

OFFICERS IAS ACADEMY™

OFFICERS' PULSE

HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT
REPORT 2025

May 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) PRODUCTION LINKED INCENTIVE SCHEME

About the scheme

- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) aims to give companies **incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units**.
- Apart from **inviting foreign companies to set up operations in India**, the scheme also aims to **encourage local companies to set up or expand existing manufacturing units**.
- The central government had for the first time notified the PLI scheme for **mobile phones and allied component manufacturing in 2020**.
- Later, the government announced **expansion of the PLI scheme to include more than 10 sectors** including automobile and automobile components, pharmaceutical drugs, textile products, food products, high efficiency solar photo-voltaic modules, white goods such as air conditioners and LED bulbs, speciality steel products, drones and drone components, etc.

Why is the production linked scheme needed?

- The PLI scheme aims to **transform the manufacturing landscape of the Indian economy and integrate it into the global supply chains**.
- The strategy behind these schemes is to offer companies **incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in India, over the base year**.
- They have been specifically designed to **boost domestic manufacturing in sunrise and strategic sectors, curb cheaper imports and reduce import bills, improve cost competitiveness** of domestically manufactured goods, and **enhance domestic capacity and exports**.
- The PLI scheme is expected to boost production worth an estimated \$500 billion in five years since its introduction.

Why in News?

- The Centre's Department of Pharmaceuticals is inviting applications from drug makers for a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme to encourage setting up new manufacturing capacities in critical pharmaceutical components.

2) AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME

About

- Launched in **2022**, the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme is a nationwide project aimed at **revamping railway stations and developing them as "city centres"**.
- The goal is to gradually elevate stations to **modern standards while preserving their regional character**.
- The redeveloped stations feature various facilities such as entry and exit points, waiting halls, toilets, platforms, and roofing. Along with this, lifts, escalators, and free Wi-Fi are added wherever needed.
- Local products will be sold at kiosks under the **'One Station One Product' scheme**.
 - 'One Station One Product' concept aims to **encourage indigenous and specialised products and crafts** of India through providing **display and sale outlets** on railway stations across the country.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated 103 redeveloped railway stations, spread across 18 states and Union Territories, under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

3) PMJJBY & PMSBY

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)

- **Scheme:** PMJJBY is a one-year **life insurance scheme** of the **Ministry of Finance** renewable from year to year, offering **coverage for death due to any reason**.
- **Eligibility:** Individuals in the **age group of 18-50 years** having a savings bank or a post office account are entitled to enroll under the Scheme.
 - People who join the Scheme before completing 50 years of age can continue to have the risk of life covered up to age of 55 years upon payment of premium.
- **Benefits: Life cover of Rs 2 Lakh** in case of death due to any reason against a premium of **Rs 436 per annum**.
- **NRI's eligibility:** Any Non-Resident Indian (NRI) having an eligible bank account with a bank branch located in India is **eligible** for purchase of PMJJBY cover. However, in case a claim arises, the claim benefit will be paid to the beneficiary/ nominee **only in Indian currency**.
 - *NRI refers to a citizen of India who resides outside the country for more than 182 days in a financial year.*



Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)

- **Scheme:** PMSBY is a one-year **accidental insurance scheme** of the **Ministry of Finance** renewable from year to year, offering **coverage for death or disability due to accident**.
- **Eligibility:** Individuals in the **age group of 18-70 years** having a savings bank or a post office account are entitled to enroll under the Scheme.
- **Benefits: Accidental death and disability cover of Rs 2 lakh** (Rs 1 lakh in case of partial disability) for death or disability due to an accident against a premium of **Rs 20 per annum**.
- **NRI's eligibility:** Any NRI having an eligible bank account with a bank branch located in India is **eligible** for purchase of PMSBY cover. However, in case a claim arises, the claim benefit will be paid to the beneficiary/ nominee **only in Indian currency**.



Why in News?

- Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) have completed 10 years of implementation.
- Both the schemes were introduced in **2015**.

4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. PM JANMAN

About

- The Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) was launched for the **socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** in **2023**, on the occasion of **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas**.

Janjatiya Gaurav Divas:

- Janjatiya Gaurav Divas is celebrated on **15th November** to **remember the contribution of tribal freedom fighters**.
- The day has been announced in the memory of **Bhagwan Birsa Munda**, the tribal freedom fighter from Jharkhand.

- The initiative aims at **ensuring last-mile welfare scheme delivery and protection for PVTGs.**

PVTGs:

- In India, **tribal population** makes up for **8.6% of the total population**. Tribal people live in about 15% of the geographical area of the country.
- Among them some groups are declared as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** based on the following criteria.
 1. **A pre-agriculture level of technology;**
 2. **A stagnant or declining population;**
 3. **Extremely low literacy; and**
 4. **A subsistence level of economy.**

Livelihood:

- In 1973, the **Dhebar Commission** created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.
- In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.
- **75 tribal groups** have been categorized by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** as PVTGs.
- PVTGs reside in **18 States and UT of A&N Islands**. Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in **Odisha (13)**, followed by **Andhra Pradesh (12)**.
- PM JANMAN focuses on **11 critical interventions** through 9 line Ministries to uplift these tribal communities.

Interventions under the Mission

- The 11 crucial interventions to be carried out by the PM-JANMAN include:
 1. Provision of pucca houses;
 2. Connecting roads;
 3. Providing piped water supply & community water supply;
 4. Providing mobile medical units with medicine cost;
 5. Construction of hostels & vocational education centres;
 6. Construction of anganwadi centres;
 7. Construction of multipurpose centres (MPCs);
 8. Energization of households (Last mile connectivity);
 9. Solar lighting in streets & MPCs;
 10. Setting up of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs);
 11. Installation of mobile towers.
- These 11 interventions, which are part of existing schemes, will be implemented on the ground by **nine Ministries**, with the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** acting as the **nodal Ministry**.

Funding Pattern

- The Mission will be implemented as a **combination of Centrally Sponsored Schemes** in partnership with State Governments and UT Administrations and **Central Sector Schemes** through line Ministries/Departments.

4.2. PRADHAN MANTRI BHARTIYA JANAUSHADHI PARIYOJANA

About PMBJP

- With an objective of **making quality generic medicines available at affordable prices to all**, Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) was launched by the **Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers** in 2008.

- Under the scheme, dedicated outlets known as **Janaushadhi Kendras** are opened to provide generic medicines at affordable prices.
- The Scheme is implemented by the **Pharma & Medical Bureau of India (PMBI)**, a society established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals.
- The Scheme is operated by **government agencies as well as by private entrepreneurs.**



India is the world's largest maker and exporter of generic drugs.

Who can open a Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra?

- A PMBJK can be opened by:
 - Individual entrepreneur / Proprietor
 - Partnership
 - Charitable Institute/Hospital
 - NGO/ Trust/ Society
 - Government/Government Nominated Agency

What are generic drugs?

- When a company develops a new drug — often after years of research — it applies for a patent, which **prohibits anyone else from making the drug for a fixed period** (usually 20 years unless specified).
- To recover the cost of research and development, companies usually price their brand-name drugs on the higher side.
- Once the patent expires, other manufacturers duplicate and market their own versions of the drug — known as **Generic drugs**.
- A generic drug is **created to be the same as an already existing brand-name drug** in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance characteristics, and intended use.
- Generic drugs are **equally effective and inexpensive (50%-90% less)** compared to their branded counterparts.

4.3. PM E-DRIVE SCHEME

About

- In 2024, the **Ministry of Heavy Industries** launched the 'PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme' for **promotion of electric mobility in the country**.
- PM E-DRIVE replaced the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles in India (FAME) programme** that ran for nine years.

Objectives

- The scheme aims to **accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in India**, focusing on electric two-wheelers (e-2Ws), electric three-wheelers (e-3Ws), electric buses, and other emerging EV categories.
- The PM E-DRIVE Scheme has **three key components**:
 - **demand incentives** for various categories of EVs,
 - **grants for capital asset creation**, and
 - **administrative provisions** to support the scheme's implementation.
- These incentives aim to make EVs more affordable and drive their wider adoption across the country.

4.4. RODTEP SCHEME

About the Scheme

- The government introduced the **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme** with an objective to **neutralize the taxes and duties suffered on exported goods** which are otherwise not refunded in any manner.
- Introduced in 2021, the scheme **reimburses currently un-refunded Central, State, and Local taxes and duties** incurred in the process of manufacture and distribution of exported products.
- RoDTEP is a **World Trade Organization (WTO) compliant Scheme** and follows the global principle that the taxes/duties should not be exported, they should be either exempted or remitted to exporters, to make the goods competitive in the global market.
- Major components of taxes covered are **electricity duty, value-added tax (VAT) on fuels used in transportation/ distribution, mandi tax, stamp duty, etc.**
- The rebate is issued as a **transferable electronic scrip** by the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)** in an end to end IT environment.

4.5. NAMASTE SCHEME

About

- The NAMASTE (National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem) scheme was launched in **2023** to **ensure safety and dignity of sanitation workers**.
- The focus is on **prevention of hazardous cleaning and promotion of safe cleaning practices** through trained and certified sanitation workers.
- The objective of the scheme is to **formalize and rehabilitate** the persons engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewer and septic tanks.
- The scheme is jointly being implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)** and the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.
- The **National Safai Karamcharis Finance Development Corporation (NSKFDC)** under the MoSJE is the implementing agency of 'NAMASTE'.

National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation:

- NSKFDC is a **wholly owned Govt. of India Undertaking** under the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** set up in 1997.
- NSKFDC is the **apex corporation** for the **all-round socio-economic upliftment of the Safai Karamcharis, Scavengers and their dependents** throughout India.

4.6. ELECTRONICS COMPONENT MANUFACTURING SCHEME

About

- In March 2025, the Union Cabinet approved an **Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme** to **make India Atmanirbhar** (self-reliant) in the **electronics supply chain**.
- This scheme aims to develop a **robust component ecosystem** by attracting large investments (global/domestic) in the electronics component manufacturing ecosystem, **increasing Domestic Value Addition (DVA)** by developing capacity and capabilities, and **integrating Indian companies with Global Value Chains (GVCs)**.
- The scheme provides **differentiated incentives to Indian manufacturers** so that they can acquire technological capabilities and achieve economies of scale.

- Unlike past schemes, this one is **not based on a production-linked incentive**, where manufacturers will be rewarded for incremental manufacturing. Instead, they will **receive incentives pegged to the factory's turnover, as well as in employment creation.**

INITIATIVES

1) NEW OCI PORTAL

Who is OCI?

- The Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) scheme was introduced through an **amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955**, in 2005.
- The scheme provides for the **registration of Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) as Overseas Citizens of India**, provided they were **citizens of India on or after 26th January 1950**, or were **eligible to become citizens on that date**.
 - *A PIO means a **foreign citizen whose ancestors were a permanent Indian resident and, at some point, held an Indian passport.***
- However, **individuals** who are or had been or whose **parent or grandparent or great grandparent citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh are not eligible**.

Benefits:

- A registered OCI is granted **multiple entry, multipurpose, life-long visa** for visiting India and he/she is **exempted from registration with Foreign Regional Registration Officer or Foreign Registration Officer** for any length of stay in India.
- OCI is **entitled to general parity with Non-Resident Indians** in respect of all facilities available to them in **economic, financial and educational fields except in matters relating to the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties**.

Restrictions:

- The OCI Card holder is **not entitled**:
 - To **vote**;
 - To be a **member of a Legislative Assembly or of a Legislative Council or of the Parliament of India**;
 - To **hold Indian constitutional posts** such as that of the President, Vice President, Judge of the Supreme Court or High Court etc.;
 - He/she **cannot normally hold employment in the Government**;
 - To undertake any **Missionary work, Mountaineering and Journalism work without prior permission** of the Govt. of India;
 - OCI cardholder shall also **require Protected Area Permit (PAP)/Restricted Area Permit (RAP)** to visit any place which falls within the Protected/Restricted Area notified by the Government as in the case of any other foreigner.

