations to be conducted if it opines the interrogation being necessary under the facts produced before the court.
Police custody may extend only up to a period of 15 days from the date custody begins.	Judicial custody may extend to a period of 90 days for a crime which entails a punishment of death, life imprisonment or period of imprisonment exceeding 10 years and 60 days for all other crimes if the Magistrate is convinced that sufficient reasons exists, following which the accused or suspect must be released on bail.

Related Constitutional Provisions

- The Constitution of India under **Article 22** provides for the protection of the arrested person to the extent that he has a **right to be informed of the reason for arrest** and he **must be produced before the nearest Magistrate within a period of 24 hours**.
- **Article 22 (1)** also provides that he shall be entitled to consult and to be **defended by a legal practitioner of his choice**.

REPORTS & INDICES

1) INDIA BREAKS INTO TOP 100 IN SDG INDEX FOR THE FIRST TIME

About SDGs

- The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.
- The **17 Goals** were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.



Why in News?

- The **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)** has published its 10th edition of the **Sustainable Development Report (SDR)**.

About the Report

- The index **tracks overall progress of countries towards achieving the 17 SDGs**.
- The overall score indicates progress on a **scale of 0 to 100** where 100 indicates a country has achieved all 17 goals and 0 means no progress has been made.

Highlights of the Index

- **India** has for the **first time** secured a place among the **Top 100 out of 167 countries** ranked in the Index.
- Ranking **99th** in 2025 with a **score of 67**, India has **improved steadily** over

Sustainable Development Solutions Network:

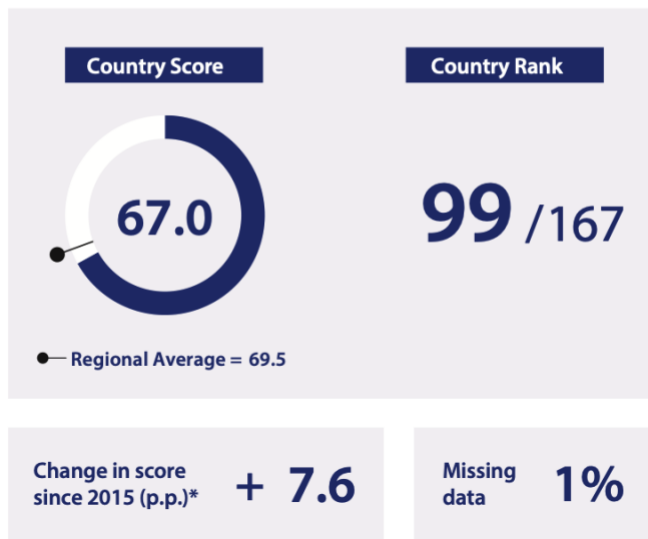
- SDSN was launched in **2012** by then **UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon** to mobilize global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical problem solving for sustainable development and implement SDGs.
- SDSN works closely with United Nations agencies, multilateral financing institutions, the private sector, and civil society to support the implementation of the SDGs at national and international levels.

the past four years, rising from 109th in 2024, 112th in 2023, 121st in 2022, and 120th in 2021.

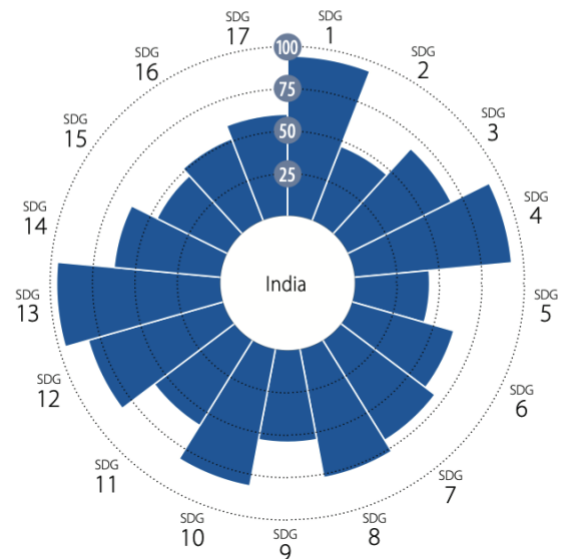
INDIA

East and South Asia

Overall Performance



Average Performance by SDG



SDG Dashboard and Trends



- **SDG progress has stalled at the global level, with only 17 per cent of the 17 targets projected to be achieved by 2030**, due to conflicts, structural vulnerabilities, and limited fiscal space in many regions.
- **European countries**, especially the **Nordic nations**, continue to top the SDG Index, with **Finland** ranking first, **Sweden** second and **Denmark** third.
 - A total of **19 out of the top 20 countries are in Europe**.
- **East and South Asia** have outperformed all other global regions in terms of **SDG progress since 2015** largely due to rapid socioeconomic development.
- Most UN member states have made **strong progress** on targets related to access to **basic services and infrastructure**, including **mobile broadband use (SDG 9)**, **access to**

electricity (SDG 7), internet use (SDG 9), under-five mortality rate (SDG 3) and neonatal mortality (SDG 3).

