

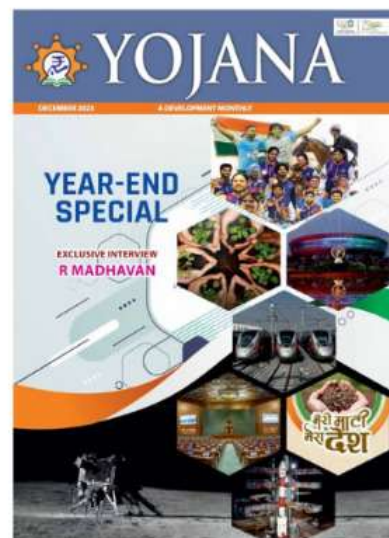
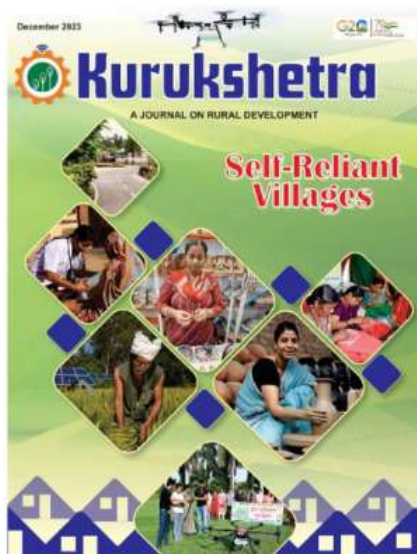
# OFFICERS' Pulse

## DIGEST

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# Schemes



## 1) Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme





<p><b>About</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is meant to enable <b>Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature</b> with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets based on the locally felt needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nodal Ministry</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Features</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MPLADS is <b>fully funded by the Government of India</b>. The <b>annual MPLADS fund entitlement</b> per MP constituency is <b>Rs. 5 crore</b>.</li> <li>Funds under the MPLADS are <b>non-lapsable</b>.</li> <li><b>Lok Sabha Members</b> can recommend works within their Constituencies and <b>Elected Members of Rajya Sabha</b> can recommend works within the State of Election (with select exceptions). <b>Nominated Members</b> of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.</li> <li>All works to meet <b>locally felt infrastructure and development needs</b>, with an <b>emphasis on creation of durable assets</b> in the area of national priorities namely drinking water, education, public health, sanitation, roads etc.</li> <li>The MPLADS funds can be <b>merged with other schemes</b> such as MGNREGA and Khelo India.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implementation</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under MPLADS, the role of the MPs is limited only upto recommendation of works. Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the <b>District Authority</b> to sanction, execute and complete the works recommended by Members of Parliament within the stipulated time.</li> <li>Information on MPLADS (the number and cost of works sanctioned, implementing agencies, projects completed, etc) should be made available to citizens under the <b>Right to Information Act</b>.</li> <li><b>At least 10% of the projects</b> under implementation in the district are to be <b>inspected</b> every year by the district authority.</li> </ul> <p><b>Allocation for SC &amp; ST</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The guidelines recommend MPs to suggest works costing <b>at least 15 percent</b> of their MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by <b>Scheduled Caste population</b> and <b>7.5 per cent</b> for areas inhabited by <b>Scheduled Tribe population</b>.</li> <li>In case there is insufficient tribal population in the area of Lok Sabha Member, they may recommend this amount for the creation of community assets in <b>tribal areas outside of their constituency but within their State of election</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why in News?</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ministry of Statistics &amp; Programme Implementation said that around 45000 projects have been sanctioned under MPLAD Scheme in 2023-23.</li> </ul>

## 2) PRASHAD Scheme



<p><b>About</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It stands for the 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive' (PRASHAD).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scheme's objective is <b>integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Nodal Ministry</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched by the <b>Ministry of Tourism</b> in the year 2014-15.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Features</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a <b>Central Sector Scheme with complete financial assistance by the Government of India.</b></li> <li>The scheme has been launched with the vision of <b>focused infrastructure development to harness pilgrimage and heritage tourism destinations.</b></li> <li>The scheme aimed at infrastructure development such as entry points (Road, Rail and Water Transport), last mile connectivity, basic tourism facilities like Information/ Interpretation Centers, ATM/ Money exchange, eco-friendly modes of transport, area Lighting and illumination with renewable sources of energy, parking, drinking water, toilets, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implementation</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The projects identified under this scheme shall be implemented through the identified agencies by the <b>respective State/ Union Territory Government.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Why in the news?</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ministry of Tourism has released details about projects sanctioned under the PRASHAD Scheme.</li> </ul>




## 3) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

<p><b>About</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), was launched in <b>2000</b> as a <b>centrally sponsored scheme.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide <b>connectivity to unconnected habitations of designated population size</b> (500+ in plain areas and 250+ in North-East, hill, tribal and desert areas as per Census, 2001).</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Government had launched <b>Phase III</b> of PMGSY in 2019 for consolidation of Through Routes and Major Rural Links connecting habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), Higher Secondary Schools and Hospitals.</li> </ul>
<b>Nodal Ministry</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Ministry of Rural Development</b> along with state governments is responsible for the implementation of PMGSY.</li> </ul>
<b>Guiding Principles</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The spirit and the objective of the scheme is to provide good all-weather road connectivity to <b>unconnected habitations</b>. A habitation which was <b>earlier provided all-weather connectivity would not be eligible even if the present condition of the road is bad</b>.</li> <li>The unit for this Programme is a <b>Habitation</b> and not a Revenue village or a Panchayat. A Habitation is a cluster of population, living in an area, the location of which does not change over time.</li> <li>PMGSY promotes the use of <b>new and green technology</b> in the process of rural road construction. <b>Locally available materials</b> are used in road construction activities to promote cost effective and fast construction.</li> <li>The PMGSY shall cover <b>only the rural areas</b>. Urban roads are excluded from the purview of this Programme.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Pattern</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently, the fund sharing pattern of PMGSY is <b>60:40</b> between the <b>Centre and States</b> for all states <b>except for North Eastern and Himalayan States</b>. For these states the fund sharing pattern is <b>90:10</b>.</li> <li>In <b>Union Territories</b>, <b>100%</b> of funds will be provided by the <b>Central Government</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Why in News?</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ministry of Rural Development reviewed the progress of projects approved under PMGSY.</li> </ul>


#### 4) SHRESHTA

<b>About</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It stands for the Scheme for Residential Education For Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESTHA).</li> </ul>
<b>Aim</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide <b>residential education to Scheduled Caste students in High School in targeted areas</b>.</li> </ul>



<b>Nodal Ministry</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched in <b>2022</b> by the <b>Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Features</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SHRESHTA has been conceived to provide access to high quality residential education to the meritorious <b>poor students from Scheduled Caste communities</b>, whose parental annual income is up to Rs. 2.5 Lakh per annum, at <b>free of cost from class 9th to class 12th</b>.</li> <li>Under this, each year a specified number of meritorious SC students in States/UTs are selected through a transparent mechanism of a <b>National Entrance Test for SHRESHTA (NETS)</b> and admitted in the <b>best private residential schools</b> affiliated by CBSE/State Boards in <b>classes 9th and 11th</b> for completion of education till 12th standard.</li> <li><b>Entire cost of school fee and hostel fee</b> including food charges shall be borne by the Government of India.</li> <li>The Students under the Scheme <b>may select any school across the country</b> for their academics.</li> </ul>
<b>Why in News?</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under the SHRESTHA scheme, a total of 2,564 students were admitted in 142 Private Residential Schools for academic session 2023-24.</li> </ul>

### 5) Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana




<b>About</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched in <b>2015</b>, the Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) is meant to provide for the <b>welfare of areas and people affected by mining related operations</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Objective</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The overall objective of PMKKKY scheme include             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to implement various <b>developmental and welfare projects/programs in mining affected areas</b>;</li> <li>to <b>minimize/mitigate the adverse impacts</b>, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economics of people in mining districts; and</li> <li>to ensure <b>long-term sustainable livelihoods</b> for the affected people in mining areas.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Nodal Ministry</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ministry of Mines.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMKKKY is implemented by the <b>District Mineral Foundations (DMFs)</b> of the respective districts using the funds accruing to the DMF.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Mines and Minerals (Development &amp; Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015, mandated the setting up of DMFs in</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p><i>all districts in the country affected by mining related operations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>DMF is a trust, setup as a non-profit body, in all districts affected by mining-related operations.</i></li> <li>• Where mining leases are granted after 2015, miners will have to contribute an <b>amount equal to 10% of the royalty payable by them to the DMFs.</b></li> <li>• Using the funds generated by this contribution, the DMFs are expected to implement the PMKKKY.</li> <li>• <b>At least 60% of PMKKKY funds will be utilized for high priority areas</b> like: (i) drinking water supply; (ii) environment preservation and pollution control measures; (iii) health care (iv) education; (v) welfare of women and children; (vi) welfare of aged and disabled people; (vii) skill development; and (viii) Sanitation.</li> <li>• The rest of the funds will be utilized <b>undertaking works</b> like for: (i) physical infrastructure; (ii) irrigation; (iii) energy and watershed development; and (iv) any other measures for enhancing environmental quality in mining districts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why in the news?</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMF has been set up in <b>644 districts in 23 States.</b></li> </ul>