Why in News?

- The Government of India has launched the new Overseas Citizen of India Portal (<https://ociservices.gov.in>).
- The new portal will provide enhanced functionality, advanced security, and a user-friendly experience for the existing over 5 million OCI cardholders and new users.

2) NEW INDIA LITERACY PROGRAMME

About

- The New India Literacy Program (NILP), popularly known as **ULLAS** (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society), is a **centrally sponsored scheme** aimed at **eradicating illiteracy among those above 15 years of age**.

- Launched in **2022**, the scheme aims not only to equip learners with **reading, writing, and numeracy skills** but also to enrich them with an understanding of **critical life skills** while encouraging **lifelong learning**.
- The scheme aims to cover a target of **5 crore non-literates in the age group of 15 years and above**.
- The Scheme has **five components**: (i) Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, (ii) Critical Life Skills, (iii) Vocational Skills Development, (iv) Basic Education and (v) Continuing Education.
- NILP is mainly based on **volunteerism** for teaching and learning.

Why in News?

- **Goa** has been officially declared as **fully literate** under the New India Literacy Programme.
- This makes Goa the **second state** (after **Mizoram**) of the country to cross the **nationally prescribed 95% benchmark for full literacy**.



- According to the **Census 2011**, India faces a significant literacy challenge, with **25.76 crore non-literate individuals** in the 15 years and above age group, comprising 9.08 crore males and 16.68 crore females.
- Despite the progress made under the **Saakshar Bharat programme** (to promote and strengthen Adult Education), which certified 7.64 crore individuals as literate between 2009-10 and 2017-18, an estimated **18.12 crore adults** in India remain **non-literate**.

3) CASTE CENSUS

What's in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has decided to conduct **caste enumeration in the upcoming Census**—marking the first time in nearly a century that such data will be collected.

What is Census?

- The Census is a **decennial population-based survey** held across the country.
- The first census in India was held in **1872** under **Viceroy Lord Mayo**.
 - The **first synchronous Census** across the country was however conducted in **1881**.
- Post-Independence, the **responsibility** to conduct the decennial census lies with the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

What is meant by Caste Census?

- A caste census means **collecting caste-based data during the census**.
- Caste enumeration was a **regular feature of census exercises** during **British rule** from **1881 to 1931**.
- However, with the **first census of Independent India in 1951**, the **government discontinued the practice, only counting Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SCs/STs)**.
- In **2011**, the Union government conducted the **Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)**, the first attempt since 1931 to collect caste data nationwide.
 - However, the caste data from SECC 2011 was **never fully released or utilized**.

Why does caste census matter?

- Accurate caste data can help **tailor affirmative action policies**, such as reservations in education and jobs, to **address current socio-economic disparities**.
- Many consider caste census essential to **identify and uplift marginalized communities** but people also warn that it could **entrench caste identities and deepen divisions**.

State-level Initiatives

- As per **Article 246** of the Constitution, the **Census is a Union subject listed in the 7th schedule**.
- However, the Union government has **allowed states to conduct their own caste surveys** if they wished.
- In recent years, states like **Bihar, Telangana, and Karnataka** conducted their own caste surveys to guide welfare schemes and reservations.

4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. EPIC NUMBER

What is an EPIC number?

- The **Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) number** is a **10-digit voter ID card number** issued by the **Election Commission of India** to each voter.
- The number is a **unique alphanumeric code** assigned to each registered elector to prevent impersonation.
- It was introduced in **1993** under the **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**, to enhance electoral transparency.
- It is assigned via the **Election Commission's ERONET digital platform** when a new voter registers, after which it is linked to State and constituency data to ensure regional uniqueness.

ERONET Platform:

- The ERONET is a web-based platform which was **developed for election officials**, in multiple languages and scripts, to handle **all processes pertaining to registration, migration, and deletion of names from electoral rolls**.
- The platform **automates the process of electoral roll management**.

4.2. MISSION KARMAYOGI

About the Mission

- Mission Karmayogi, officially known as the "**National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)**," was launched in **2020** to create a **competent and future-ready civil service** in the country.
- Mission Karmayogi adopts a **citizen-centric approach for civil service reforms** and shifts the focus from "**Rule based training to Role based training**". Greater thrust has been laid on **behavioral change**.
- Envisioned as **one of the largest capacity building initiatives** in the world, Mission Karmayogi will initially cover about 46 lakh government officials at the **Centre** and will eventually aim to transform approximately 1.5 crore government officials across the **Centre, the States and the local bodies**.



- NPCSCB is **governed by the Prime Minister's Human Resource Council**, which will also include state Chief Ministers, Union Cabinet ministers and experts.
 - This council will approve and review civil service capacity building programmes.

iGOTKarmayogi

- The Mission Karmayogi programme is **delivered by the digital platform** called **iGOTKarmayogi**.
- The platform enables officials to explore, acquire and certify their competencies that are critical to discharging their duties.

4.3. PM-WANI

About PM-WANI

- Prime Minister's WiFi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) was launched by the **Department of Telecommunication in 2020**.
- The scheme aims to **enhance the proliferation of public WiFi hotspots** to create robust digital communications infrastructure in the country, especially in rural areas.



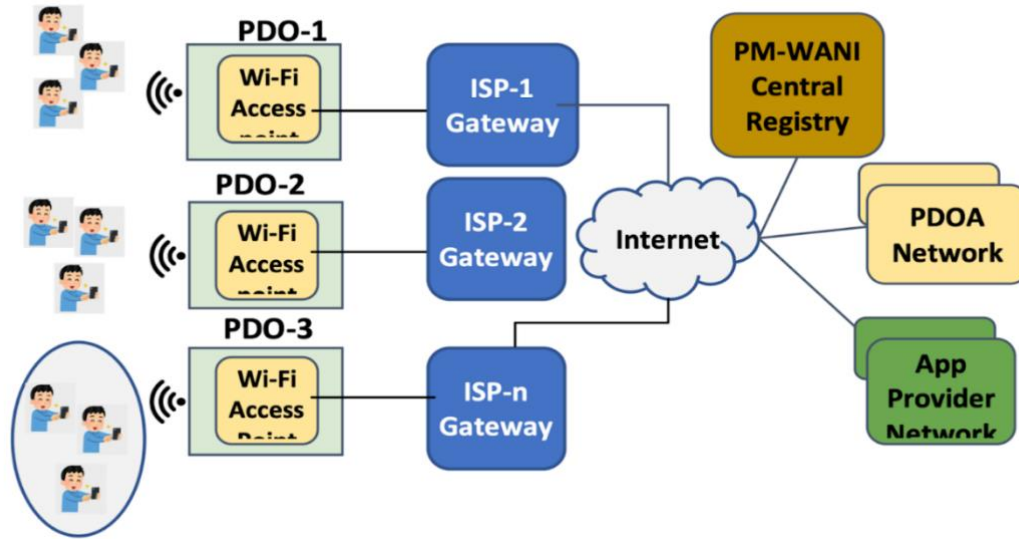
- Through better access to public hotspots, the government aims to **increase employment** for small and micro-entrepreneurs and **provide low-cost internet** to the underserved urban poor and rural households.
- The scheme encourages **local shops and establishments** to provide Wi-Fi for **last-mile internet delivery** which **does not require a licence or charge a registration fee**.

How can one access the PM-WANI internet?

- To access public hotspots under the PM-WANI scheme one needs to download a **relevant App** which shows the available networks.
- The user can then choose from a list of available connections and **make a payment to use the network**. The user can access the network till his/her balance is exhausted.

Wi-Fi:

- Wi-Fi, or **Wireless Fidelity**, is a wireless networking technology that gives internet access to devices like desktop computers, laptops, mobile phones, smart TVs etc.
- It uses **radio frequencies, or radio waves**, in two primary frequency bands: **2.4GHz & 5GHz** to communicate between devices.



PM-WANI ecosystem

- The PM-WANI ecosystem consists of **four parts: Public Data Office (PDO), Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA), App Provider, and Central Registry.**
 - PDO establishes the Wi-Fi Hotspots and provides internet access to users.
 - PDOA provides authorisation and accounting services to PDOs.
 - The app provider displays the available hotspots in the phone's proximity.
 - The central registry, which is overseen by the **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)**, maintains details of App Providers, PDOs, and PDOAs.

ENVIRONMENT

1) INNOVATIVE BIO-INK FOR CORAL REEF RESTORATION

Coral Reefs

- Coral reefs are **large underwater structures** composed of the skeletons of colonial **marine invertebrates called coral**.
 - Corals extract **calcium carbonate (CaCO₃)** from seawater to build **hard, protective skeletons**, which **form the structure of coral reefs over time**.
- Corals are **animals**, even though they may exhibit some of the characteristics of plants and are often mistaken for rocks. In scientific classification, corals fall under the **phylum Cnidaria** and the **class Anthozoa**.

Symbiotic Relationship

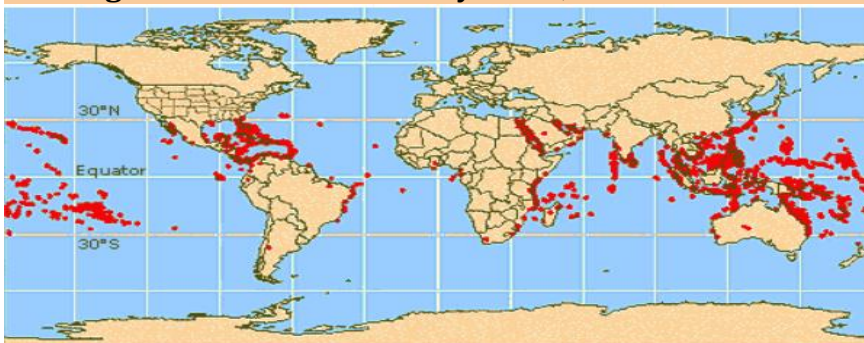
- Most reef-building corals contain photosynthetic algae, called **zooxanthellae**, that live in their tissues. The **corals and algae** have a **symbiotic relationship**.
 - The coral provides the algae with a **protected environment** and **compounds they need for photosynthesis**. In return, the algae produce **oxygen** and help the coral to **remove wastes**.
 - The **presence of the zooxanthellae** also provides **colored pigments** to help protect the coral's white skeleton from sunlight.

Significance of Coral reefs

- Coral reefs only **occupy 0.1% of the area of the ocean** but they **support 25% of all marine species** on the planet.
- **Coral reefs host far more number of animal phyla than those hosted by tropical rainforests and are often called the "rainforests of the sea."**

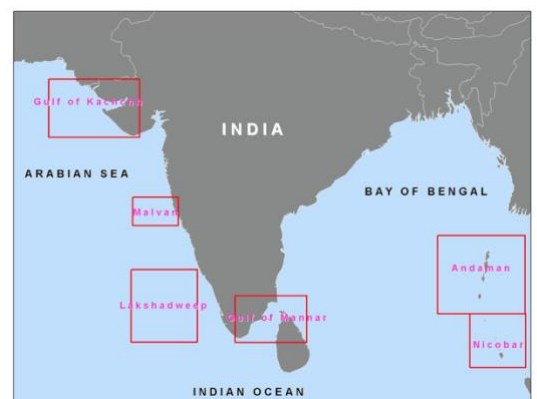
Geographical Distribution

- The reef-building corals prefer to grow at
 - **depths shallower than 30 m (100 ft)**, or
 - where the **temperature range is between 16-32°C**, and
 - **light levels are high**
- **The majority of reef building corals are found within tropical and subtropical waters. These typically occur between 30°N and 30°S of the equator.**
- **The largest of these coral reef systems, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.**



Coral Reefs in India

- Coral reefs are present in the areas of **Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep Islands and Malvan coast of Maharashtra.**



Coral Bleaching

- Coral bleaching is a phenomenon that occurs when **corals lose their vibrant colors due to stress**.
- This occurs when the **reef's water remains too hot for too long** putting the corals under stress. The stress compels the corals to **expel marine algae** residing inside their tissues.
- Once the algae is expelled, the **corals turn white** exposing their skeleton called as bleaching, also making them **vulnerable to diseases**.
- Corals can **recover from bleaching** in the **conducive environment**, but it can **often take years or even a decade** to recover depending on the damage caused.
 - Prolonged and extreme exposure of heat due to heat waves leads to **coral mortality**.