- **Five targets show significant reversals in progress** since 2015. These are **obesity rate (SDG 2), press freedom (SDG 16), sustainable nitrogen management (SDG 2), the Red List Index of species survival (SDG 15) and the Corruption Perceptions Index (SDG 16).**

Figure 2.1

World SDG Dashboard 2025



2) STATE OF THE CLIMATE IN ASIA 2024 REPORT

World Meteorological Organization

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** focused on **international cooperation in meteorology, climatology, hydrology, and related fields.**
- It was established in **1950**, evolving from the **International Meteorological Organization (IMO)**, which was founded in 1873 to facilitate global exchange of weather data and promote standard practices in meteorological research.
- The **World Meteorological Congress** is WMO's supreme body, meeting **every four years** to determine policies, approve plans, and elect leaders.
- Headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**, the WMO has played a key role in coordinating global efforts in weather, climate monitoring, disaster risk reduction, and environmental protection.
- WMO has 193 Member States and Territories (including **India**).

Why in News?

- The World Meteorological Organisation has published its **State of the Climate in Asia 2024 report**, stating that **2024 was the warmest year on record in Asia.**

Highlights of the Report

- The **global mean temperature in 2024** was the **highest on record** for the period 1850-2024.
 - **Each of the years from 2015 to 2024 was one of the 10 warmest years on record.**
- **Sea surface temperatures were the highest on record**, with Asia's sea surface decadal warming rate nearly double the global average.

- **Sea level rise on the Pacific and Indian Ocean sides of Asia exceeded the global average,** heightening risks for low-lying coastal areas.
- **Out of the 24 glaciers in the central Himalayas and Tian Shan** (great mountain system of **Central Asia**), **23 suffered mass loss**, leading to an increase in hazards, including glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF), and landslides, and long-term risks to water security.

ART & CULTURE

1) BIRSA MUNDA

About

- Birsa Munda (1875–1900) was a **religious leader and folk hero** from the **Munda Tribe** of the **Chhota Nagpur Plateau area**.
- Known as '**Dharti Aaba**' or the '**Father of the Earth**' by tribal communities, Birsa Munda spearheaded a **tribal religious movement named Munda Rebellion/Ulgulan/ Great Tumult** that arose in the tribal belt of **modern-day Bihar and Jharkhand** in the late 19th century, as a response to the oppressive policies of the British such as new land settlement systems.
 - Though the movement was suppressed by the British, it led to the enactment of the **Tenancy Act (1903)** which recognised the **khuntkhatti system**.
 - 'Khuntkatti' system is joint ownership or holding of land by tribal lineage.
- He **encouraged the tribals to follow the Birsa Raj** and to not comply with colonial laws and rent payments. He encouraged tribals to **understand their cultural roots and observe unity**.
- Birsa 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.
- In 2021, Government of India had declared that the **birth anniversary (15th November)** of Bhagwan Birsa Munda will be celebrated as **Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas**.



Why in News?

- The 125th death anniversary of revolutionary tribal leader Birsa Munda was observed on June 9.

DEFENCE

1) S-400 MISSILE

About

- The S-400 Triumf is a mobile **surface-to-air missile (SAM) system developed by Russia.**
- The system can engage all types of aerial targets including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and ballistic and cruise missiles within the **range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km.**
- The system can track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously.
- The S-400's mission set and capabilities are roughly comparable to the famed **US Patriot system.**

Why in News?

- Russia has reaffirmed its commitment to deliver the remaining S-400 air defence systems to India by 2025-2026.

Background

- India signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia in 2018 for five squadrons of the S-400 Triumf missile system.
- As of now, India has received three squadrons of the air defence system which have been operationalised and deployed along the **borders with China and Pakistan.**