## 6) Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat

<p><b>About</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The initiative 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' was launched by the Government of India on 31st October, 2015 to commemorate the 140th birth anniversary of Sardar Patel to <b>revive a sense of 'nationhood'</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim and Objectives</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme aims to <b>actively enhance interaction between people of diverse cultures</b> living in different States and UTs in India, with the objective of promoting greater mutual understanding amongst them.</li> <li>• The broad objectives of the initiative are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>To CELEBRATE</b> the Unity in Diversity of our Nation and to maintain and strengthen the fabric of traditionally existing emotional bonds between the people of our Country;</li> <li>○ <b>To PROMOTE</b> the spirit of national integration through a deep and structured engagement between all Indian States and Union Territories through a year-long planned engagement between States;</li> <li>○ <b>To SHOWCASE</b> the rich heritage and culture, customs and traditions of either State for enabling people to understand and appreciate the diversity that is India, thus fostering a sense of common identity</li> <li>○ <b>TO ESTABLISH</b> long-term engagements and,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>TO CREATE</b> an environment which promotes learning between States by sharing best practices and experiences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nodal Ministry</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Ministry of Education</b> has been designated as the Nodal Ministry for coordination of the programme.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Features</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per the programme, each year, <b>every State/UT would be paired with another State/UT</b> in India for reciprocal interaction between the people.</li> <li>• It is envisaged through this exchange, that the knowledge of the language, culture, traditions and practices of different states will lead to an enhanced understanding and bonding between one another, thereby strengthening the unity and integrity of India.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why in the news?</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was in the news recently.</li> </ul>

# Initiatives

## 1) Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

### What's in the news?

- The government has launched the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra to **raise awareness about and track the implementation of flagship central schemes, such as Ayushman Bharat, Ujjwala Yojana, PM Surksha Bima, PM SVANidhi, etc.**
- The yatra has **four aims**:
  - **reach out to the vulnerable** who are eligible under various schemes but have not availed benefit so far;
  - **dissemination of information and generating awareness** about schemes;
  - **interaction with beneficiaries** of government schemes through their personal stories/ experience sharing; and
  - **enrolment of potential beneficiaries** through details ascertained during the Yatra.
- The programme is being undertaken with the active involvement of various Union ministries and state governments.
- By January 25, 2024, the Yatra aims to cover over 2.60 lakh Gram Panchayats and 4000+ Urban Local Bodies across the country.

# Environment

## 1) COP-28

### About UNFCCC

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), signed in **1992** at the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** (also known as the **Rio Earth Summit**), constitutes the foundational climate agreement that has provided the platform for most subsequent international climate agreements.
- The UNFCCC entered into force in **1994**. Today, it has **near-universal membership**. The **198 countries** (including **India**) that have ratified the Convention are called **Parties to the Convention**.
- The ultimate objective of the Convention is to **stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations** at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.
- The UNFCCC endorses the **concept of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR)** in the climate context.
  - This means that while developing country parties are expected to contribute to climate mitigation, because of superior capacity to undertake mitigation and greater contribution to the problem of climate change as a result of historical emissions, **developed countries are expected to take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof.**

### About CoP

- The Conference of Parties, known as COP, is the **decision-making body** responsible for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- It brings together the 198 Parties – that have signed on to the Framework Convention. The COP has **met annually since 1995**.

### Timeline

#### 1992: Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro

- It **finalised the UNFCCC**, the mother agreement that lays down the objectives and principles on which climate action by countries are to be based.
- It **acknowledged that developing countries had fewer obligations and capabilities to bring down emissions**.

#### 1997: COP3, Kyoto

- Delivered the **Kyoto Protocol**, precursor to the Paris Agreement.
- The Protocol assigned **specific emission reduction targets for a set of developed countries**, to be achieved by **2012**.
- Others were supposed to take **voluntary actions** to reduce emissions.

#### 2007: COP13, Bali

- It reaffirmed the principles of **common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)** in the efforts to find a replacement to the Kyoto Protocol, which developed nations were getting increasingly uncomfortable with, especially after the emergence of **China** as the world's leading emitter.
- Developed countries want **emission reduction targets for everyone, or for nobody**, their argument being that without

stringent action from China and India, the success of any climate action would not be possible.

#### 2009: COP15, Copenhagen

- **Developed countries committed to mobilising \$100 billion every year in climate finance** for developing countries from 2020.

#### 2015: COP21, Paris

- The successor agreement was finally delivered. The **Paris Agreement does not assign emission reduction targets to any country**. Instead, it asks all to do the best they can.
- The Paris Agreement requires all Parties to put forward their best efforts through **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead.
- The Paris Agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century **well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels** and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to **1.5 degrees Celsius**.

#### 2021: COP26, Glasgow

- India at COP 26 expressed to intensify its climate action by updating its NDCs to the Paris Agreement and presented to the world **five nectar elements (Panchamrit) of India's climate action**.
- The updated NDCs is as follows:
  - India will increase its **non-fossil fuel power capacity to 500 gigawatts (GW)** by the end of the decade, up from 450GW.
  - **Reduce Emissions Intensity of India's GDP by 45 percent** by 2030, from 2005 level.

- Achieve about **50 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources** by 2030.
- The country will also strive to **cut carbon-dioxide emissions by 1 billion tonnes** from business as usual by 2030.
- By 2070, India will achieve the target of **net-zero emissions**.

#### 2022: COP27, Sharm-El-Sheik

- COP27 agreed to establish the **Special Loss and Damage Fund** which will help to **make up for the losses suffered by developing nations that are vulnerable to climate change**.
- COP27 also agreed to the creation of **UN's Early Warning System for All initiative**, with an investment of \$3.1 billion between 2023 and 2027, to **improve understanding of climate-related risks in developing countries**.

#### Why in News?

- The 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) – an annual convening of countries signatory to UNFCCC – concluded in Dubai, UAE.

#### Major outcomes of COP-28

##### Global Stocktake:

- During the summit, the **first global stocktake (GST) concluded**.
- GST is a **periodic review mechanism** established under the **Paris Agreement** in 2015. GST enables countries and other stakeholders to see where they are collectively making progress towards meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement – and where they are not.
- The global stocktake revealed that the **Global temperature rise** is now expected to be between **2.4-2.6°C**, a significant improvement

from the earlier projection of 3.7-4.8°C in 2010.

- The global stocktake proposed **measures** to keep the global temperatures within the ambit of **1.5 °C**, this includes - **Transitioning away from fossil fuels, tripling renewable energy capacity globally, accelerating efforts towards net zero emissions**, etc.

#### **Loss and Damage Fund:**

- At **COP28** the loss and damage fund was **operationalised**. By the end of the conference, commitments worth about **US\$ 800 million** had been made.
  - The funds are meant to provide financial help to countries trying to recover from **climate-induced disasters**.
  - The **World Bank** will be the **interim host** of the fund for a period of **four years**.
  - All **developing countries** are eligible to apply to the fund and all countries can **voluntarily** contribute to the fund. A certain percentage of the fund has been set aside for **Least Developed Countries** and **Small island developing states**.

#### **Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuel:**

- The role of **fossil fuels** in causing **global warming** was **formally acknowledged** for the first time in COP 28.
- The final agreement called upon countries to contribute towards **Transitioning away from fossil fuels**, in an orderly and equitable manner, so as to achieve **Net zero by 2050**.

#### **Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge:**

- The Pledge stipulates that signatories commit to work

together to **triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 GW by 2030** and to collectively **double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements** from around **2% to over 4% every year until 2030**.

- **India abstained** from signing the Pledge, to which **118 countries** around the world, including the US and UK, committed themselves.
- India's decision can likely be attributed to the **focus on coal and investments in it**.

#### **Global Methane Pledge:**

- The Global Methane Pledge launched at COP26 received renewed attention at COP28.
- **More than 150 countries** signed the pledge to reduce methane pollution which talks about **accelerating and substantially reducing methane emissions by 2030**.
  - Methane is the **most widespread greenhouse gas apart from CO<sub>2</sub>**, accounting for **nearly 25 per cent of all emissions**. It is also about **80 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>** in causing global warming.
- **India isn't a signatory** to this pledge. Methane emissions in India are primarily from **rice cultivation and enteric fermentation** (livestock rearing), which support the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers.

#### **Climate and Health Declaration:**

- The **U.A.E. declaration on climate and health**, signed by **123 countries**, calls for nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in the health sector.
- But **India didn't sign** this declaration because reducing GHG

emissions in the health sector would mean reduction in emissions from gases used for cooling.

- As India's healthcare infrastructure is still growing to meet demand, such a commitment could compromise the healthcare requirements of a growing population.

#### Global Goal on Adaptation

- COP 28 resulted in the **identification** of some **common adaptation goals**, which are important for the entire world.
- These included **reduction in climate-induced water scarcity**, attaining **climate-resilience in food and agricultural production**, and **resilience against climate-induced health impacts**.
- Positively, an **explicit 2030 date** has been integrated into the text for targets on water security, ecosystem restoration, and health.