Why in News?

- Biologists have recently discovered that certain **rocky pink algae**, called **crustose coralline algae (CCA)**, play an important role in attracting coral larvae and encouraging them to settle on the reef.
 - It appears that CCA emits **metabolites** into the surrounding water, and coral larvae follow these chemical signals.
 - *Metabolites are small molecules that are intermediates or products of metabolism.*
- Inspired by this finding, a team of scientists have engineered a **bio-ink** (called **SNAP-X**) infused with metabolites derived from CCA that could **help promote coral settlement** by more than 20 times.
- The team is now working on methods to scale up the production of SNAP-X.



- The world is now witnessing its **fourth global bleaching event**.
- It has **affected nearly 84 percent of the world's coral reefs**.

FLORA & FAUNA

1) GUJARAT'S LIONS NUMBERS HAVE RISEN BY 32%

Asiatic Lion

- The Asiatic lion, also known as the **Persian lion**, is a lion subspecies that today **survives in the wild only in India.**

Characteristics:

- Asiatic lions are **slightly smaller than African lions.**
- Asiatic lions have **longitudinal skin folds on their belly**, which are quite a unique character.
- **Males** have only **moderate mane growth** at the top of the head, so that their **ears are always visible.**
- Asiatic lions roam in **small pride** and unlike the African lions, Asiatic lions are **less social** in nature and the **lioness takes care of the cubs.**



Geographical Distribution:

- Asiatic lions were once found from the **Middle East to India** — but by the early 20th century, they had **almost vanished due to hunting and habitat loss.**
- Today, they **survive only in and around the Gir forest in Gujarat.**

Conservation Status:

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

Why in News?

- According to a report from the Gujarat Forest Department, **India's lion population**, exclusively concentrated in Gujarat, has **risen by 32%** between 2020 and 2025, with **891 lions reported.**
- Though the **maximum number of lions** – 394 – have been observed in the **Gir National Park and Paniya Wildlife Sanctuary**, considered the **'source' population**, the latest survey underlines the **continuing trend of lions expanding into more parts of Gujarat.**
 - More lions have now been reported outside the core protected zone than inside. This translates to **increasing proximity to human settlements and subsequent conflict.**



- Asiatic Lion's **'Endangered'** classification is a notable improvement from **'Critically Endangered'** category in 2008 due to the efforts taken for conservation and protection of Asiatic Lions resulting in increase in their population over the years.

Project Lion:

- In 2020, the Government of India approved 'Project Lion' to **improve lion habitat and develop new habitat within Gujarat.**
- The initiative emphasizes **community involvement, technology-driven conservation, and human-lion conflict mitigation.**

ECONOMY

1) INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

About IIP

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an indicator that measures the **short-term changes in the volume of production** of a **basket of industrial products** during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- **Manufacturing** (77.6%), **mining** (14.4%), and **electricity** (8%) are the three broad sectors in which IIP constituents fall.
- It is **compiled and published every month** by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- The current base year is **2011-2012**.
- The **Eight Core Industries** (Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity) comprise **40.27 per cent of the weight** of items included in the IIP.

Why in News?

- Growth in industrial activity in the country, measured by Index of Industrial Production, slowed to an eight-month low of 2.7% in April 2025, dragged down by lower activity in several sectors

2) DARK PATTERNS

What are dark patterns?

- A dark pattern refers to a design or user interface technique that is intentionally crafted to **manipulate or deceive users into making certain choices or taking specific actions that may not be in their best interest**.
- It is a **deceptive practice employed to influence user behaviour in a way that benefits the company implementing it**.
- Some of the different types of dark patterns are **“false urgency”**, meaning falsely stating or implying a sense of urgency; **“basket sneaking”**, meaning inclusion of additional items at the time of checkout without the consent of the user; and **“confirm shaming”**, or using a phrase, video, audio or any other means to create a sense of fear or shame or ridicule or guilt in the mind of the user.

Regulations in India

- Such practices fall under the category of **“unfair trade practices”** as defined under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- The **Central Consumer Protection Authority** has issued **“Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023”** for prevention and regulation of dark patterns.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has directed all e-commerce platforms to conduct self-audits within three months to identify and eliminate dark patterns.

3) INDIA-UK FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

What's in the news?

- **India and the UK** have concluded the negotiations for a free trade agreement to boost economic ties between the two countries.
- It is aimed at **doubling the bilateral trade in goods and services** from USD 60 billion at present to **USD 120 billion by 2030**.
 - In FY 2023-24, **India recorded a trade surplus** with the UK, exporting goods worth US\$12.92 billion against US\$8.41 billion in imports.

Highlights of the India-UK FTA

- The FTA ensures **comprehensive market access for goods** across all sectors.
 - **India** will gain from **tariff elimination on about 99% of the tariff lines covering almost 100% of the trade value.**
 - India has agreed to **lower tariffs on a range of high-value British exports**, including whisky, medical devices, advanced machinery, and lamb.
 - **Sensitive agri-products** like dairy products, apples, cheese, oats, animals and vegetable oils are on the **exclusion list**, which means no duty benefits are provided by India to the UK on these items.
- The **FTA eases mobility for professionals** including Contractual Service Suppliers; Business Visitors; Investors; Intra-Corporate Transferees; partners and dependent children of Intra-Corporate Transferees with right to work; and Independent Professionals like yoga instructors, musicians and chefs.
- The deal also includes a **Double Contribution Convention (DCC)**. This pact is intended to **eliminate the requirement for Indian professionals** on short-term assignments in the UK to **pay social security contributions** there.
- India has ensured that **non-tariff barriers are suitably addressed** to ensure free flow of goods and services and that they do not create unjustified restrictions to India's exports.

4) INDIA RECORDS USD 81.04 BILLION FDI INFLOW

FDI

- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is the **investment made by a person or a company in one country into businesses located in another country.**
- Generally, FDI takes place when an investor establishes foreign business operations or acquires foreign business assets.
- FDI has three major components: **equity capital, reinvested earnings and intra-company loans.**
 - **Equity capital** is the foreign direct investor's purchase of shares of an enterprise in a country other than its own.
 - **Reinvested earnings** comprise the direct investor's share of earnings not distributed as dividends by affiliates, or earnings not remitted to the direct investor. Such retained profits by affiliates are reinvested.
 - **Intra-company loans** refer to short- or long-term borrowing and lending of funds between direct investors (parent enterprises) and affiliate enterprises.
- FDI is considered as a **major source of non-debt financial resources** for economic development.
- The key to FDI is the **element of control**. Control represents the intent to actively manage and influence a foreign firm's operations. This is the **major differentiating factor between FDI and a passive Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI).**

Foreign Portfolio Investment:

- FPI means **investing in the financial assets** of a foreign country, such as stocks or bonds available on an exchange.
- FPI is often referred to as **"hot money"** because of its tendency to flee at the first signs of trouble in an economy.

Why is FDI preferred?

- **FDI is considered a more stable form** of foreign capital infusion as it brings in a certain expenditure that can't be pulled out overnight. It creates jobs and can potentially aid economic growth.

- FPI, on the other hand, can come and go easily. **Sudden withdrawal** can create **liquidity problems** in the securities market and **hit the foreign exchange rate** of the country.

Why in News?

- According to the latest data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), **FDI inflows** in FY 2024–25 reached **USD 81.04 billion**, marking a 14% increase from USD 71.28 billion in FY 2023–24.
- The **services sector** emerged as the **top recipient of FDI equity** in FY 2024–25, attracting 19% of total inflows, followed by **computer software and hardware** (16%) and **trading** (8%).
- **Maharashtra** accounted for the **highest share** (39%) of total FDI equity inflows in FY 2024–25, followed by **Karnataka** (13%) and **Delhi** (12%).
- Among **source countries**, **Singapore** led with 30% share, followed by **Mauritius** (17%) and the **United States** (11%).

5) RBI BOARD APPROVES RECORD DIVIDEND TRANSFER

Context

- The **Central Board of Directors of RBI** has approved a **record transfer of over ₹2.68 lakh crore as surplus** to the Central government for the financial year 2024-25.
- This marks the **highest-ever dividend transfer** by the RBI, aimed at bolstering government finances amid ongoing economic challenges.

Central Board of Directors

- The Reserve Bank's affairs are governed by a **Central Board of Directors**.
- Section 8(1)(a) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, provides that **there shall be one Governor and not more than four Deputy Governors** to be appointed by the **central government** on the central board of RBI.
- **Functions:** General superintendence and direction of the Bank's affairs.

Appointments

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

How does a central bank like the RBI make profits?

- Typically, the central bank's income comes from the **returns it earns on its foreign currency assets**, which could be in the form of bonds and treasury bills of other central banks or top-rated securities, and deposits with other central banks.
- It also earns **interest on its holdings of local rupee-denominated government bonds or securities**, and while **lending to banks**.
- In addition to these, the **process of issuing currency** allows for the RBI to earn something called **seigniorage**.
 - *Seigniorage is basically the difference between the face value of a currency and the cost it took to produce that currency.*

Legal Mandate

- According to the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, after the RBI has made **provisions for bad and doubtful debt** and has **met all its expenses**, including any provisions it needs to make towards **buffer funds**, the **balance of the profits shall be paid to the Central Government**.

What kind of buffer levels does the RBI maintain?

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

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. MINIMUM IMPORT PRICE

About

- Minimum import price (MIP) is a **temporary measure** to provide **protection to domestic farmers from predatory pricing of imports**. Below this price, import of the commodity is not allowed.
- It is imposed by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**, an attached office of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- Under WTO rules, minimum import prices are regarded as **non-tariff trade barriers** and are therefore **prohibited**. However, they can be **applied as an anti-dumping measure**.
 - Dumping is the practice of **selling a product in a foreign market at an unfairly low price** in order to **gain a competitive advantage over other suppliers**.

6.2. SIDBI

About

- Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) was established in **1990** under an **Act of Parliament**.
- It acts as the **principal financial institution for promotion, financing and development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector** as well as for co-ordination of functions of institutions engaged in similar activities.
- **SIDBI facilitates and strengthens credit flow to MSMEs and addresses both financial and developmental gaps in the MSME eco-system.**
- The Bank executes its mandate through-
 - **Indirect Lending** - based on multiplier effect/ larger reach in financing the MSME sector and is undertaken through Banks, SFBs, NBFCs, MFIs and New Age Fintechs.
 - **Direct Lending** - aims to fill the existing credit gaps in the MSME sector and is undertaken through demonstrative and innovative lending products.
 - **Fund of Funds** - boosts entrepreneurship culture by supporting emerging startups through the Fund of Funds channel.
 - **Promotion and Development** - promoting entrepreneurship and handholding budding entrepreneurs for holistic development of MSME sector through credit-plus initiatives.