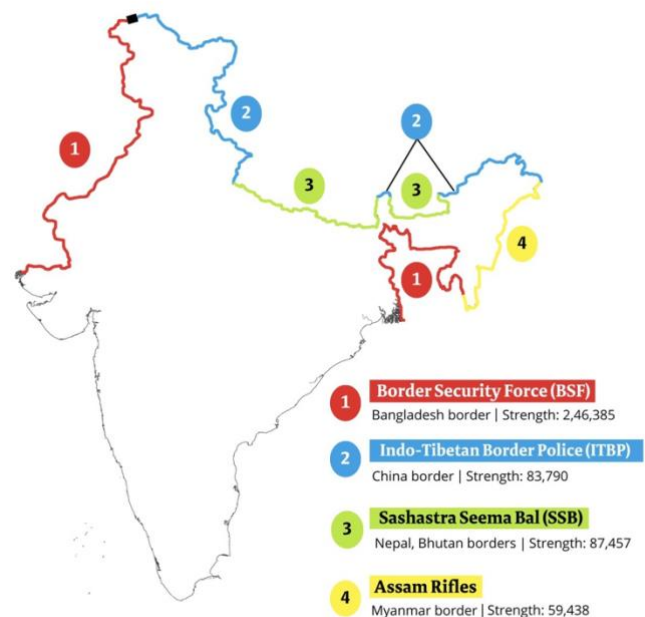


2) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

2.1. CENTRAL ARMED POLICE FORCES

About

- The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) refers to the uniform nomenclature of **seven security forces** in India which function under the **administrative control** of the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).** They are
 - **Assam Rifles (AR)**
 - **Border Security Force (BSF)**
 - **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**
 - **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**
 - **Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**
 - **National Security Guard (NSG) and**
 - **Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB).**
- Of the CAPFs, the **AR, BSF, ITBP and SSB are Border Guarding Forces.** The **NSG is a commando trained force Organisation** in India and is used for **special operations.** The



Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs, 2021-22

CISF provides **security and protection to industrial undertakings and vital installations**. The **CRPF** is deployed in **aid of civil power** in matters relating to maintenance of law and order, internal security and counter-insurgency.

- The CAPF's are headed by **DGP rank officers**.

PLACES IN NEWS

1) STRAIT OF HORMUZ

About

- The Strait of Hormuz is a **narrow waterway** (only 30 miles wide at the narrowest point) 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)**.
- As the **main shipping route for oil from the Middle East**, the strait sees a **fifth of the world's oil consumption passing through it daily**, making it a critical vulnerability in the global oil supply chain.
 - India **imports about 40% of its crude oil requirement and 54% of its liquefied natural gas** through the Strait of Hormuz.



Why in News?

- Iran has threatened to close down the Strait of Hormuz in response to the attacks by the U.S. on Iranian nuclear facilities.

2) CROATIA

About

- **Location: Southeast Europe**, on the **coast of the Adriatic Sea**.
- It borders
 - **Slovenia** to the northwest,
 - **Hungary** to the northeast,
 - **Serbia** to the east,
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Montenegro** to the southeast and
 - shares a **maritime border with Italy** to the west.
- Capital: **Zagreb**.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Croatia recently.
 - He is the **first Indian Prime Minister to visit the country** since diplomatic ties were established in 1992.
- During the visit, the two nations signed memoranda of cooperation in the areas of agriculture, culture, and science.



3) NIGERIA

About

- Nigeria is located on the **western coast of Africa** and is the **most populous country of Africa**.
- Capital: **Abuja**.
- Nigeria is bordered to the
 - north by **Niger**,

- east by **Chad** and **Cameroon**,
- south by the **Gulf of Guinea**,
- west by **Benin**.
- The country has **abundant natural resources**, notably **large deposits of petroleum and natural gas**.

Why in News?

- Deadly flash floods in Nigeria have displaced thousands of people and killed over 200 people.



4) TAIWAN STRAIT

About

- Taiwan strait, also known as **Formosa Strait**, is a 180 km wide strait **separating Taiwan from continental Asia**.
- The strait extends from southwest to northeast between the **South and East China seas**.
- It contains the **Pescadores Islands**, an archipelago of 64 islands.
- The strait serves as a **critical international waterway**, facilitating global trade and influencing regional security dynamics.

Tension in the Taiwan Strait

- The Taiwan Strait has been a hotspot for geopolitical tension due to the ongoing dispute between the **People's Republic of China (PRC)** and the **Republic of China (ROC)**, which is the Government of Taiwan.
 - The PRC claims Taiwan as a province of China, while the ROC maintains its independence.



5) SHIPKI LA PASS

About

- The Shipki La Pass is a **high-altitude motorable mountain pass** at an altitude of 3,930 metres located in **Himachal Pradesh**.
- Located on the **ancient Silk Route**, where the **River Sutlej enters India** from Tibet, it served as a vital trade route between India and Tibet.
- Commerce through Shipki La came to a standstill due to a series of **geopolitical events** (Sino-India War, 1962, Doklam standoff, COVID-19 pandemic).

Why in News?

- For the first time, Shipki-La pass in Himachal Pradesh has been opened for domestic tourists who can now visit simply by presenting valid identity documents.
- Previously, access to the pass was heavily restricted, requiring special permissions from the Indian Army due to their proximity to the India-China border.

MISCELLANEOUS

1) CHENAB BRIDGE

What's in the news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the **world's highest railway arch bridge**, constructed over the **Chenab River** in Jammu and Kashmir.