#### Climate Finance

- At COP28, discussions continued on setting a **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** in 2024.
  - NCQG refers to ongoing negotiations on a **new climate finance commitment** that developed countries must make to developing countries to accelerate the world's transition away from fossil fuels.
  - The initial goal set in **2009**, was to transfer nearly **\$100 billion a year** to developing countries via the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**. Only a small fraction of this tranche was actually realised. The \$100 billion commitment is **set to expire in 2025**.

#### Global Cooling Pledge:

- Around 66 national signatories committed to a **68% reduction in**

**cooling-related emissions by 2050.**

- **India**, which is likely to see the greatest growth in demand for cooling in the coming decades, has **not joined the pledge**.

#### Tripling Nuclear Energy:

- Led by the **United States**, 22 countries have pledged to **triple the global nuclear installed capacity by 2050**.
- Nuclear energy is a **clean but non-renewable source of energy**. A recent study by the **International Energy Agency** said nuclear power had avoided nearly **70 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions** — in the last 50 years.
- **India is not a part** of the nuclear energy commitment as well, in keeping with its position **not to join alliances outside the COP process**.

#### Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA)

- It is a coalition involving governments, businesses, and organizations, which primarily focuses on **transitioning from unabated coal power to clean energy**.
- **India is not a part of PPCA** as it has not committed to phasing out of coal and highlights the necessity of using coal for developmental needs.

#### India's Initiatives at COP 28

##### Green Credit Initiative

- The Green Credit Initiative has been conceptualized as a mechanism to **incentivize voluntary pro-planet actions**, as an effective response to the challenge of climate change.
- It envisions the issue of **Green Credits for plantations on waste or degraded lands and river catchment areas**, to rejuvenate and revive natural ecosystems.

### Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)

- It was launched by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, Government of India.
- GRCA highlights India's role in sustainable river-centric development and climate resilience.
- The GRCA platform will facilitate **knowledge exchange, river-city twinning, and dissemination of best practices.**

### Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT 2.0)

- **India and Sweden** co-launched Phase II of LeadIT 2.0 for the period 2024-26, at COP-28.
- LeadIT 2.0 will focus on **inclusive and just industry transition, codevelopment and transfer of low-carbon technology, and financial support** to emerging economies for **industry transition.**

### Shortcomings of COP 28

- Contributions to the **loss and damage fund** have been made **voluntary**. Hence, there is no clear plan on how the money will be added to the fund **regularly**. This raises serious questions over the funds **long term sustainability.**
- The final agreement only talks about **transitioning away from fossil fuels** and not **fossil fuel phase out**. Further **no targets or time schedules** were being provided.
- **Tripling of renewable energy** is a **global target**, and it is not incumbent on every country to individually triple its current installed capacity. It is thus not clear how this tripling would be ensured.
- With regard to the **Global goal on adaptation**, a lot more needs to be done, particularly in **identifying the indicators to measure progress** on each of the global goals.

## 2) Maiden winter expedition to Arctic

### What's in the news?

- India is set to embark on its maiden winter expedition to the Arctic, making it the **first Asian nation to stay at the northernmost polar region throughout the year.**
- Since 2008, India operates a research base in the Arctic named **Himadri** (in the **Ny-Alesund region of Svalbard, Norway**), which has been mostly hosting scientists during the summer.
- The research areas of the latest expedition will include atmospheric sciences, astronomy, astrophysics, and climate studies.

### Significance

- **Temperatures in the Arctic region have risen** by about **4 degree Celsius** on average over the last 100 years; **2023 was the warmest year on record.**
- The **extent of Arctic sea-ice** has been **declining at the rate of 13 per cent/ decade**. At this rate, the Arctic could become **ice-free in less than 20 years.**
- Rising sea levels can **influence atmospheric circulation**. An increase in tropical sea surface temperatures could lead to **increased precipitation** in the tropics, a **shift in the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone**, and **high chances of an increase in extreme rainfall events.**
- The study of this region is important to understand how it impacts the Indian monsoons and the tropical climate.

## 3) National Clean Air Program

### About NCAP

- The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) was launched in 2019 by the **Ministry of Environment**

**Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to tackle the air pollution crisis** in a comprehensive manner.

- NCAP envisaged a reduction by **20-30% in Particulate Matter (PM) concentration** over baseline in **2017** by **2024**. Target has been revised to achieve **reduction in PM10 level up to 40% or achievement of national standards (60 µg/m<sup>3</sup>) by 2025-26**.
- **131 million plus/non-attainment cities** (cities exceeding National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), consecutively for five years) have been identified for implementing mitigation actions under NCAP.
- **City Action Plans (CAPs)** have been prepared by all 131 cities and are being implemented by **Urban Local Bodies**.
- CAPs target city specific air polluting sources like Soil & Road Dust, Vehicles, Domestic Fuel, Construction Material and Industries, etc.

#### Why in News?

- 90 cities out of 131 cities have shown improvement in air quality in terms of annual PM10 concentrations in FY 2022-23 with respect to the baseline of FY 2017-18.

- An amount of Rs 9650 Cr has been released to the identified 131 cities till FY 2023-24 under NCAP.

#### Related Information

##### About NAAQS

- Ambient air quality refers to the **condition or quality of air surrounding us in the outdoors**. National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are the **standards for ambient air quality set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** that are applicable nationwide.
- The CPCB has been conferred this power by the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
- NAAQS was adopted in 1982 for the first time in India and it was revised in 1994 and 2009.
- The current standards (2009) comprise the following 12 pollutants:
  - **Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, Lead (Pb), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>), Benzene (C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>), Benzo(a)Pyrene (BaP), Arsenic (As) and Nickel (Ni)**.



## Flora & Fauna

### 1) Green Turtles

#### About

- Green turtle is **one of the largest sea turtles** and the only **herbivore** among the different species.
- They are named for the **greenish color** of their **cartilage** and **fat**, not their shells.
- Green turtles are found mainly in **tropical** and **subtropical waters**.
- In the Eastern Pacific, a group of green turtles that have **darker shells** are called **black turtles** by the local community.
- Like other sea turtles, they **migrate long distances** between feeding grounds and the beaches from where they hatched.

#### Threats:

- Green turtles are threatened by **overharvesting** of their **eggs**, **hunting** of adults, being **caught in fishing gear** and **loss of nesting beach sites**.

#### Protection Status:

- IUCN Red List: **Endangered**.



#### Why in News?

- As per a recent study, **rising global temperatures could lead to an increase in the nesting range of green turtles** in the Mediterranean Sea, spreading west from the current area to include much of the North African, Italian, and Greek coastlines.

### 2) Namdapha flying squirrel

#### About

- The **Namdapha flying squirrel** (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*) is an **arboreal** (tree-dwelling), **nocturnal** (mainly active during night) **flying squirrel endemic to Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The most distinctive feature of this species is the **furred, muscular membrane** that extends along the sides of the body, from the front limbs to the hindlegs.



- This unique membrane acts as a **parachute** when the animal leaps from a tree, and once in the air, the squirrel can steer by moving its limbs and tail, and altering the tension in the membrane.

#### Threats:

- The Namdapha flying squirrel is threatened by **habitat loss** and **degradation**, caused by felling for human settlements, shifting agriculture, and the extraction of non-timber forest products.

#### Protection Status:

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

#### Why in News?

- The elusive Namdapha flying squirrel has made a remarkable reappearance in the dense forests of

Arunachal Pradesh after 42 years of eluding detection.

- This critically endangered species was last officially recorded in **1981** within the confines of the **Namdapha National Park**.

#### **About Namdapha National Park**

- It is located along the **Eastern Himalayas** in the state of **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- Namdapha is the name of a **river** which flows right across in a North-South direction of the National Park.

- The landscape of the park ranges from **tropical evergreen forests to temperate and alpine forests**.
- It is home to several **endangered and rare species**, including the **snow leopard, red panda, and Hoolock Gibbon**.
- It was declared a **Tiger Reserve** in 1983.

# Agriculture

## 1) Operation Greens

### About

- The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries** has been implementing “**Operation Greens**” under **Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana** since 2018-19.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** with the objective of **enhancing the value realisation of farmers and minimizing post-harvest losses**.
- Initially the scheme covered **Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP)** only. Later the government expanded the scope of the scheme to **22 perishable crops**.

### Objectives of the Scheme

- **Enhance the value realization** of farmers by targeted interventions to strengthen production clusters and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and link the farmers with the market.
- **Reduction of post-harvest losses** by creating farm gate infrastructure, development of suitable agro-logistics, and creation of appropriate storage capacity linking consumption centers.
- **Development of food processing capacities and value addition** in the value chain with firm linkages of production clusters.

### Why in News?

- Under “Operation Greens”, 53 projects have been approved across the country.

### Related Information

#### About PMKSY

- The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries** has been implementing the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY)** since 2017.
- SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters) is a comprehensive package which **aims to create modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet**.
- Under PMKSY the following schemes are to be implemented.
  - Mega Food Parks
  - Integrated Cold Chain, Value Addition and Preservation Infrastructure
  - Creation/Expansion of Food Processing/Preservation Capacities
  - Infrastructure for Agro Processing Clusters
  - Scheme for Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages
  - Food Safety & Quality Assurance Infrastructure
  - Human Resources and Institutions.

#### Objectives of PMKSY

- **Creation of modern infrastructure** for food processing mega food parks/ clusters and individual units;
- To create **effective backward and forward linkages** - linking farmers, processors and markets;
- To create **robust supply chain infrastructure for perishables**.