- **Facilitator** - playing a facilitator through roles like Nodal Agency for the MSME oriented schemes of the Government.
- The **Shares of SIDBI** are held by the **Government of India** and **twenty-two other institutions / public sector banks / insurance companies owned or controlled by the Central Government.**

AGRICULTURE

1) MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE

About MSP

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a form of **market intervention** by the Government to **insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices**.
- It is the **price** at which the **government procures certain crops from farmers** to ensure support price to farmers and affordable prices to the consumer.
- MSP is announced by the Government at the **beginning of the sowing season** for certain crops on the basis of the recommendations of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**.

How many crops does the minimum support price cover?

- **Annually**, the Government of India announces MSPs for **22 major agricultural commodities**, including **14 Kharif crops** (paddy, jowar, bajra, **ragi (finger millet)**, maize, tur (arhar), moong, urad, **groundnut**, sunflower, soyabean, **sesamum**, nigerseed, cotton), **6 Rabi crops** (wheat, **barley**, gram, masur (lentil), rapeseed-mustard, safflower), and **2 commercial crops** (copra, jute).
 - In addition, MSP for **toria and dehusked coconut** is also fixed based on MSPs of rapeseed & mustard, and copra, respectively.

About CACP:

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices is an attached office of the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**. It came into existence in **1965**.
- It is **mandated to recommend MSPs** to incentivize the cultivators to adopt modern technology and raise productivity and overall grain production in line with the emerging demand patterns in the country.

- CACP submits its recommendations to the government. The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** chaired by the **Prime Minister** takes a **final decision** on the level of MSPs and other recommendations made by CACP.

Why in News?

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for 14 Kharif Crops for Marketing Season 2025-26.
- The increase in MSP is in line with the **Union Budget 2018-19** announcement of fixing the **MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times of the cost of production**.

How is the production cost arrived at?

- As per CACP, there are three definitions of production cost which includes **A2, A2+FL and C2**.
 - A2 covers **all paid-out expenses**, including cash and in kind. It includes costs on seeds, chemicals, hired labour, irrigation, fertilisers and fuel.
 - A2+FL covers **actual paid cost and also unpaid family labour**.
 - The C2 cost method is **more comprehensive** and makes the calculation by including a wider range of inputs. It includes **actual paid out costs, imputed value of family labour, interest on the value of owned capital assets, rent paid for leased-in land and the rental value of owned land**.
- CACP considers **both A2+FL and C2 costs** while recommending MSP.
- It should be noted that there is currently **no statutory backing** for these prices, **nor any law mandating their enforcement**.

The **agricultural crop year** in India is from **July to June**. The Indian cropping season is classified into **two main seasons** - (i) **Kharif** and (ii) **Rabi** based on the monsoon.

Kharif	Rabi
Cropping season: From July–October during the south-west monsoon .	From October–March (winter) .
Crops: The kharif crops include rice, maize, sorghum, pearl millet/bajra, finger millet/ragi (cereals), arhar (pulses), soyabean, groundnut (oilseeds), cotton, etc.	The rabi crops include wheat, barley, oats (cereals), chickpea/gram (pulses), linseed, mustard (oilseeds) etc.

2) FAIR AND REMUNERATIVE PRICE

About FRP Mechanism

- Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) is an arrangement for the **price to be paid to sugarcane farmers by the sugar mills**.
- It is announced each year by the **Centre**, on the advice of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** and after consultation with State Governments.
- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** chaired by the **Prime Minister** takes the final decision on the level of FRP based on the recommendations made by CACP.

Significance

- Under the FRP system, the price paid to farmers for sugarcane is **not linked to the profits** generated by sugar mills. Instead, **FRP is based on the recovery rate of sugar from sugarcane**.
- In order to ensure that higher sugar recoveries are adequately rewarded and considering variations amongst sugar mills, the **FRP is linked to a basic recovery rate of sugar**, with a **premium payable to farmers for higher recoveries of sugar from sugarcane**.
- The payment of FRP across the country is governed by **The Sugarcane Control order, 1966** which **mandates payment within 14 days** of the date of delivery of the cane.
 - Delays in payment can attract an **interest** up to 15 per cent per annum.

What is the State Advised Price?

- State Advised Price or SAP is the price **announced by the state government, over and above the FRP**.
- Since **sugar pricing** comes under the **concurrent list**, both the centre and the state have the power to fix sugarcane prices — while the centre's price is the minimum price, states can set an SAP that is **usually higher than the centre's FRP**.

Why in News?

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane for the 2025–26 season at ₹355 per quintal for a basic recovery rate of 10.25 per cent.

3) KISAN CREDIT CARD SCHEME

About the Scheme

- The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was introduced in **1998** with the aim of providing **adequate and timely credit support** to the farmers for their cultivation and other needs as indicated below:
 - a. To meet the short term credit requirements for cultivation of crops;

- b. Post-harvest expenses;
- c. Produce marketing loan;
- d. Consumption requirements of farmer household;
- e. Working capital for maintenance of farm assets and activities allied to agriculture;
- f. Investment credit requirement for agriculture and allied activities.



- **Note:** The aggregate of components 'a' to 'e' above will form the **short term credit limit portion** and the aggregate of components under 'f' will form the **long term credit limit portion**.
- Under the KCC Scheme, a **flexible limit of Rs.10,000 to Rs.50,000** has been provided to marginal farmers (as Flexi KCC) based on the land holding and crops grown.
- The beneficiaries under the scheme will be issued with a **Smart card/ Debit card**.
 - It enables farmers to purchase agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. and draw cash to satisfy their agricultural and consumption needs
- Cards issued under the scheme are **valid for 5 years subject to annual review**.
- The Government of India provides **interest subvention** and **prompt repayment incentive** to the farmers under KCC scheme.
- The Scheme is implemented by **Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Small Finance Banks and Cooperatives**.

Eligibility:

- **Farmers** - individual/joint borrowers who are owner cultivators;
- **Tenant farmers, oral lessees & sharecroppers;**
- **Self Help Groups (SHGs) or Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)** of farmers including tenant farmers, sharecroppers etc.
- In 2019, KCC was extended to **farmers who are involved in activities related to animal husbandry and fisheries**.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of the **Interest Subvention (IS) component** under the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)** for the financial year 2025-26.

Modified Interest Subvention Scheme:

- MISS is a **Central Sector Scheme** aimed at ensuring the availability of **short-term credit to farmers at an affordable interest rate** through Kisan Credit card (KCC).
- Under the Scheme:
 - Farmers can apply for **short-term loans of up to Rs.3 lakh** through KCC at a **subsidized interest rate of 7%**, with **1.5% interest subvention** provided to eligible lending institutions.
 - *Interest subvention refers to a government subsidy that lowers the interest rate for borrowers. Essentially, the government pays a portion of the interest on a loan, making it more affordable.*
 - Additionally, **farmers repaying loans promptly** are eligible for an **incentive of up to 3%** as **Prompt Repayment Incentive (PRI)** effectively reducing their interest rate on KCC loans to 4%.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1) CPEC

What is the CPEC project?

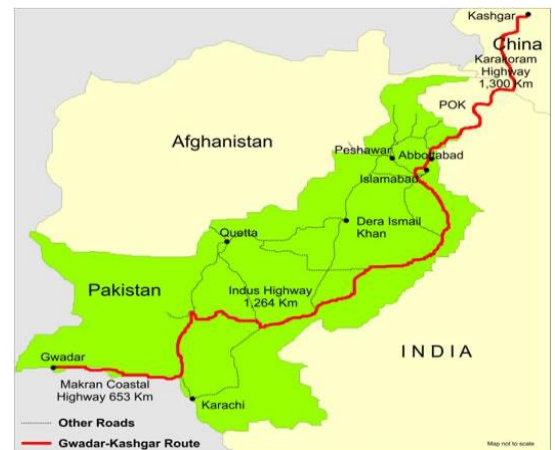
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) refers to a clutch of major infrastructure works currently under way in Pakistan, intended to **link Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar deep sea port** close to Pakistan's border with Iran.
- Launched in 2015, CPEC is **part of the larger Belt and Road Initiative**.

Belt and Road Initiative:

- **China's Belt and Road Initiative** aims to strengthen Beijing's economic leadership through a vast program of infrastructure building throughout China's neighbouring regions. It was launched in 2013.
- The plan was two-pronged: the overland **Silk Road Economic Belt** and the **Maritime Silk Road**.
- The project initially aimed to strengthen connectivity with Southeast Asia but later expanded to South and Central Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

Significance

- The goal of CPEC is both to **transform Pakistan's economy**—by modernizing its road, rail, air, and energy transportation systems—and to **connect the deep-sea Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi to China's Xinjiang province and beyond** by overland routes.
- This would reduce the time and cost of transporting goods and energy such as natural gas to China by **circumventing the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea**.
- The CPEC project is also **strategically important for China**. Currently, eighty percent of China's oil has to pass through the **Strait of Malacca**, a narrow stretch of water between the Indonesian island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula.
- In the event of a conflict, the Malacca Strait could easily be blocked by a rival nation, cutting off China from crucial energy resources. **CPEC** allows China to circumvent the Strait of Malacca and **reduce its dependency on the strait**.



India's position on CPEC

- India has been opposing the project as it **passes through Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**, which New Delhi considers its own territory.
- India claims that the CPEC project encroaches on sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

Why in News?

- Pakistan and China have agreed to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to **Afghanistan** in an effort to deepen the trilateral cooperation between the three nations.

2) WHO PANDEMIC TREATY

About WHO

- World Health Organization (WHO) is the **United Nations' specialized agency for Health**.
- Founded in **1948**, the WHO is an **inter-governmental organization** of more than 190 member states (including **India**).

- WHO headquarters are located in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- WHO works globally to **promote health, expand universal health coverage and respond to emergencies**.

How is WHO funded?

- WHO receives funding through **membership dues** paid by Member States and **voluntary contributions** from Member States and other partners.

World Health Assembly

- The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the **decision-making body of WHO**.
- It is attended by **delegations from all WHO Member States** and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- The Health Assembly is held **annually in Geneva, Switzerland**.

Why in News?

- In a major development for public health and improving preparedness for future pandemics, **India has joined other WHO member states** in jointly adopting the **global pandemic treaty** at the **World Health Assembly in Geneva**.
- The treaty, which has been adopted **without the United States**, is the **only the second legally binding accord in the WHO's 75-year history**, the first being the **2003 tobacco control treaty**.

About the Treaty

- The WHO Pandemic Agreement sets out the **principles, approaches, and tools for better international coordination towards pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response**.
- The pact is meant to **avoid the disorganisation and competition for resources** seen during the **Covid-19 outbreak**.
- At the core of the agreement is a proposed **Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System (PABS)**, which gives **pharmaceutical companies access to scientific data** such as pathogen samples and genomic sequences in return for **more equitable sharing of drugs, vaccines and diagnostics** during a pandemic.
- **Participating manufacturers** will have to allocate **10% of their production** of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to the **WHO**. **Another 10%** will then be supplied at **"affordable prices"**.
- Also, **member states** should **promote and otherwise facilitate or incentivise the exchange of technology and know-how to help manufacturers in developing nations** make their own drugs and vaccines.

How strong is the global pandemic treaty?

- Although the treaty has been hailed as groundbreaking and historic, several experts have said that it has a **limited scope**.
- For instance, the agreement **does not give the WHO powers over individual states**.
- The treaty also says that the **WHO does not have the power to mandate or otherwise impose any requirements** such as ban or accept travellers, impose vaccination mandates or therapeutic or diagnostic measures, or implement lockdown.



Less than 20% of WHO's total budget comes from membership dues, while the remainder comes from voluntary contributions.



A 2022 study published by the journal Nature revealed that more than one million lives could have been saved if COVID-19 vaccines had been shared more equitably with lower-income countries.

- Notably, the treaty has been agreed upon and adopted **without the US** which has announced plans to **withdraw from the WHO**.
 - Given the dominance of the US in the drug, vaccine, and diagnostics manufacturing industries, **its absence may weaken the agreement**.

3) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

3.1. MARPOL CONVENTION

About

- The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) is the main international convention covering **prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships from operational or accidental causes**.
- It was adopted at the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** in **1973**.
 - The **Protocol of 1978** was adopted in response to a **number of tanker accidents** in 1976–1977.
 - Since the 1973 convention did not enter into force, the 1978 protocol was merged with it, and the **combined convention** entered into force in **1983**.
- The Convention includes **regulations** aimed at **preventing and minimizing pollution from ships** - both **accidental pollution** and that from **routine operations**.
- MARPOL consists of **six technical Annexes**, addressing different pollution aspects, including oil, noxious substances, sewage, garbage, and air pollution.
- **All vessels flagged under nations** that are **MARPOL signatories must adhere** to its requirements, irrespective of where they sail, and **member states** are also **responsible for ships on their national ship registry**.
- More than 150 states (including **India**) are parties to the convention.

International Maritime Organization:

- As a **specialized agency of the United Nations**, IMO is the **global standard-setting authority for the safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping**.
- Its main role is to create a **regulatory framework for the shipping industry** that is fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented.

ORGANISATIONS

1) GLOBAL ENERGY ALLIANCE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

About

- The Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP) is an **alliance of entrepreneurs, governments, technology, policy, and financing partners** working together to **support developing countries in their transition to clean energy.**
- GEAPP's common mission is to **enable low and medium income countries (LMICs) to shift to a clean energy, pro-growth model** that accelerates universal energy access and inclusive economic growth.
- GEAPP aims to **reduce 4 gigatons of future carbon emissions, expand clean energy access to one billion people, and enable 150 million new jobs.**



Why in News?

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has signed an agreement with GEAPP to support early-stage climate-tech startups through funding access, and mentorship.

2) QUALITY COUNCIL OF INDIA

About QCI

- Quality Council of India (QCI) was set up in **1997 jointly by the Government of India and the Indian Industry** as a **National body for Accreditation.**
- QCI is registered as a **non-profit organization** registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.
- The **Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry** is the nodal ministry for QCI.
- QCI is governed by a Council comprising of **38 members** including the Chairman and Secretary General. The Council has an **equal representation of Government, Industry and other Stakeholders.**
- The **Chairman of QCI is appointed by the Prime Minister of India** on the recommendations of the industry to the Government.

Mandate:

- QCI has been established to **create a mechanism for independent third party assessment of products, services and processes.**
- It plays a pivotal role at the national level in **propagating, adoption and adherence to quality standards** in all important spheres of activities including education, healthcare, environment protection, governance, social sectors, infrastructure, and other areas that have a positive impact on people.

Why in News?

- The new unified headquarters of the Quality Council of India was recently inaugurated in **New Delhi.**

3) INDIA ASSUMES CHAIRMANSHIP OF ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANISATION

About APO

- Established in **1961**, the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) is a **Tokyo-based intergovernmental body** that **promotes productivity enhancement across the Asia-Pacific region** through mutual cooperation and capacity building.

- The APO currently comprises **21 member economies**, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Taiwan, Fiji, Hong Kong, **India**, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkiye, and Vietnam.
- **India is one of the founding members** of the APO and has played an integral role in shaping its agenda and supporting its mission since its inception.



Why in News?

- **India** has assumed the **Chairmanship** of the Asian Productivity Organization for the **2025-26 term** during the 67th Session of the **Governing Body Meeting** of APO held in Jakarta, Indonesia.
 - The **Governing Body** is the **APO's highest decision-making authority** and **meets annually** to set the organization's strategic direction, approve major proposals, and review Secretariat performance.

4) COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

About CCI

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a **statutory body** established under the **Competition Act, 2002** to **promote competition, protect consumers, and ensure fair trade** in India.
- CCI consists of a **Chairperson and 6 Members** appointed by the **Central Government**.
- The following are the **objectives** of the Commission:
 - To prevent practices having adverse effects on competition;
 - To promote and sustain competition in markets;
 - To protect the interests of consumers and
 - To ensure freedom of trade.
- The Commission is also required to **give opinion** on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority and to **undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training** on competition issues.
- Appeals of CCI lie with the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal**.

Why in News?

- In a further bid to check predatory pricing and ensure fair competition, the Competition Commission of India has notified **new definitions** for various costs it will use to judge whether a price charged by a company for a product or service is **predatory or not**.
- According to the **Competition Act 2002**, **predatory pricing** is where a good or service is **priced below its cost** — which is to be determined through regulations like the one just issued — with the aim to reduce competition and eliminate competitors.

5) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

5.1. COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN STATES

About

- The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) is a **regional bloc of 33 sovereign countries in Latin American and Caribbean countries**.

- It was created in **2010** at a session of the **Latin American and Caribbean Unity Summit** in **Playa del Carmen (Mexico)**.
- The bloc forms a **political dialogue** to **deepen Latin American integration**.
- The **countries** forming the CELAC are: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Panama, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and The Grenadines, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and Uruguay.



5.2. ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

About ADB

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) was founded in **1966** with the primary mission of **fostering growth and cooperation among countries in the Asia-Pacific Region**.
- ADB assists its members, and partners, by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
- It is headquartered in **Manila, Philippines**.



Members & Shareholding:

- At present, ADB comprises 69 members (including **India**) - of which 50 are from within **Asia and the Pacific** and 19 **outside**.
 - **Israel** became the most recent member of the ADB, joining in 2024.
- The ADB was **modeled closely on the World Bank**, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
- ADB's **five largest shareholders** are **Japan** and the **United States** (each with 15.6% of total shares), the **People's Republic of China** (6.4%), **India** (6.3%), and **Australia** (5.8%).
- ADB is an official **United Nations Observer**.

5.3. OPEC

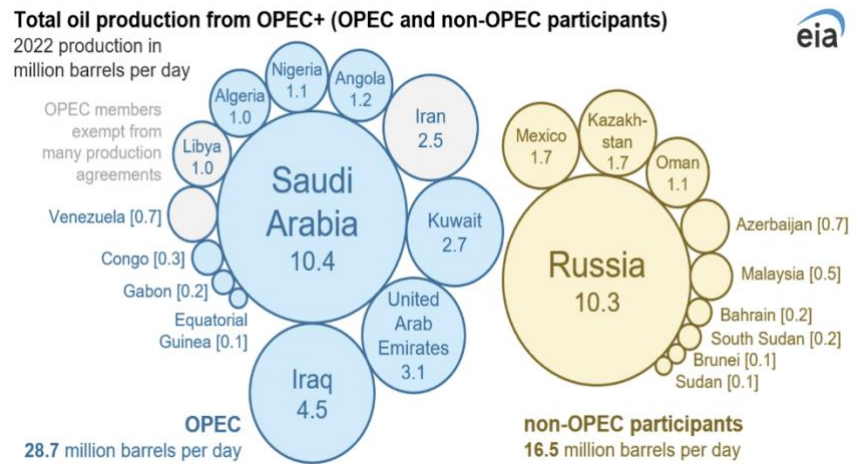
About

- The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a **permanent intergovernmental organization** of **12 oil-exporting developing nations**.
- Countries that belong to OPEC include **Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela** (the five founders), plus the **United Arab Emirates, Libya, Algeria, Nigeria, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon**.
- OPEC was founded in **1960** to **coordinate the petroleum policies** of its members and to provide member states with **technical and economic aid**.

- OPEC is **used to work as a cartel** and fix prices in a favourable band. It could bring down prices by increasing oil production and raise prices by cutting production.
- The **OPEC Secretariat** is located in **Vienna, Austria**.

OPEC Plus

- The 2014 oil crisis, which was accentuated by oversupply of crude, brought down prices below \$30 a barrel.
- Since then, **OPEC has been working with non-OPEC countries** like **Russia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Sudan and South Sudan** to fix the global prices and supply.
- Known as the **“OPEC Plus” arrangement**, this alliance kept production lower and pumped up the prices.
- Together, these nations produce about **40% of the entire world's crude oil**.



5.4. BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS

About BIS

- Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the **National Standard Body of India**. It is a **statutory organization** established under the **BIS Act, 1986** (later amended by **BIS Act, 2016**) in 1987.
- BIS is responsible for the **harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods**.
- BIS is involved in various activities like standard formulation, certification of products, hallmarking, testing and calibration scheme, etc.
- BIS works under the aegis of the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**.



BIS Certification

- BIS Product Certification Scheme is one of the largest in the world, with over 26500 licensees covering more than 900 products.
- BIS Certification allows the licensees to use the popular **ISI mark** on their product, which is synonymous with quality products.
- BIS also operates **Foreign Manufacturers Certification Scheme** under which overseas manufacturers can be granted a licence to use the BIS Standard Mark.

Products that Require Mandatory BIS Certificate

- BIS certification scheme is basically **voluntary in nature**. However, for a number of products compliance to Indian Standards is **made compulsory** by the Central Government under various considerations viz. public interest, protection of human, animal or plant health, safety of environment, prevention of unfair trade practices and national security.
- The following are products that require mandatory BIS License or Certification.
 - Cement

- Household electrical goods
- Food and related products
- Diesel engines
- Oil pressure stoves
- **Automotive tyres and tubes**
- Cylinders, Valves and Regulators
- Medical Equipment
- Steel Products
- Electrical Transformers.

5.5. INCOIS

About Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)

- ESSO-INCOIS was established as an **autonomous body** in **1999** under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**.
- Headquartered in **Hyderabad**, it is a **unit of the Earth System Science Organization (ESSO)**.
 - *ESSO operates as an **executive arm of MoES**. It was established in 2007 as a virtual organization, bringing all meteorological and ocean development activities under one umbrella.*



Mandate of ESSO-INCOIS

- ESSO-INCOIS is mandated to provide the best possible **ocean information and advisory services** to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community.
- It provides round-the-clock **monitoring and warning services** for the coastal population on tsunamis, storm surges, high waves, etc. through the in-house **Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC)**.

5.6. INDIAN PORTS GLOBAL LIMITED

About

- India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**, is the **Government of India's arm to operate International Ports**.
- IPGL was incorporated under the **Companies Act 2013** as a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) jointly promoted** by **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust** and **Deendayal Port Trust** (earlier **Kandla Port Trust**)
- At present, IPGL operates **Shahid Beheshti Port** in the Province of the Sistan-Baluchistan of the **Chabahar, Iran**, and **Sittwe Port** in **Myanmar**.

5.7. INLAND WATERWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

About

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) was established in **1986** for **development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation**.
- It is a **Statutory Body under the Ministry of Shipping**.
- The Authority primarily undertakes projects for **development and maintenance of Inland Water Transport (IWT) infrastructure on national waterways** through grants received from the Ministry of Shipping.
- The head office of the Authority is at **Noida**.



Inland Water Transport in India:

- India has about **14,500 km of navigable waterways** which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.
- Inland Water Transport (IWT) is the **most economical mode of transportation**, especially for bulk cargo like coal, iron ore, cement, food grains and fertilizer.
- Presently, it remains **underutilized** at a **share of 2% in India's modal mix**.
- Government intends to **increase the share of IWT to 5%** as per **Maritime India Vision (MIV)-2030**.
- For development of IWT in the country, **111 waterways** (including 5 existing National Waterways and 106 new) spread over 24 States have been declared as **National Waterways** under the **National Waterways Act, 2016**.
- As per constitutional provisions, only those waterways which are **declared as National Waterways** come under the purview of the **Central Government** while the rest of waterways remain in the purview of respective **State Governments**.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1) ELIMINATION OF TRACHOMA

About

- Trachoma is a **bacterial eye infection** caused by *Chlamydia Trachomatis*.
- Trachoma is a **contagious** infection that **spreads through contact with the eyes, eyelids, nose, or throat secretions of infected individuals**.
- It can be transmitted via **contaminated fingers, fomites, and flies** that come into contact with discharge from the eyes or nose of an infected person.
 - *Fomites refer to objects or materials which are likely to carry infection, such as clothes, utensils, and furniture.*
- If left untreated, trachoma can lead to **irreversible blindness**.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies it as a **neglected tropical disease**, with 150 million people affected globally.
- In India, Trachoma was a major cause of blindness in the 1950s-60s. The government launched the **National Trachoma Control Program** in 1963, later integrating it into the **National Program for Control of Blindness (NPCB)**.
- In 2017, **India was declared free** from infective Trachoma.