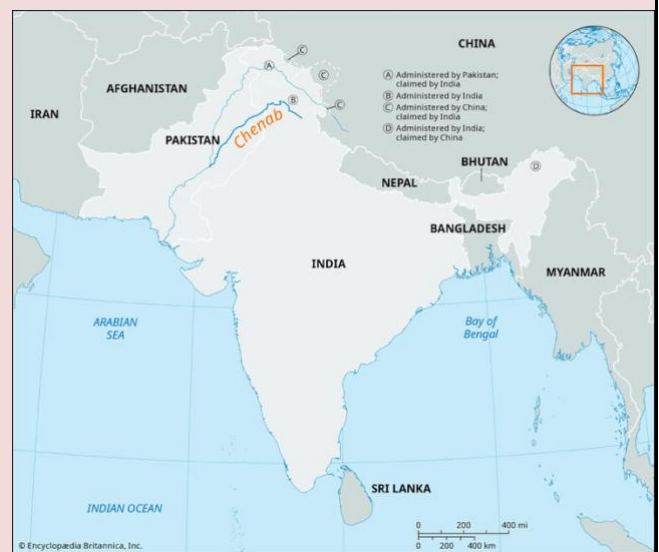
About

- Spanning 1,315 m, the Chenab rail bridge runs over the **Chenab River** in Reasi district of **Jammu and Kashmir**.
- It is the **highest railway arch bridge in the world**, with a deck height of 359 meters from the riverbed — making it **35 meters taller than Paris's iconic Eiffel Tower**.
 - *An arch bridge is a type of bridge that has a curved shape, like an arch. It uses strong supports called abutments at each end.*
- Forming a critical part of the **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project**, the bridge will connect the **valley region of Kashmir with the rest of the country by train** for the very first time.
 - *The 272-km USBRL Project was started in 1997 to provide rail connectivity from rest of the country to the Kashmir Valley.*
- The Chenab bridge project was overseen by the **Konkan Railway Corporation**, a division of Indian Railways.



Chenab River:

- The Chenab River originates from **Lahaul valley of Himachal Pradesh**.
- It is formed by the **confluence of two streams, Chandra and Bhaga**.
- Chenab is the **largest of the five tributaries of River Indus**.
- Its **main tributaries** in India include **Miyar, Marusudhar and Tawi**.
- In the vast plains of **Punjab in Pakistan**, it is met by **Jhelum, Ravi and Sutlej** to form the mighty **Panjnad** before it meets the **Indus**.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM OTHER ARTICLES

1) INDIA'S COPPER IMPORTS

News:

- **India** is the **world's second-largest importer of refined copper**.
- Copper is **one of 30 critical minerals** identified by India in 2023 and demand within the country is expected to double by 2030.

2) GRAND CROSS OF THE ORDER OF MAKARIOS III

News:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was recently conferred with the "**Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III**" – the **highest civilian honour of the Republic of Cyprus**.
- The award acknowledges exceptional service and contributions to Cyprus or the international community.

3) EXERCISE SHAKTI

News:

- Indian Army recently participated in the 8th edition of the **India-French Joint Military Exercise SHAKTI**.
- Exercise SHAKTI is a **biennial training engagement between the Indian and French Armies**, aimed at enhancing interoperability, operational coordination, and military to military connect.

4) EXERCISE NOMADIC ELEPHANT & KHAAN QUEST

News:

- The 17th edition of the **India-Mongolia Joint Military Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT** concluded recently at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
- Following its conclusion, the **Multinational Joint Military Exercise KHAAN QUEST** was inaugurated at the same location in which Indian Army contingent is also one of the participants.

5) SHAH COMMISSION

About

- To **investigate the widespread abuse of power during the Emergency** from 1975 to 1977, the then newly elected Janata Party government headed by Prime Minister Morarji Desai appointed a commission of inquiry under **former Supreme Court Chief Justice J C Shah** in May 1977.
- The Shah Commission submitted its findings in 1978 in a report that detailed the alleged misuse of power by politicians and bureaucrats during the Emergency.

6) ADM JABALPUR CASE

About

- The ADM Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla resulted in a controversial **Supreme Court** ruling that **upheld the suspension of fundamental rights**, including the **right to life and personal liberty (Article 21)**, during the **1975-1977 Emergency** in India.
- The **majority decision**, a 4-1 ruling, essentially **allowed for the suspension of habeas corpus petitions**, meaning individuals detained without due process could not challenge their detention in court.

7) OPERATION SINDHU

About

- Operation Sindhu was recently launched by the Government of India to **evacuate Indian nationals from conflict zones in Iran and Israel.**

8) E-RAKT KOSH

About

- e-Rakt Kosh is an **online blood bank management system** implemented under **National Health Mission.**
- It is a **citizen centric portal and mobile app** for various services such as nearest blood center, blood availability & blood donation camps information.