# Economy

## 1) Inflation Targeting

### How does India measure retail inflation?

- Inflation refers to a rise in the **general level of prices of a set of goods and services over a period of time.**
- India bases its **retail inflation** metrics on the **Consumer Price Index - Combined (CPI-C).**

### About CPI

- Consumer Price Index-Combined (CPI-C) is an index which measures the weighted average of prices of a basket of **consumer goods and services** such as transportation, food and medical care.
- It is calculated by measuring price changes for each item in the **predetermined basket of goods and services** and averaging them.
- It is released by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- The **base year** used to calculate CPI-C in India is **2012.**
- Weightage of Sub-groups in CPI
  - Food and beverages (45.86 percent of total weight);
  - Miscellaneous (28.32 percent), of which Transport and communication (8.59 percent), health (5.89 percent), and education (4.46 percent);
  - Housing (10.07 percent);
  - Fuel and light (6.84 percent);
  - Clothing and footwear (6.53 percent);
  - Pan, tobacco and intoxicants (2.38 percent).

### RBI's Target

- The RBI's explicit mandate is to **conduct monetary policy.** The primary objective of monetary

policy is to **maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.** Price stability is a necessary precondition to sustainable growth.

- In **2016**, the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, was amended to provide a statutory basis for the implementation of a **flexible inflation-targeting framework**, where the Centre and the RBI would review and agree upon a specific inflation target every five years.
- In **2021**, the **Centre decided to retain the inflation target of 4% (measured by CPI-C), with a tolerance band of +/- 2 percentage points** for the period **April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2026.**
- When the Reserve Bank of India fails to meet the inflation target, it will send a report to the central government stating reasons and remedial actions that will be taken.
- A **breach of the "tolerance level" for three consecutive quarters will constitute a failure of monetary policy.**

### Why in News?

- India's retail inflation, measured by CPI-C, rose to 5.69 per cent in December, marginally higher than 5.5 per cent in the previous month.
- It may be noted that inflation has remained **within the RBI acceptable range of 2-6 per cent.**

## 2) RBI keeps repo rate at 6.5%

### About MPC

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is a committee of the RBI which is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy interest rate (**repo rate**) to **contain inflation within the specified target level.**

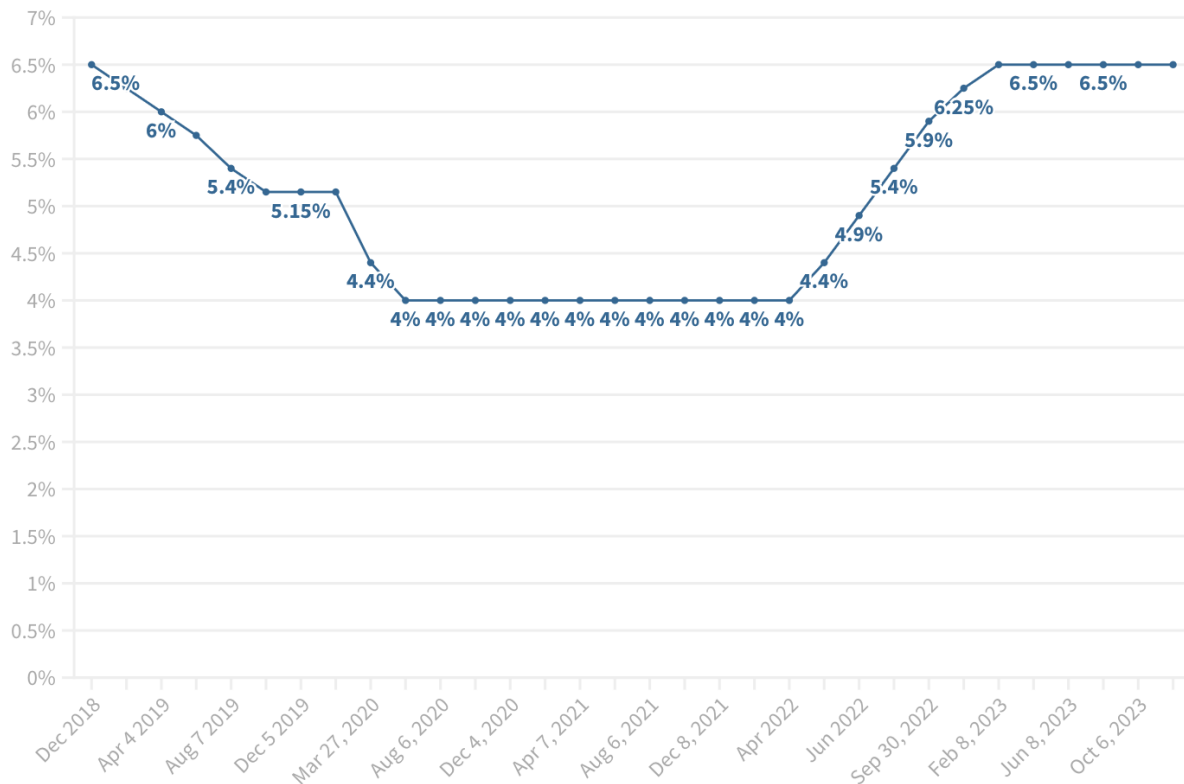
- Under the **flexible inflation targeting (FIT) framework**, the RBI targets to contain **Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation within 4 percent with a tolerance band of (+/-) 2 percent** for the period April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2026.
- The MPC has **six members: RBI Governor (Chairperson)**, RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy, one official nominated by the RBI Board and remaining 3 members would represent the Government.
- The MPC is required to meet **at least four times in a year**. The

**quorum** for the meeting is **four members**.

- The MPC makes decisions based on **majority vote**. In case of a tie, the **RBI governor will have a second or casting vote**.
- Each Member of MPC writes a **statement** specifying the reasons for voting in favour of, or against the proposed resolution.

#### Why in News?

- The Monetary Policy Committee of RBI unanimously decided to **keep the key policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5%**.
- The MPC last raised this rate by 25 bps to 6.50% at its meeting in February 2023.



- The Committee has **raised its GDP growth projection for 2023-24 to 7% from 6.5%**.

### 3) Standing Deposit Facility

#### About SDB

- In 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced the **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)**, allowing banks to park their excess funds at a higher rate but without taking any collateral from the central bank.
- Currently, the SDF rate has been set at an **interest rate of 6.25%**, higher than the **3.35% fixed reverse repo rate**, which is the rate at which banks park their excess funds with the RBI in exchange of government securities as collateral.
- SDF is a tool to **absorb excess liquidity**, as it will be **more attractive** for the commercial banks to pump liquidity back to the central bank due to higher returns, while for the central bank it would **not need to offer any security** to the commercial bank.

#### Features of SDF

- SDF has the following features viz;
  - it is a **monetary policy instrument to absorb liquidity without any collateral** with an interest rate of **6.25%**;
  - it is operated on an **overnight basis**, with the flexibility to absorb liquidity for longer tenor with appropriate pricing;
  - deposits under the SDF **shall not be reckoned as balances eligible for the maintenance of the cash reserve ratio (CRR)**, but shall be an **eligible asset for maintenance of the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR)**.

#### Why in News?

- SDF was in the news recently.

### 4) Constitution of Sixteenth Finance Commission

#### About Finance Commission

- The Finance Commission is a **constitutional body** set up under **Article 280** of the Constitution.
- Under Article 280, the **President of India** is required to constitute a Finance Commission at an **interval of five years or earlier**.

#### What are the qualifications for Members?

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

#### What are the functions of the Finance Commission?

- It is the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to—
  - the **distribution of tax proceeds** between the Union and the States and the share of each state.
  - the **principles which should govern the grants-in-aid** of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India;
  - the **measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State** to

supplement the resources of the Panchayats in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State;

- the **measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State** to supplement the resources of the Municipalities in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State;
- any other matter referred to the Commission by the **President** in the interests of sound finance.

#### Why in News?

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

### 5) RBI tightens rules for lenders investing in AIF

#### About AIF

- Alternative Investment Fund or AIF is a **privately pooled investment vehicle**, which collects funds from investors, for investing it in accordance with a defined investment policy for the benefit of its investors.
- AIF **does not include funds covered under the SEBI (Mutual**

**Funds) Regulations, 1996**, SEBI (Collective Investment Schemes) Regulations, 1999 or any other regulations of the Board to regulate fund management activities.

- **Categories of AIF:**

- Category I AIF:
    - Venture capital funds (Including **Angel Funds**)
    - **Social Venture Funds**
    - **Infrastructure funds**
  - Category II AIF (real estate funds, private equity funds, funds for distressed assets, etc)
  - Category III AIF (hedge funds, private investment in public equity (PIPE) Funds, etc.)
- In India, AIFs are regulated by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012**.

#### Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India has tightened norms for lenders relating to making investments in units of Alternative Investment Funds to address concerns relating to possible evergreening of stressed loans.
- RBI has **prohibited all regulated entities (REs)**, including banks, cooperative banks and NBFCs from **making investments in AIFs, if the AIF has made any investment into a “debtor company”**.
  - *Debtor company means a company in which the RE currently has or previously had a loan exposure anytime during the preceding 12 months.*

#### Rationale of the move

- Since several regulated entities have affiliated AIFs, routing the

money through AIFs to borrowers might lead to **evergreening**.