Why in News?

- India has been awarded the **Certificate of Elimination of Trachoma as a Public Health Problem** by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- Last year, the WHO declared that the Government of India had eliminated Trachoma as a public health problem, making it the **third country in the South East Asia region** after Nepal and Myanmar to achieve this feat.

Neglected Tropical Diseases:

- Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are a **diverse group of communicable diseases** that prevail in **tropical and subtropical conditions** in more than 140 countries.
- NTDs are caused by a **variety of pathogens** including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins.
- NTDs often thrive in regions with **poor sanitation, scarce healthcare access, and challenging environmental conditions**, making them difficult to control.
- NTDs are most **prevalent in rural areas, conflict zones, and regions with limited access to clean water and sanitation**.
- They are called "neglected" because they generally afflict the world's poor and historically have not received as much attention and resources from global health initiatives as other diseases.
- NTD includes Dengue, Chikungunya, **Trachoma**, Human dog-mediated rabies, Leprosy (Hansen disease), Endemic treponematoses (yaws), Human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), Leishmaniasis, Lymphatic filariasis, etc.

2) BHARAT FORECAST SYSTEM

What's in the news?

- The Government of India has launched **one of the world's first indigenously developed high-resolution weather forecast systems** — the **Bharat Forecast System**.
- Developed by the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune**, the cutting-edge system **enhances India's weather prediction resolution from 12 km to 6 km**, enabling every village in India to access more precise and location-specific forecasts.

- It makes it the **world's first model at such a high resolution for localised forecasts.**
- The Bharat Forecast System is based on the **advanced 'Triangular Cubic Octahedral Grid model'**, which enables real-time modelling.
 - It has demonstrated a 30% improvement in forecasting extreme rainfall events and a 64% enhancement in predictions within core monsoon zones.

3) KODAIKANAL SOLAR OBSERVATORY

About

- **Established in 1899** by the British, the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KSO) is **India's oldest and one of the world's oldest solar observatories.**
- Located in the **Palani Hills of Tamil Nadu**, KSO has been a pioneering centre for **solar research** in India for over a century.
- It holds the distinction of being the country's **longest-running astronomical observatory** and maintains one of the world's most **extensive and continuous daily records of the Sun.**
 - KSO houses a **digital repository of 1.2 lakh digitised solar images and thousands of other images of the Sun recorded every day since the start of the 20th century.**
- KSO is operated by the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA).**
 - IIA, with its headquarters in **Bengaluru**, is an **autonomous research institute wholly funded by the Department of Science and Technology.**



Why in News?

- The Department of Posts has released a postal stamp to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory.

4) NIPAH

About Nipah Infection

- It is a **viral infection** caused by the **Nipah virus (NiV).**
- **Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family** are the natural host of Nipah virus.
 - NiV can also be transmitted by pigs and other domestic animals like goats, horses, dogs, and cats.
- The disease was first identified in **1998** during an outbreak in **Malaysia.** Later, Nipah outbreaks have been reported in **Singapore, Bangladesh and India.**

Transmission

- It is a **zoonotic virus** (transmitted from animals to humans) which can also be transmitted through **contaminated food** or **directly between people.**
- **Consumption of fruits or fruit products contaminated** with urine or saliva from **infected fruit bats** is the most likely source of infection.
- In infected people, it causes a **range of illnesses** from asymptomatic infection to **acute respiratory infection** (mild, severe), and **fatal encephalitis** (inflammation in the brain).
- The virus can also cause **severe disease in animals** such as pigs, resulting in significant economic losses for farmers.

Treatment

- There are currently **no drugs or vaccines** specific for Nipah virus infection.
- The primary treatment for humans is supportive care.
- Preventing the Nipah virus involves **infection control measures** like using protective equipment, disinfecting surfaces, and avoiding sick animals or areas with known Nipah virus outbreaks.

Why in News?

- Health experts have expressed concerns about the potential transmission of the Nipah virus from animals to humans in Kerala's northern districts.
 - Recently, a new case of the virus was confirmed in the state.

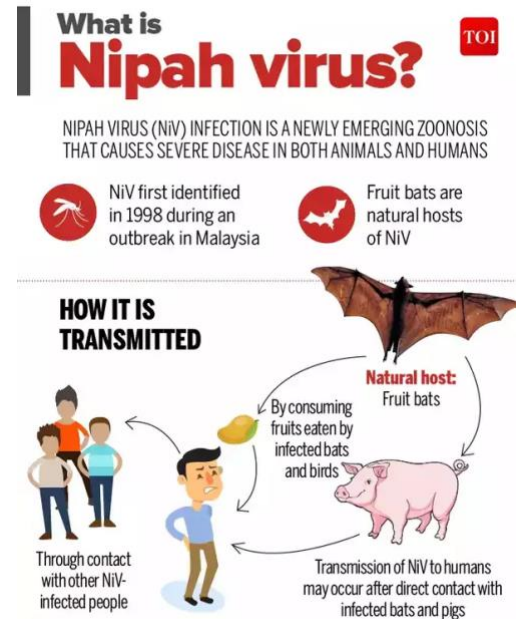
5) INDIA DEVELOPS GENOME EDITED RICE

About

- Genome editing is a technique that allows scientists to **precisely alter the DNA of an organism** by inserting, deleting, or modifying specific DNA sequences **at particular locations in the genome**.
- It works like a **molecular scissor** — targeting and cutting DNA at exact spots, enabling specific genetic changes.
- **CRISPR-Cas9** is a well-known type of genome editing.

Why in News?

- **India has become the first country** in the world to develop **genome-edited rice varieties**.
- The two varieties namely **DRR Dhan 100 Kamala** and **Pusa DST Rice 1** are developed by **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutions**.
- ICAR said that these varieties will play a leading role in heralding the **second green revolution** in the country.



Genome:

- The genome is the **entire set of DNA instructions found in a cell**.
- In humans, the genome consists of **23 pairs of chromosomes** located in the **cell's nucleus**, as well as a **small chromosome** in the **cell's mitochondria**.
- A genome **contains all the information needed for an individual to develop and function**.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research:

- ICAR is an **autonomous organisation** under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- The ICAR has its headquarters at **New Delhi**.
- It is the apex body for **co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture** including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

What was the technology used?

- The new varieties were developed using **genome-editing technology based on CRISPR-Cas**, which makes **precise changes in the organism's genetic material without adding foreign DNA**, unlike in case of **genetic modification (GM)** which involves introducing foreign genetic material into the plant.
- Scientists have used **SDN1 (Site-Directed Nucleases-1)** and **SDN2 genome editing techniques** to develop the seeds.
- Though this technique was used to develop different crops since 2001, such as tomatoes, a fish variety in Japan and a soybean variety in the U.S., **making a rice variety has been done for the first time.**
- It should be noted that since the two new varieties **incorporate no foreign DNA, they are not genetically modified (GM) crops.**

Significance

- The genome-edited rice varieties contribute to **climate resilience** by offering tolerance to salinity, alkalinity, and by maturing earlier — helping farmers adapt to climate change and degraded soils.
- These varieties ensure **higher yields**, with productivity increasing by **up to 30%**, while also helping **reduce input costs for farmers.**
- They enhance **food security** by supporting the nutritional demands of India's growing population through more efficient and reliable crop production.

6) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

6.1. BIOE3 POLICY

About

- The '**BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) Policy** was launched by the Government of India in **2024** to **bolster biomanufacturing** in the country.
- To be steered by the **Department of Biotechnology** (under the Ministry of Science and Technology), the aim is to have it **catalyze a technology revolution** just as the IT industry revolutionized life in the 1990s.

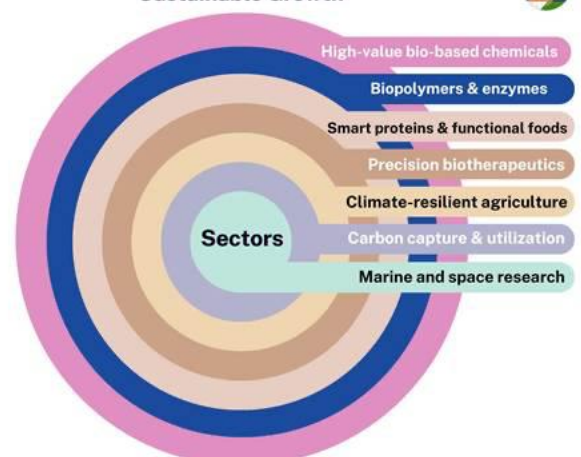
Biomanufacturing:

- Biomanufacturing refers to the **use of engineered microbial, plant, and animal (including human) cells** with increasing precision and control to produce **commercially important products on scale.**
- These are versatile processes that have the potential to create **bio-based products allowing efficient utilization of resources**, in a scalable and cost-effective manner with reduced environmental impact.

About the Policy

- The BioE3 Policy would broadly focus on the following strategic and thematic sectors: **smart proteins & functional foods; high value bio-based chemicals, biopolymers & enzymes; precision biotherapeutics; climate resilient agriculture; carbon capture & its utilization; marine and space research.**
- The policy will accelerate technology development and commercialization by

BioE3 Policy Targets Strategic Sectors for Sustainable Growth



establishing **Biomanufacturing & Bio-AI hubs and Biofoundry**.

- The '**Bio-AI Hubs**' will enable discovery research across the sectors, while the '**Biofoundries & Biomanufacturing Hubs**' will support facilities for pilot scale and pre-commercial scale research.
- Along with prioritizing **regenerative bioeconomy models of green growth**, this policy will facilitate **expansion of India's skilled workforce and provide a surge in job creation**.
- The policy aims to facilitate a **shift from chemical-based industries to sustainable bio-based models**, promoting a **circular bioeconomy** and working towards achieving **net-zero carbon emissions**.
- The policy also places a **renewed focus on ethical biosafety considerations and global regulatory harmonization**.

A **circular bioeconomy** is a new economic model that **emphasizes the use of renewable natural capital and focuses on minimizing waste**, replacing the wide range of non-renewable, fossil-based products currently in use.

POLITY

1) GOVT.RESERVES 4% HOUSING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016

- The objective of the RPwD Act is to ensure that **all persons with disabilities can lead their lives with dignity, without discrimination and with equal opportunities.**
- The Act fulfills the obligations to the **United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, to which **India is a signatory.**

Disabilities covered

- The types of disabilities have been increased from **existing 7 to 21** and the **Central Government** will have the power to add more types of disabilities.

Rights and entitlements

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

Children with disabilities not to be separated from their parents

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

Establishment of Authorities

- Broad based **Central & State Advisory Boards on Disability** are to be set up to serve as apex policy making bodies at the Central and State level.
- The **Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and the State Commissioners** will act as **regulatory bodies** and **Grievance Redressal agencies** and also **monitor** implementation of the Act.

Penalties for offences

- Any person who violates provisions of the Act, or any rule or regulation made under it, shall be punishable with **imprisonment up to six months and/ or a fine of Rs 10,000, or both.**
- For any **subsequent violation, imprisonment of up to two years and/or a fine of Rs 50,000 to Rs five lakh** can be awarded.
- Whoever intentionally insults or intimidates a person with disability, or sexually exploits a woman or child with disability, shall be punishable with **imprisonment between six months to five years and fine.**
- **Special Courts** will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning violation of rights of PwDs.