- *Evergreening refers to practices to mask the true extent of bad loans by*

*allowing delinquent borrowers to take more loans and repay existing ones.*



# Organisations

## 1) Central Zoo Authority

### About CZA

- The Central Zoo Authority is a **statutory body** established in **1992** under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- The Authority functions under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** and consists of a **Chairman, ten members and a Member Secretary**.

### Objectives

- The main objective of this Authority is to complement and strengthen the national effort in **conservation of the rich biodiversity of the country**, particularly the fauna as per the National Zoo Policy, 1998.
- Other objectives of this Authority include- enforcing **minimum standards and norms** for upkeep and healthcare of animals in **Indian zoos** and to **control mushrooming of unplanned and ill-conceived zoos**.

### Functions

- **Every zoo in the country is required to obtain recognition** from the Authority for its operation.

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

### Why in News?

- The Central Zoo Authority conducted a National Level Workshop aimed at fostering collaboration for One Health initiatives.
  - *One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems.*

# Science and Technology

## 1) Anthrax

### About

- Anthrax is an infectious disease **caused by rod-shaped bacteria** known as *Bacillus Anthracis*, which is found in soil naturally.
- Anthrax spores can remain dormant for years until they find their way into a host. **Common hosts** for anthrax include **wild or domestic livestock, such as sheep, cattle, horses and goats.**
- Anthrax is a **zoonotic disease**, meaning that it is naturally transmissible from animals to humans. People can get the disease through **contact with infected animals or animal products that are contaminated with bacteria.**
- When anthrax spores get inside the body, they can be **“activated.”** The bacteria can then multiply, spread out in the body, produce toxins, and cause severe illness.
- **Symptoms** include black sore, headaches, fever, breathing difficulties, vomiting of blood, diarrhea.
- According to the World Health Organization, Anthrax is generally regarded as **non-contagious.** There have been instances of person-to-person transmission, however, such instances are **extremely rare.**
- All types of anthrax infection can be treated with **antibiotics.**

### Why in News?

- Five countries in East and southern Africa (Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) are in the middle of outbreaks of the anthrax disease.

## 2) High-energy ‘sun goddess’ particle

### What’s in the news?

- Scientists have detected **one of the most powerful cosmic rays ever slamming into Earth** but they have no idea what caused it or where it came from.
- The extremely high-energy particle has been named **Amaterasu** after the Japanese Sun goddess, and it seemingly arrived from a void in space where nothing is known to exist.

### About Amaterasu

- The Amaterasu particle has an **energy exceeding 240 exa-electron volts (EeV).** That is **millions of times more powerful** than the particles produced by the **Large Hadron Collider**, which is the most powerful accelerator ever built.
- It is **second only to the “Oh-My-God” particle**, another high-energy cosmic ray detected in 1991. That came in at 320 EeV.

### What are Cosmic Rays?

- Cosmic rays are **charged particles originating from elsewhere in our galaxy or the universe** and they **travel close to the speed of light.**
- They are **echoes of violent celestial events** that are constantly arriving at Earth. However, this event had **extraordinary energy** and is **exceptionally rare.**

### The Puzzle

- The newly detected particle, Amaterasu, was identified by the **Telescope Array in Utah, United States.**
- Operational since 2008, it is a **specialized cosmic ray detector** which comprises 507 surface detectors spread over 700 square kilometers.
- It has detected over 30 ultra-high-energy cosmic rays, but the

Amaterasu particle, which struck Earth's atmosphere on **May 27, 2021**, is the largest observed to date.

- The **exact sources of these high-energy particles remain elusive**, despite extensive research.
- The scientists propose **three explanations** for the enigmatic origin of the particle—One, it could be from a **source** that we have **not yet identified**. Two, It might have been **magnetically deflected much higher** than current models predict. Or three, scientists might need to **rewrite their incomplete understanding of high-energy particle physics**.

### 3) XPoSat

#### What's in the news?

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched **X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat)** aboard **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C58**.
- The satellite was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- XPoSat has been successfully launched into a **650 km Low Earth Orbit** as intended.

#### About the Mission

- XPoSat is **India's maiden mission** dedicated to study **how the X-rays from celestial sources** (such as black holes and magnetars) **are polarised**, which can reveal details about the **structure and conditions of the objects emitting those X-rays**.
- XPoSat comprises two payloads, including **Indian X-ray Polarimeter (POLIX)** and **X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing (XSPECT)**.
- Following the launch of XPoSat, **India has become the second country in the world** after the

**United States** to send a specialised astronomy observatory to **study black holes and neutron stars** in our galaxy.

- The mission life of the primary payload XPoSat is about **five years**.

#### What is the polarisation of X-rays?

- X-rays comprise **electric and magnetic waves** that are **constantly in motion**. Being **sinusoidal waves**, they do not follow a patterned direction of motion. Whereas, a **polarised X-ray** is both **organised** and has **two waves vibrating in the same direction**.
- When **magnetars or black holes** emit X-rays, they encounter a wide variety of materials in the Universe. As X-rays pass through the thick cloud of materials, the electric component of the X-ray emits a **photon in a changed direction**, as it has now **undergone scattering**.
- In the process, the **new photon has got polarised in a direction perpendicular to the plane** formed between the original and scattered photon.
- The polarisation measurements – angular and degree of polarisation – are believed to provide **clues about the bright X-ray emitting sources, the nature of these radiations and the complex process they undergo**.
  - *Magnetars are neutron stars with the strongest-known magnetic fields, with up to a thousand times the intensity of typical neutron stars. Modest disturbances to the magnetic field can cause magnetars to erupt with sporadic X-ray bursts for weeks or longer.*
  - *A **black hole** is a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing, including*

*light and other electromagnetic waves, has enough energy to escape it.*

#### 4) INSACOG

##### What is INSACOG?

- The **Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG)** was established in **2020** as a **joint initiative** of the Union Health Ministry of Health and Department of Biotechnology (DBT) with the Council for Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- It was launched to **expand the whole-genome sequencing of SARS-CoV-2**, the coronavirus that causes the Covid-19 disease, across India with the **aim of understanding how the virus spreads and evolves.**
- The pan-India consortium works to monitor genomic variations in SARS-CoV-2 by a **sentinel sequencing effort (random testing in the community)** which is facilitated by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

##### Why in News?

- A case of JN.1 subvariant of COVID19 has been detected in Kerala, as part of the ongoing routine surveillance activity by INSACOG.

#### Related Information

##### What is whole genome sequencing (WGS)?

- The genome, or genetic material, of an organism (bacteria, virus, potato, human) is made up of **DNA**. Each organism has a **unique DNA sequence** which is composed of **bases (A, T, C, and G)**.
- If you know the sequence of the bases in an organism, you have identified its unique DNA fingerprint, or pattern. **Determining the order of bases is called sequencing.**
- Whole genome sequencing is a laboratory procedure that **determines the order of bases in the genome of an organism in one process.**

##### Significance

- Genomic information has been instrumental in **identifying inherited disorders, characterizing the mutations that drive cancer progression, and tracking disease outbreaks.**
- While genome sequencing is commonly associated with sequencing human genomes, the scalable, flexible nature of **next-generation sequencing (NGS) technology** makes it equally useful for **sequencing any species**, such as agriculturally important livestock, plants, or disease-related microbes.

## Reports and Indices

### 1) Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023

#### About FAO

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** leading international efforts to **defeat hunger**.
- It is an **intergovernmental organization**, established in **1945**, with more than 190 member countries (including **India**) and one member organization, the **European Union**.
- FAO's goal is to achieve **food and security for all** and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food and lead active, healthy lives.
- FAO works towards improving nutrition, increasing agricultural productivity, raising the standard of living in rural populations and contributing to global economic growth.

#### Why in News?

- The Food and Agriculture Organisation has released the **Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023**, a report which said **74.1% of Indians were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021**.
- In 2020, the percentage was **76.2**.

#### Key Takeaways

- The report said during the **COVID-19 pandemic** and the **"5Fs" crisis** – Food, Feed, Fuel, Fertilisers, and Finance – the Asia-Pacific region witnessed alarming statistics.
- The **Asia-Pacific region** accounts for **half of the world's severe food insecurity**, with **more women than men lacking enough safe and nutritious food**.
- Comparatively, the report provides **percentages of people unable to**

**afford a healthy diet** in other countries, including Bangladesh (66%), Pakistan (82%), Iran (30%), China (11%), Russia (2.6%), the US (1.2%), and the UK (0.4%).

- *The United Nations defines a healthy diet for adults as food that includes at least 400 gms of fruit and vegetables per day as well as nuts and whole grains.*
- *It also says that a healthy diet should have less than 10% of the total energy intake from free sugars, less than 30% of total energy intake from fats and less than 5 gms of salt.*

### 2) National Policy on Child Labour - An Assessment

#### What's in the news?

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour has tabled a detailed report on the implementation of the Centre's policy on child labour in Parliament.
- The report, titled **'National Policy on Child Labour - An Assessment'**, states the country has a long way to go in eliminating child labour, and requires changes to the policies and laws that govern the issue.