Why in News?

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has decided to make a **reservation of 4%** in the **allotment of Central government housing for persons with disabilities** in alignment with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- The **Directorate of Estates** under the Ministry, which **allots accommodation to eligible Central government employees**, has issued an office memorandum in this regard.

REPORTS & INDICES

1) HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

About the Report

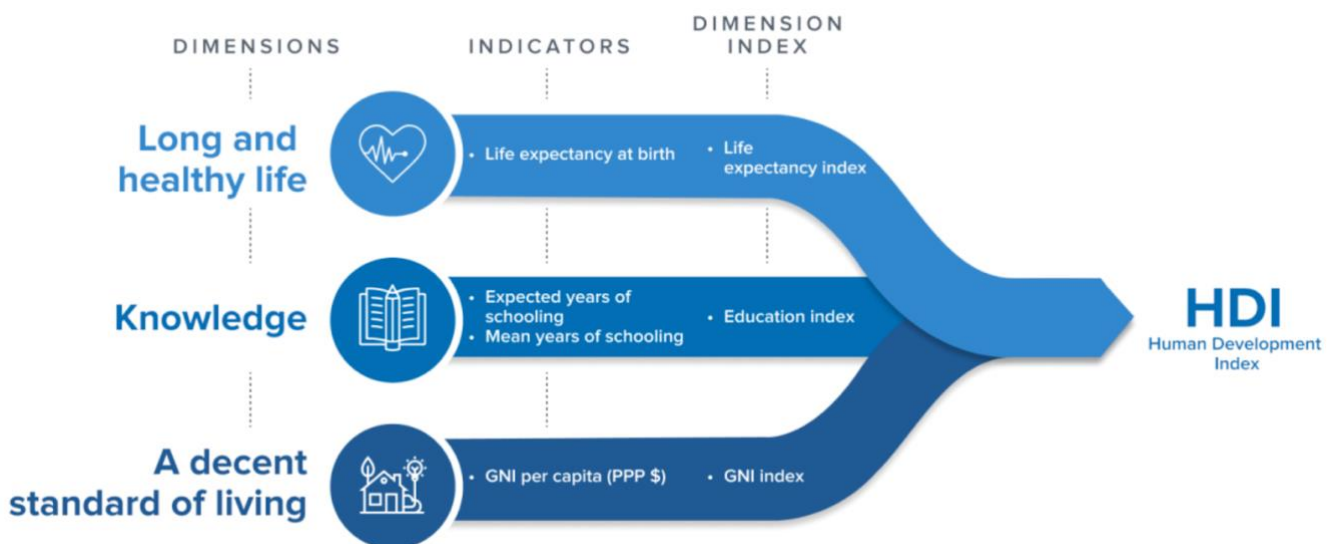
- The Human Development Report (HDR), published by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, assesses the state of human development globally.
- The report has been released most years since 1990 and has **explored different themes through the human development approach.**
- The first HDR was launched in 1990 by the Pakistani economist **Mahbub ul Haq** and Indian Nobel laureate **Amartya Sen.**
- As part of the report, the UNDP releases the **Human Development Index.**

Human Development Index (HDI)

- HDI is a statistical tool used to **measure a country's overall achievement in its social and economic dimensions.**
- Calculation of the index combines four major indicators:
 - **life expectancy for health,**
 - **expected years of schooling,**
 - **mean years of schooling for education and**
 - **Gross National Income per capita for standard of living.**

United Nations Development Programme:

- UNDP is the **UN's global development network**, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.
- UNDP's work is concentrated on **three main focus areas:**
 - Sustainable development**
 - Democratic governance and peacebuilding**
 - Climate and disaster resilience.**



Other Indices published as a part of HDR:

1. Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI):

- The IHDI looks beyond the average achievements of a country in longevity, education and income to show how these achievements are distributed among its residents.

2. Gender Development Index (GDI):

- GDI measures disparities on the HDI by gender.
- The closer the ratio is to 1, the smaller the gap between women and men.

3. Gender Inequality Index (GII):

- GII presents a composite measure of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.

4. Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI):

- MPI captures the multiple deprivations that people face in their health, education and standard of living.
- The MPI shows both the incidence of multidimensional poverty (a headcount of those in multidimensional poverty) and its intensity (the average deprivation score experienced by multidimensionally poor people).

5. Planetary pressures- adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI):

- PHDI adjusts the HDI for planetary pressures in the Anthropocene to reflect a concern for intergenerational inequality, similar to the Inequality-adjusted HDI adjustment, which is motivated by a concern for intragenerational inequality.

Why in News?

- The United Nations Development Programme has released its **Human Development Report (HDR) 2025** titled 'A matter of choice: People and possibilities in the age of Artificial Intelligence'.

Highlights of the Index

Overall Performance

- **Global HDI progress has slowed to its weakest pace since 1990**, excluding the pandemic years.
- The **gap between Very High and Low HDI countries has widened for four consecutive years**, reversing decades of narrowing disparities.
- The report notes the **potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to accelerate development** but **warns infrastructure gaps and talent migration could deepen inequalities**.
- **Iceland**, with an HDI value of 0.972, ranked at the top of the HDI Index, followed by **Norway** and **Switzerland**. **South Sudan** was at the bottom at 193 with 0.388.

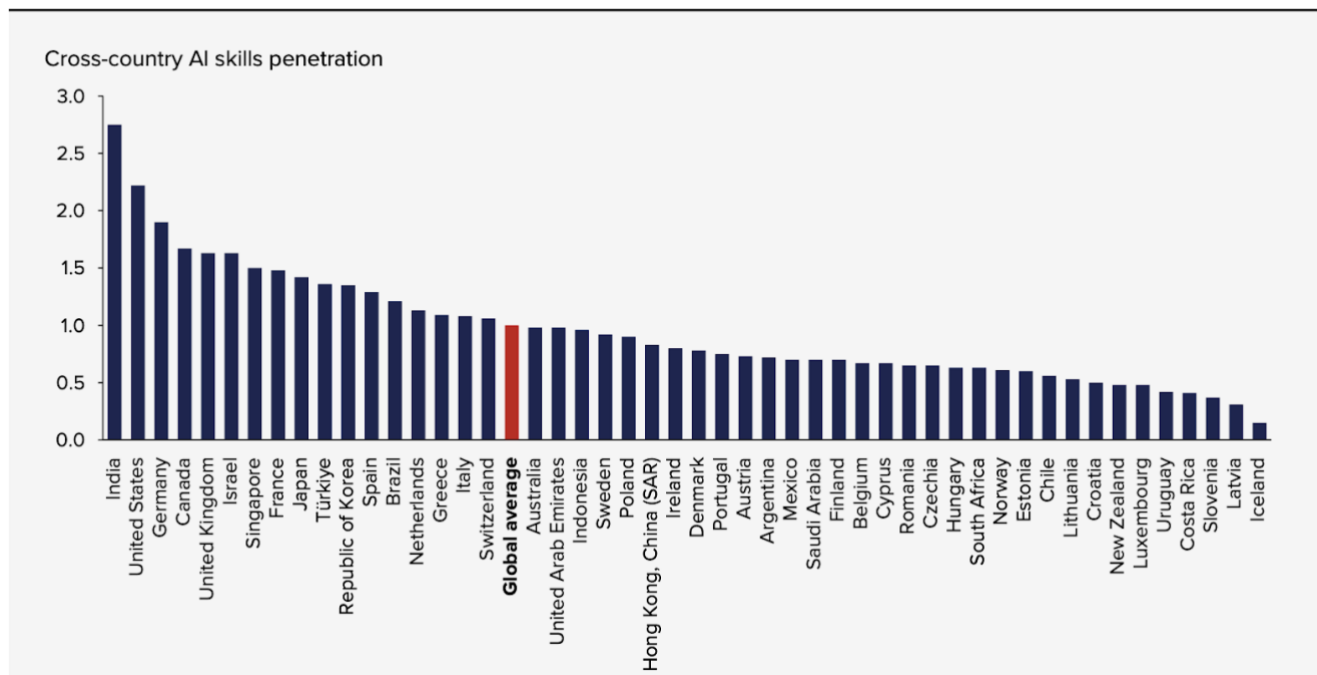
Where does India stand?

- **India** climbed four spots to the **130th** position out of 193 countries in the latest index.
- The report noted that **India improved its HDI value** from 0.676 in 2022 to **0.685** in 2023, with the country remaining in the **medium human development category**, although moving closer to the threshold for **high human development (HDI ≥ 0.700)**.

Rank	Country	HDI
1	Iceland	0.972
2	Norway	0.97
2	Switzerland	0.97
4	Denmark	0.962
5	Germany	0.959
5	Sweden	0.959
130	Bangladesh	0.685
130	India	0.685

- **India's HDI value has increased by over 53% since 1990**, growing faster than both the global and South Asian averages.
- **India's life expectancy rose to 72 years in 2023** from 67.7 in 2022, while **expected schooling years increased to 13** from 12.6, with **average schooling years increasing to 6.9** from 6.57. Meanwhile, the **per capita Gross National Income (GNI) jumped from \$6,951 to \$9,047**.
- Though the report highlights that **13.5 crore** of India's population **escaped multidimensional poverty** between 2015-16 and 2019-21, the **metric adjusted by inequality (IHDI)** reveals a sharper picture.
 - **India's HDI dropped to 0.475** when accounting for disparities in health, education, and income — a **30.66% decline**.
- **Gender gaps** too persist. The **Gender Development Index (GDI)** stands at **0.874**, keeping it in **group 5 countries** that have ranked low on eradicating the gap.
- **India ranks 102nd** on the **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** at **0.403**, reflecting challenges in reproductive health, political representation, and workforce participation.
- The report places **India** in a unique position globally as a **rising AI powerhouse** with the **highest self-reported AI skills penetration**.

Figure 5.8 India has the highest self-reported artificial intelligence (AI) skills penetration



ART & CULTURE

1) PADMA AWARDS

About

- Padma Awards, which were instituted in **1954**, are **announced every year** on the occasion of **Republic Day** except for brief interruption(s) during the years 1978 and 1979 and 1993 to 1997.
- The Award seeks to recognize **achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines** where an **element of public service** is involved.
- It is given in **three categories**, namely,
 - **Padma Vibhushan** for **exceptional and distinguished service**;
 - **Padma Bhushan** for **distinguished service of a high order**; and
 - **Padma Shri** for **distinguished service**.



Who is eligible?

- **All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex** are eligible for these awards.
- However, **Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible** for these Awards.

Various Fields

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

Who decides?

- The Padma Awards are conferred on the **recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee**, which is constituted by the **Prime Minister** every year.
- The nomination process is **open to the public**. Even **self-nomination can be made**.
- The Padma Awards Committee is headed by the **Cabinet Secretary** and includes Home Secretary, Secretary to the President and four to six eminent persons as members. The recommendations of the committee are submitted to the **Prime Minister** and the **President of India** for approval.
- Recipients of these awards receive a **medal and a certificate** signed by the President of India.

Maximum number of awards

- The total number of awards to be given in a year (excluding posthumous awards and to foreigners) should not be more than **120**.

Note:

- The award **does not amount to a title** under **Article 18(1)** of the Indian Constitution and **cannot be used as a suffix or prefix to the awardees' name**.
- The award is normally **not conferred posthumously**. However, in highly deserving cases, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously.



Bharat Ratna is the highest Civilian Award in India and is awarded to a maximum of **3 people per year**.

- A **higher category** of Padma award can be conferred on a person only where a period of **at least five years has elapsed** since conferment of the earlier Padma award. However, in highly deserving cases, a relaxation can be made by the Awards Committee.