#### Highlights of the Report

- The panel said the **number of working children has decreased** from 1.26 crore (as per 2001 census) to **1.01 crore** (as per 2011 census).
- Considering the prevalence of child labour at present, the panel said, it is **practically not possible to meet the international commitment to eliminate child labour by 2025**.
- The panel has recommended that **discrepancies in the criteria for determination of the age of the child** in various Acts be examined to

ensure they did not lead to any ambiguity in securing justice for aggrieved children.

- According to the **Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 (CALPRA)**, 'child' means a person who has **not completed his fourteenth year of age** or such age as may be specified in the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**, whichever is more.
- The **amendment** made to the CALPRA in **2016** defines the **child** falling in the age group of **(14-18) years**.
- Under the **Right of Education Act, 2009**, 'Child' means a male or female aged **six to fourteen years**.
- The **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** defines 'child' as a person who has **not completed eighteen years of age**.
- The Committee proposed setting up of a **National Level Child Tracking Mechanism** to facilitate coordination among the states and the centre.
- The panel has also recommended that, in addition to the **three-four times increase in the amount of fine, stricter punishment** in the form of cancellation of license, attachment of property, etc., needed to be incorporated.
- The Committee asked the Ministry to take up the issue in a mission mode and devise a systematic action plan based policy to meet international commitments.

### 3) LEADS 2023

#### About the Index

- Logistics Ease Across Different State (LEADS) was conceived on the lines of the **Logistics Performance Index of World Bank** in 2018.
- Launched by the **Union Ministry of Commerce & Industry**, it serves as a benchmarking tool to assess the performance of logistics in Indian states and Union territories.
- The Report places states and UTs based on their Geography into **four Groups** namely **Coastal Group, Landlocked Group, North- East Group and Union Territories Group** to analyse their logistics performance.
- Performance of States/UTs, in each of these Groups, is measured using a combination of **objective data and user perception scores** for individual indicators under the **three pillars of logistics performance** i.e.,
  - **Quality of Logistics Infrastructure,**
  - **Quality of Logistics Services, and**
  - **Operating & Regulatory Environment.**
- States/UTs are **classified into three performance levels - Achievers, Fast Movers and Aspirers**, based on their logistics performance.

#### Why in News?

- The Ministry of Commerce & Industry has released the 5th edition of the LEADS annual exercise - LEADS 2023 report.

## Highlights of LEADS 2023

Table 1 LEADS 2023 Results

Groups / Categories	Achievers	Fast Movers	Aspirers
Coastal	Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu	Kerala, Maharashtra	Goa, Odisha, West Bengal
Landlocked	Haryana, Punjab, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh	Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand	Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand
North-East	Assam, Sikkim, Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland	Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram
Union Territories	Chandigarh, Delhi	Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Puducherry	Daman & Diu/ Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh

*LEADS 2023: Performance Snapshot*

\* States/ Union Territories within the performance categories are listed in alphabetical order

- The report signals a **positive shift** in States' performance across the key pillars – **Logistics Infrastructure, Logistics Services and Operating and Regulatory Environment**.
- The latest report highlights an **enhanced overall stakeholder perception and impact of various reforms**, across States and UTs.

### Recommendations

- The report noted that States/UTs can further enhance logistics efficiency by focusing on areas such as **data-driven planning, City Logistics Plans, bridging infrastructure gaps, technology utilization, private sector participation, and green logistics**.

## 4) Climate Change Performance Index 2024

### About the Index

- The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is developed by non-governmental organizations **Germanwatch** and **NewClimate Institute** together with the **Climate Action Network**, a global network of environmental NGOs.

- **Published annually** since 2005, CCPI is an independent monitoring tool for tracking the climate protection performance of **63 countries and the European Union**.
- The climate protection performance of these 63 countries, which together account for 90% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, is assessed in **four categories**:
  - **GHG Emissions** (40% weightage),
  - **Renewable Energy** (20%),
  - **Energy Use** (20%) and
  - **Climate Policy** (20%).

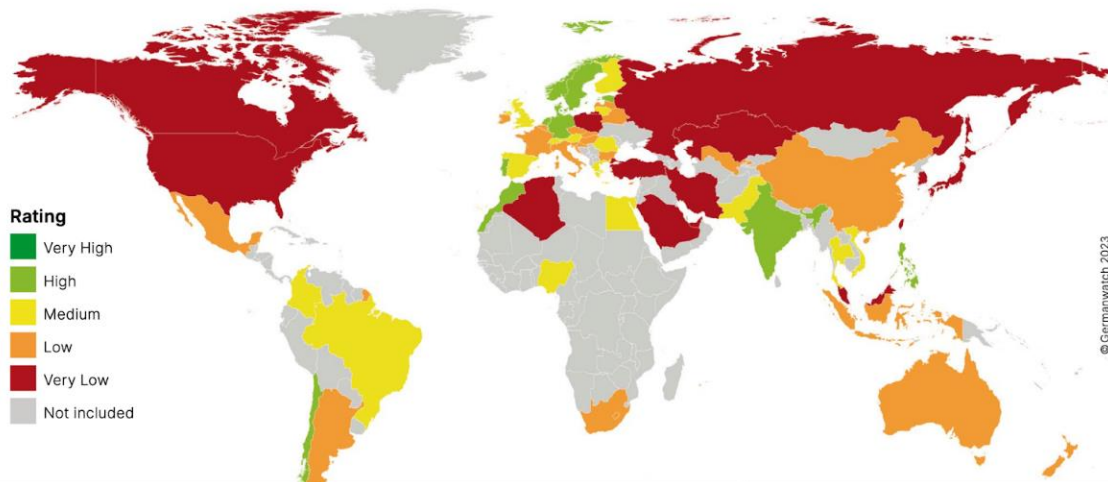
### Why in News?

- Climate Change Performance Index 2024 was released recently.

### Highlights of the Index

- **India has been placed 7th** in this year's CCPI.
- **No country** performs well enough in all categories to achieve an overall **"very high"** rating in the index. Therefore, the **first three ranks in the overall ranking remain empty**.
- **Denmark** is at the top of the index (4th), followed by **Estonia** and **Philippines** (5th and 6th).

## 2. Overall Results CCPI 2024



- **India's** rank is the **best amongst the G20 countries**. India maintained its **top 10 position** for the **fifth year in a row**.
- India receives a **high ranking** in the **GHG Emissions and Energy Use categories**, but a **medium** in **Climate Policy and Renewable Energy**.
- **China**, the **largest polluter** came in at number 51 while **the US**, the **second biggest emitter** came in at number 57.
- India's past performance in the CCPI ranking shows significant improvement from 31st rank in 2014 to seventh in 2023.



# Polity

## 1) Suspension of MPs

### Context

- 146 MPs were suspended recently for disrupting Parliamentary proceedings.
- This is the highest number of MPs suspended in a single session in the history of Parliament.

### Who can suspend the MPs? How?

- The **Presiding Officer** — the Speaker of LS and Chairman of RS — plays the major role in meting out suspensions.
- In Lok Sabha, the Speaker acts in accordance with **Rules of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business. Rajya Sabha** also has a similar procedure.
- First, the presiding officers can **direct an MP to withdraw** from the House for any disorderly conduct. If that does not work and the said MP continues to disrupt the House proceedings, the presiding officer can **“name” the legislator**. After that, the House can move a **motion to suspend the MP until the end of the session**.
- While these rules have mostly remained unchanged since 1952, in 2001, the Lok Sabha further empowered the Speaker to deal with **“grave and disorderly conduct.”**
- As per the new rule (Rule 374A), an **MP “named” by the Speaker shall automatically stand suspended** for a period of five days or the remaining part of the session. This rule **removes the need for the House to pass a motion** for suspension.
- Notably, the **Rajya Sabha has not incorporated this provision in its procedures**.

### How long can MPs be suspended for?

- Mild offences are punished by **admonition or reprimand**, with the latter being the more serious of the two punishments.
- However, continuing to disregard the Presiding Officer’s directions can invite the **punishment of suspension**. A member can be suspended, at the **maximum**, for the **remainder of the session only**. Moreover, the House, at **any point of time, can reinstate** a suspended member by passing a motion.
- In cases of **extreme misconduct**, the House may **expel a member “to rid the House of persons who are unfit for membership.”**

### Is suspending MPs common practice?

- While it is a strong step, it is not uncommon. However, the number of suspensions have **gone up over the last few years**.

## 2) SC ruling on Article 370

### Background

#### What was the Constitution position?

- **Article 370 of the Constitution**, which provided autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, was drafted in 1947 by **Sheikh Abdullah**, then the state's Prime Minister, and accepted by India's first **Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru**.
- Classified only as a **temporary provision**, it was included in the Indian Constitution in **October 1949**.

#### Special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370

- Article 370 of the Constitution gave **special status** to Jammu and Kashmir in the Indian Union and **restricted the Centre’s legislative powers with respect to the state**.
- It gave the **state legislature to make its own laws in all matters**

**except for finance, defence, foreign affairs and communications.**

### Abrogation of Article 370

- In 2019, the Government of India **revoked Article 370** of the Indian Constitution, which granted special status and autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- With the abrogation of Article 370, the Centre had also **reorganised** the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into **two Union Territories — Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir**.
- **Ladakh** was carved out as a Union Territory **without a legislature**, while **Jammu and Kashmir** had a **legislative body**.
- Both the UTs are being administered by the **Centre-appointed lieutenant governors** since no assembly elections have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir since 2019.