Why in News?

- President of India Droupadi Murmu presented the Padma Awards for the year 2025.

2) JNANPITH AWARD

About

- The Jnanpith Award is the **oldest and the highest Indian literary award** presented to authors for their "**outstanding contribution towards literature.**"
- Instituted in **1961**, the award is **bestowed only on Indian writers** writing in **Indian languages included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India and English**, with **no posthumous conferral.**
- The **first recipient** of the award was **Malayalam writer G Sankara Kurup** in 1965 for his novel 'Odakkuzhal' meaning 'The Bamboo Flute'.
- The award carries a **cash prize of Rs. 11 lakhs**, a **citation**, and a **bronze replica of Vagdevi** (Hindu goddess Saraswati).
- The Award is **presented annually** by the **Bharatiya Jnanpith**, a literary and research organization, based in New Delhi.



Why in News?

- President Droupadi Murmu conferred the 58th Jnanpith Award on Sanskrit scholar **Jagadguru Rambhadracharya**.
 - Jagadguru Rambhadracharya and the renowned Urdu poet and lyricist **Gulzar** have been selected for this prestigious award for 2023.
- Jagadguru Rambhadracharya is a renowned Hindu spiritual leader, educator, and writer of more than 240 books and texts. Gulzar is known for his works in Hindi cinema and is considered one of the finest Urdu poets of this era.

DEFENCE

1) REVAMPED MULTI AGENCY CENTRE

What's in the news?

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah has inaugurated the **revamped Multi Agency Centre (MAC)**, a **common counter-terrorism grid under Intelligence Bureau (IB)** that was **conceptualised in 2001 post the Kargil war**.
- **Housed with the IB**, the MAC serves as a **unified platform integrating as many as 28 security agencies** - including Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), armed forces, and state police forces.
- This nodal mechanism enables **real-time intelligence sharing and coordinated responses** among intelligence, security, and law enforcement agencies to address complex national security challenges through synergistic action.

PLACES IN NEWS

1) SYRIA

About

- Syria is a **southwest Asian country** located on the **east coast of the Mediterranean Sea**.
- Its area includes territory in the **Golan Heights** that has been occupied by **Israel** since 1967.
- **Capital: Damascus.**
- Syria is bounded by
 - **Turkey** to the north,
 - **Iraq** to the east and southeast,
 - **Jordan** to the south, and
 - **Lebanon** and **Israel** to the southwest.



2) YEMEN

About

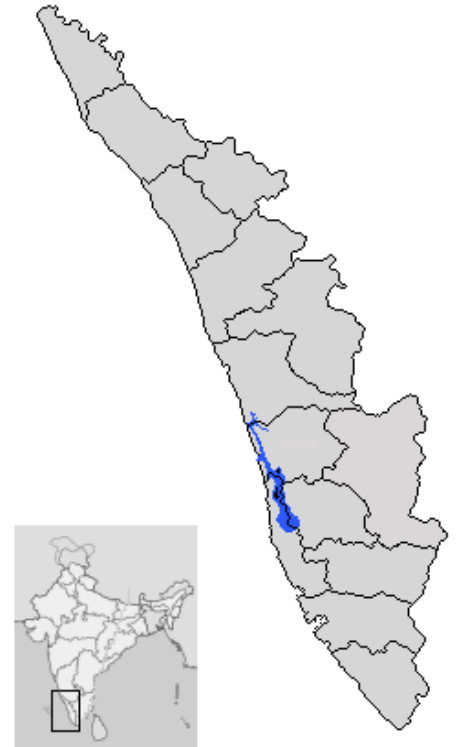
- **Location:** Southwestern corner of the **Arabian Peninsula**.
- **Capital: Sanaa**
- Yemen is **bounded by**
 - **Saudi Arabia** to the north,
 - **Oman** to the northeast,
 - **Arabian Sea** to the east,
 - **Gulf of Aden** to the south, and
 - **Red Sea** to the west.
- **Civil war** in the country began in 2014 when **Houthis** (a political and military organization) seized control of the capital city, Sanaa.



3) VEMBANAD LAKE

About

- Vembanad is the **longest lake in India** and the **largest lake in Kerala**.
- Also known as **Punnamada Lake**, the lake has its source in four rivers, Meenachil, Achankoil, Pampa and Manimala.
- The **Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary** is located on the periphery of the lake.
- The **Nehru trophy boat race** takes place every year in this lake.



MISCELLANEOUS

1) INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE

About

- The International Booker Prize is a **literary prize** awarded **every year** for **translated fiction**.
- The prize celebrates the best works of **long-form fiction or collections of short stories translated into English** and **published in the UK and/or Ireland**.
- The prize money awarded is **50,000 pounds**.

Why in News?

- Indian author **Banu Mushtaq** and translator **Deepa Bhashi** have won the International Booker Prize 2025 for **“Heart Lamp,”** a collection of 12 short stories that chronicle the everyday experiences of women and girls living in patriarchal communities in southern India.
- The winning book is the **first collection of short stories** to be awarded the prize, and the **first winner originally written in Kannada**.

2) KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES 2025

About KIYG

- Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) are part of the **Khelo India program** that was launched in 2017.
 - Khelo India aims to achieve the **twin objective** of **mass participation and promotion of excellence in sports**.
- For the first time, KIYG was held in **Delhi** in **2018**.
- KIYG provides an important platform for youth to showcase their skills and gain experience in national-level competitions.

Why in News?

- **Bihar** recently hosted the **seventh edition of the Khelo India Youth Games**.

About KIYG 2025

- Over 5,000 young athletes from all 36 States and Union Territories across India competed for medals in **27 sports** in KIYG 2025.
- For the first time in the KIYG program, **sepaktakraw** has been included as a medal sport and **esports** was included as a **demonstration sport** (not eligible for official medal consideration).
- The **official mascot** was **“Gajsimha”** which symbolizes the power of elephant and heart of lion.
 - The mascot has been derived from the archival heritage of **Pala dynasty** from Nalanda and Bodhgaya engraved on temples and their pillars.
- In the KIYG 2025 medal tally, **Maharashtra** defended their title by securing the top position, followed by **Haryana** and **Rajasthan**.



3) NATIONAL FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AWARD

About

- The National Florence Nightingale Award was instituted by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in **1973** as a mark of recognition for the **meritorious services of nurses**.
- These awards are presented to **Registered Nurses, Midwives, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives, and Lady Health Visitors** serving across Central and State Governments, Union Territories, and voluntary organizations.
- Each award includes a **Certificate of Merit**, a **cash prize of ₹1,00,000**, and a **medal**.

Why in News?

- President of India Droupadi Murmu conferred the National Florence Nightingale Awards 2025 upon 15 exceptional nursing professionals.



- Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was a British **nurse, statistician, and social reformer** who was the **foundational philosopher of modern nursing**.
- She earned the nickname "**Lady with the Lamp**" during her work caring for wounded soldiers during the Crimean War.

4) OTHER NOTABLE TOPICS

4.1. PERSONA NON GRATA

What is persona non grata?

- Persona non grata is a Latin phrase which means "**unwelcome person**."
- In diplomacy, it refers to a **diplomat or foreign person whose entering or remaining in a certain country has been prohibited** by that country.
- The designation received diplomatic meaning at the **1961 Vienna Convention for Diplomatic Relations**.
 - **Article 9** of the treaty mentions that a country can declare any member of a diplomatic staff persona non grata "**at any time and without having to explain its decision**."
- Soon after the declaration, the person concerned usually returns to their home nation. In case they fail to do so, the country may refuse to recognise the person concerned as a member of the mission.

Vienna Convention:

- The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations was signed in **1961** as an international treaty that defines a **framework for diplomatic relations between independent countries**.
- It specifies the **privileges of a diplomatic mission** that enable diplomats to perform their function without fear of coercion or harassment by the host country.
- This forms the legal basis for **diplomatic immunity**. Its articles are considered a **cornerstone of modern international relations**.
- The Convention is **nearly universally ratified**, with **Palau and South Sudan** being the exceptions.

When is it used?

- There **aren't any fixed rules** regarding when a country can declare a foreign person persona non grata as it doesn't need to give an explanation.
- Historically speaking, countries have used it to **express their discontent** with the actions of other nations.
- Notably, the imposition of persona non grata designation **isn't just limited to diplomats**.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM OTHER ARTICLES

1) INDIA BECOMES WORLD'S 4TH LARGEST ECONOMY

News:

- **India** has surpassed **Japan** to become the **world's fourth-largest economy** (after the **US, China, and Germany**).
- India is now poised to displace **Germany** from the third rank in the next 2.5 to 3 years.
- According to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, **India's GDP** currently stands at **4.3 trillion dollars**.
- India continues to be the **world's fastest-growing major economy** and is the **only country expected to record over 6% growth over the next two years**.

2) WAVES SUMMIT

News:

- **India's first World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025** recently concluded in **Mumbai**.
- With the theme "**Connecting Creators, Connecting Countries**," the summit is a first-of-its-kind event that seeks to **position India as a centre for creative innovation and entertainment**.
- During the summit, the **WAVES Declaration** was adopted by representatives of 77 countries.
 - The declaration emphasised reducing bias, democratising content creation, and preserving cultural heritage while promoting fair and innovative markets.

3) US-INDIA COMPACT INITIATIVE

About

- The "**US-India COMPACT**" (**Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology**) for the 21st Century was launched by both countries in **February 2025**, aiming to **drive transformative progress across key sectors**.
- The initiative sets a **results-oriented agenda**, with initial outcomes expected this year to reflect the trust underpinning this mutually beneficial relationship.
- The initiative also aims to **boost bilateral trade** from \$200 billion to **\$500 billion by 2030** ("**Mission 500**").

4) ORANGE ECONOMY

About

- The Orange Economy, or **creative economy**, refers to **industries that rely on individual creativity, skill, and talent**.
- These include sectors like music, film, design, fashion, publishing, arts, advertising, and software development.

5) SANSAD RATNA AWARDS

News:

- Seventeen Members of Parliament have been selected for the Sansad Ratna Award 2025.
- The Sansad Ratna Award was instituted by the **Chennai-based non-profit charitable trust Prime Point Foundation** at the instance of former President of India **APJ Abdul Kalam**, who himself inaugurated the first award event in **2010** in **Chennai**.
 - **Hansraj Gangaram Ahir** was the first recipient of the award.

- These awards are **presented annually to the top-performing parliamentarians** based on their comprehensive performance.

6) KYOTO PROTOCOL

About

- The Kyoto Protocol was an international agreement that aimed to **reduce carbon dioxide emissions and the presence of greenhouse gases (GHG)** in the atmosphere.
- The essential tenet of the Kyoto Protocol was that **industrialized nations needed to reduce their CO2 emissions.**
- The protocol was adopted in **Kyoto, Japan, in 1997**, as greenhouse gas emissions threatened climate stability.
- It was **effectively replaced by the Paris Agreement**, which went into effect in 2016.

7) PIEZOELECTRIC MATERIALS

About

- Piezoelectric materials are materials that **produce an electric current** when they are placed under **mechanical stress.**
- The piezoelectric process is **reversible.** When these voltage-generating crystals are exposed to an electric field they get lengthened or shortened (change shape).
- Thus, piezoelectric materials enable a **direct conversion between electrical and mechanical energy.**
- **Examples:**
 - **Naturally occurring crystals** such as Quartz, Topaz, Tourmaline, Rochelle salt, and cane sugar.
 - **Man-made materials** such as lithium sulfate, polarized ferroelectric ceramics such as the lead zirconate titanate (PZT), polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF).
- **Applications:** Piezoelectric materials are used in sensors, actuators, piezoelectric igniters, microphones, micro robotics, motors, etc.