### Why in News?

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has **unanimously upheld the power of the President to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution**, which led to the **reorganisation of the State of J&K into two Union Territories and denuded it of its special privileges**.
- The court reasoned that Article 370 was only a **'temporary provision'** to ease the accession of the then princely State to the Union at a time of internal strife and war.

### Highlights of the Judgment

- The apex court pointed out that J&K had **divested itself of any element of sovereignty** after the execution of the **Instrument of Accession to the Union** in October 1947.
- The judgment noted that Article 370 was merely a **'feature of asymmetric federalism'** similar to

other provisions in the Constitution such as Articles 371A to 371J — examples of special arrangements for different States.

- The court ordered the establishment of a **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** to address violations of human rights perpetrated in J&K both by state and non-state actors since the 1980s.
- Considering the sensitivities of the issues involved, the court said that it was **up to the government** to decide how the Commission must be set up.
- The court also set a deadline of **September 30, 2024**, for the assembly elections to be held in J&K.

### Can a State be converted into a Union Territory?

- Due to the assurance given by the Union government that **J&K's statehood would be restored soon**, the court did not go into the issue of whether the conversion of J&K into a Union Territory was valid.
- It, however, **upheld the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019** to the extent that it carved out the Union Territory of Ladakh out of the State of J&K.

## 3) Women Reservation Bill extended to J&K and Puducherry

### What's in the news?

- Parliament has passed the **Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation (Second Amendment) Bill 2023** and the **Government of Union Territories (amendment) Bill 2023** to **extend Women's reservation in J&K and Puducherry Assemblies**.
  - *Refer Pulse September 2023 Digest edition for details about the Women's Reservation Bill (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam)*

*which reserved one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.*

### Highlights of the Bills

- The Bills **reserve one-third of all elected seats** in the J&K and Puducherry Legislative Assemblies for women. This will also apply to the **seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** in the Assembly.
- The reservation will be effective **once the census conducted** after the commencement of these Bills have been published. Based on the census, **delimitation** will be undertaken to reserve seats for women.
- The reservation will be provided for **15 years**. However, it will continue till such date as determined by a law made by Parliament.
- Seats reserved for women will be **rotated after each delimitation**, as determined by a law made by Parliament.

## 4) Exclusive POCSO courts

### Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2011

- The POCSO Act, which came into force in **2012**, is the first comprehensive law in the country **dealing specifically with sexual abuse of children**.
- Under the Act, any person below the **age of 18 years** is defined as a "child".
- The Act **increased the scope** of reporting offences against children, which were not earlier covered under the Indian Penal Code. This included **aggravated penetrative sexual assault** to include punishment for **abuse by a person**

**in position of trust or authority** including public servants, police, armed forces, management or staff of an educational or religious institution.

- It also defined the procedure for reporting of cases, including a provision for punishment for **failure to report a case or false complaint**.
- It provided **procedures for recording of the statement of a child** by the police and court, laying down that it should be done in a **child-friendly manner**, and by the setting up of **special courts**.
- Each district shall designate a Sessions Court to be a **Special Court**. The Court shall, as far as possible, **complete the trial within one year**. The trial shall be held in camera and in the presence of the child's parents or any person trusted by the child.
- The Act also includes penalties for **use of children for the purpose of pornography and abetment of an offence**.
- The Act was amended in **2019** to enhance punishment under various sections of the Act including punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault to be increased to include **death penalty**.

### Why in News?

- The law ministry said a total 412 exclusive POCSO courts are functional in the country which are constituted for hearing cases of sexual offences against children.

## 5) The Telecommunications Bill, 2023

### What's in the news?

- The Parliament has passed the 'Telecommunications Bill, 2023' to transform and reform the telecommunications sector, services, and its networks.

- The Bill seeks to amend and consolidate the law relating to the development, expansion, and operation of telecommunication services. The Bill seeks to replace the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885** and the **Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933**.

### Key Features

#### Authorisation for telecom-related activities:

- **Prior authorisation from the central government** will be required to:
  - (i) establish and operate telecommunications networks,
  - (ii) provide telecommunications services, or
  - (iii) possess radio equipment.
  - **Existing licences** will continue to be **valid for the period of their grant, or for five years**, where the period is not specified.

#### Assignment of spectrum:

- **Spectrum will be assigned by auction**, except for **specified uses**, where it will be allocated on an administrative basis.
  - Specified purposes include:
    - (i) national security and defence,
    - (ii) disaster management,
    - (iii) weather forecasting,
    - (iv) transport,
    - (v) satellite services such as DTH and satellite telephony, and
    - (vi) BSNL, MTNL, and public broadcasting services.

#### Powers of interception and search:

- Messages or a class of messages between two or more persons may be **intercepted, monitored, or blocked on certain grounds**.
  - Such actions must be necessary or expedient in

the **interest of public safety or public emergency**, and must be in the **interest of specified grounds which include**: (i) security of the state, (ii) prevention of incitement of offences, or (iii) public order.

- **Telecom services may be suspended** on similar grounds.
- The government may take **temporary possession** of any telecom infrastructure, network, or services on occurrence of any **public emergency or public safety**.
  - An officer authorised by the government may **search premises or vehicles** for possession of unauthorised telecom network or equipment.

#### Protection of users:

- The central government may provide for measures to protect users which include:
  - (i) **prior consent** to receive specified messages such as advertising messages,
  - (ii) creation of **Do Not Disturb** registers, and
  - (iii) a mechanism to allow users to **report malware or specified messages**.
- Entities providing telecom services must establish an **online mechanism for registration and redressal of grievances**.

#### Right of way:

- Entities laying telecommunication infrastructure may seek **right of way over public or private property**.
  - Right of way must be provided on a **non-discriminatory and non-exclusive basis to the extent possible**.

### Appointments to TRAI:

- The Bill amends the TRAI Act to also **allow individuals** with:
  - (i) at least 30 years of professional experience to serve as the **Chairperson**, and
  - (ii) at least 25 years of professional experience to serve as **members**.

### Digital Bharat Nidhi:

- The **Universal Service Obligation Fund** has been established under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 to provide for telecom services in underserved areas.
- The Bill **retains this provision**, renames the fund as **Digital Bharat Nidhi**, and also **allows its use for research and development in telecom**.

### Offences and penalties:

- The Bill specifies various criminal and civil offences with provision of stringent punishment for violators.

### Adjudication process:

- The central government will appoint an **adjudicating officer** to conduct inquiries and pass orders against **civil offences** under the Bill. The officer must be of the **rank of joint secretary and above**.
- Orders of the adjudicating officer may be **appealed** before the **Designated Appeals Committee within 30 days**.
- **Members of this Committee** will be **officers of the rank of at least Additional Secretary**. **Appeals** against the orders of the Committee, in connection to breach of terms and conditions, may be filed with **Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) within 30 days**.

### Key Issues and Analysis

- The Bill provides that procedure and safeguards related to interception will be **prescribed by**

**the central government**. The question is whether these should be **provided by the Bill**.

- The Bill may allow **mass surveillance**; such measures may **violate the fundamental right to privacy on the account of proportionality**.
- The Bill **does not specify procedural safeguards** with respect to powers to search premises and vehicles.
- The Bill vests **several regulatory functions with the central government**. This is distinct from sectors such as power and finance, where these functions have been **delegated to the regulators**.

## 6) Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita

### What's in the news?

- The Parliament has passed the **Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, 2023** which will **replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**, which is the principal law on criminal offences in the country.
- The Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita (BNS2) largely retains the provisions of the IPC, adds some new offences, removes offences that have been struck down by courts, and increases penalties for several offences.

### Key changes in the BNS2 include:

#### Offences against the body:

- The **IPC criminalises** acts such as murder, abetment of suicide, assault and causing grievous hurt. The BNS2 **retains these provisions**.
- It **adds new offences such as organised crime, terrorism, and murder or grievous hurt by a group on certain grounds**.

#### Sexual offences against women:

- The **IPC criminalises** acts such as rape, voyeurism, stalking and insulting the modesty of a woman.

The BNS2 retains these provisions.

- It increases the threshold for the victim to be classified as a major, in the case of **gangrape**, from 16 to **18 years of age**.
- It also **criminalises sexual intercourse with a woman by deceitful means or making false promises**.

#### **Sedition:**

- The BNS2 **removes the offence of sedition**.
  - It instead **penalises** the following:
    - exciting or attempting to excite secession, armed rebellion, or subversive activities,
    - encouraging feelings of separatist activities, or
    - endangering the sovereignty or unity and integrity of India.
  - These offences may involve **exchange of words or signs, electronic communication, or use of financial means**.

#### **Organised crime:**

- Organised crime includes offences such as **kidnapping, extortion, contract killing, land grabbing, financial scams, and cybercrime carried out on behalf of a crime syndicate**.
- Attempting or committing organised crime will be **punishable with life imprisonment or death**.

#### **Terrorism:**

- Terrorism includes an act that intends to:
  - threaten the unity, integrity, security or economic security of the country, or

- strike terror in the people or any section of people in India.

- Attempting or committing terrorism will be **punishable with life imprisonment or death**.

#### **Mob lynching:**

- The BNS2 adds **murder or grievous hurt by five or more people on specified grounds**, as an offence.
- These **grounds include race, caste, sex, language, or personal belief**.
- The **punishment for such murder is life imprisonment or death**.

#### **Community Service:**

- The BNS2 adds **community service as a punishment**.
- It extends this punishment to offences such as:
  - theft of property worth less than Rs. 5,000,
  - attempt to commit suicide with the intent to restrain a public servant, and
  - appearing in a public place intoxicated and causing annoyance.

#### **Key Issues and Analysis**

- **Age of criminal responsibility is retained at seven years**. It extends to **12 years** depending upon the maturity of the accused. This age is **lower than the age of criminal responsibility in other countries**.
  - In 2007, a **UN Committee** recommended states to set the age of criminal responsibility to **above 12 years**.
- **Several offences overlap with special laws**. In many cases, both carry different penalties or provide for different procedures. This may lead to multiple regulatory regimes, additional costs of compliance and possibility of levelling multiple charges.

- The BNS2 retains the provisions of the IPC on rape and sexual harassment. It does not consider recommendations of the **Justice Verma Committee (2013)** such as **making the offence of rape gender neutral and including marital rape as an offence.**
- The BNS2 **does not define what community service will entail and how it will be administered.**

## 7) Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023

### What's in the news?

- The Parliament has passed the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS2)** which seeks to **replace the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CrPC).** The CrPC provides for the procedure for arrest, prosecution, and bail.
- The BNSS2 retains most of the provisions of the CrPC.

### Key changes proposed include:

#### Detention of undertrials:

- As per the CrPC, if an accused has spent **half of the maximum period of imprisonment in detention, he must be released on personal bond.**
- This **does not apply to offences punishable by death.** The BNSS2 adds that this provision **will also not apply to:**
  - offences punishable by life imprisonment, and
  - persons against whom proceedings are pending in more than one offence.

#### Medical examination:

- The CrPC allows medical examination of the accused in certain cases, including rape cases. Such examination is done by a registered medical practitioner on the **request of at least a sub-inspector level police officer.**

- The BNSS2 provides that **any police officer can request such an examination.**

#### Forensic investigation:

- The BNSS2 mandates **forensic investigation for offences punishable with at least seven years of imprisonment.**
- If a **state does not have a forensics facility, it shall utilise such facility in another state.**

#### Signatures and finger impressions:

- The CrPC empowers a **Magistrate** to order any person to provide **specimen signatures or handwriting.**
- The BNSS2 **expands this to include finger impressions and voice samples.** It allows these samples to be collected from a person who has **not been arrested.**

#### Timelines for procedures:

- The BNSS2 **prescribes timelines for various procedures.** For instance, it requires medical practitioners who examine rape victims to submit their reports to the investigating officer within seven days.
- Other specified timelines include:
  - giving judgement within 30 days of completion of arguments,
  - informing the victim of progress of investigation within 90 days, and
  - framing of charges by a sessions court within 60 days from the first hearing on such charges.

#### Hierarchy of Courts:

- The CrPC establishes a hierarchy of courts for the adjudication of criminal matters in India. These courts include:
  - **Magistrate's Courts:** subordinate courts responsible for the trial of most criminal cases,

- **Sessions Courts:** presided over by a Sessions Judge and hear appeals from Magistrate's Courts,
- **High Courts:** have inherent jurisdiction to hear and decide criminal cases and appeals, and
- **Supreme Court:** hear appeals from High Courts and also exercise its original jurisdiction in certain matters.
- The CrPC **empowers the state governments** to notify any city or town with a population of more than one million as a metropolitan area. Such areas have **Metropolitan Magistrates**.
- The **BNSS2 removes the classification of metropolitan areas and Metropolitan Magistrates**.

#### Other Features:

- The BNSS2 provides for the **use of handcuffs** during arrest. Handcuffs may only be used to arrest:
  - a habitual or repeat offender who has escaped custody, or
  - a person who has committed offences such as rape, acid attack, organised crime, drug related crime, or offence against the State.
- **All trials, inquiries, and proceedings may be held in electronic mode.** Production of electronic communication devices, likely to contain digital evidence, will be allowed for investigation, inquiry, or trial.
- If a proclaimed offender has absconded to evade trial and there is no immediate prospect of arresting him, the **trial can be conducted and judgement pronounced in his absence**.

#### Key Issues and Analysis

- The BNSS2 allows up to **15 days of police custody**, which can be authorised in parts during the initial 40 or 60 days of the 60 or 90 days period of judicial custody. This may lead to **denial of bail for the entire period** if the police has not exhausted the 15 days custody.
- The **use of handcuffs** is permitted in a range of cases including organised crime, **contradicting Supreme Court directions**.
- The BNSS2 **retains provisions of the CrPC related to maintenance of public order**. Since **trial procedure and maintenance of public order are distinct functions**, the question is whether they should be regulated under the same law or be dealt with separately.

## 8) Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023

### What's in the news?

- The Parliament has passed the **Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023 (BSB2)** which seeks to **replace the Indian Evidence Act, 1872**. The Act governs the **admissibility of evidence** in Indian Courts. It **applies to all civil and criminal proceedings**.
- BSB2 retains most provisions of the IEA including those on confessions, relevancy of facts, and burden of proof.

### Key changes proposed in the BSB2 include:

#### Documentary evidence:

The IEA provides for two kinds of evidence – **documentary and oral evidence**.

- Under the IEA, a document includes **writings, maps, and caricatures**. The BSB2 adds that **electronic records** will also be considered as documents.



- Documentary evidence includes **primary and secondary evidence**. Primary evidence refers to the **original document**, while secondary evidence includes **documents that can prove the contents of the original**.
- The BSB2 **retains this classification**.

#### Oral evidence:

- Under the IEA, oral evidence includes **statements made before Courts by witnesses** in relation to a fact under inquiry.
- The BSB2 **allows oral evidence to be given electronically**. This would permit witnesses, accused persons, and victims to testify through electronic means.

#### Admissibility of electronic or digital records as evidence:

- Under the IEA, **electronic records** are categorised as **secondary evidence**. The BSB2 classifies electronic records as **primary evidence**.
- It **expands** such records to include **information stored in semiconductor memory or any communication devices (smartphones, laptops)**.

#### Secondary evidence:

- The BSB2 **expands secondary evidence** to include:
  - oral and written admissions, and
  - the testimony of a person who has examined the document and is skilled to examine the documents.

#### Joint trials:

- A joint trial refers to the **trial of more than one person for the same offence**. The IEA states that in

a joint trial, if a **confession made by one of the accused** which also affects other accused is **proven**, it will be treated as a **confession against both**.

- The BSB2 **adds an explanation** to this provision. It states that a trial of multiple persons, where an accused has **absconded or has not responded** to an arrest warrant, will be **treated as a joint trial**.

#### Key Issues and Analysis

- The **Supreme Court** has recognised that **electronic records may be tampered with**. While the BSB2 provides for the admissibility of such records, there are **no safeguards to prevent the tampering and contamination** of such records during the investigation process.
- The IEA provides that if a fact is discovered as a result of information received from an accused in **police custody**, that information can be **admitted** if it distinctly relates to the fact discovered. The **BSB2 retains this provision**. However, the Supreme Court and various Law Commission reports have highlighted that facts may have been discovered in custody due to the **accused being subject to duress and torture**.
- The **Law Commission** has made several recommendations, which have not been incorporated. These include the **presumption that the police officer caused the injuries if an accused was injured in police custody**.

# International Relations

## 1) Annual GPAI Summit

### About GPAI

- Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) is an international initiative to **support responsible and human-centric development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.
- GPAI is a congregation of **29 member countries**, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.
- India had joined the GPAI in **2020** as a **founding member**.
- GPAI brings together engaged minds and expertise from science, industry, civil society, governments, international organisations and academia to **foster international cooperation**.

### Why in News?

- As the **Lead Chair** for GPAI in **2024**, **India** recently hosted the Annual GPAI Summit.
- Member countries unanimously adopted the **New Delhi Declaration** underscoring the need to mitigate risks arising from the development and deployment of AI systems, and promoting equitable access to critical resources for AI innovation.

## 2) Universal Declaration of Human Rights

### Context

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is marking its 75th anniversary.

### What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the **United Nations** on **10 December 1948**, sets out the **basic rights and freedoms that apply to all people**.
- Drafted in the aftermath of World War Two, the declaration includes a **preamble and 30 articles** expanding on the human rights of all people, from freedom of expression to freedom from torture to the right to equality before the law.
- The Declaration is the **most translated document** with translations in over 500 languages.

### What did it achieve?

- The declaration **isn't a treaty and isn't legally binding in itself**, but the principles it sets out have been **incorporated into many countries' laws** and it is viewed as the **basis for international human rights law**.
- It is recognized as having inspired and paved the way for more than 70 human rights treaties at global and regional levels.
- It served as a source of inspiration for the decolonization movement, the anti-apartheid movement, and freedom fighters globally, whether their focus was on gender issues, LGBTIQ+ rights, or combating racism.

### 3) Article 99 of the UN Charter

#### Context

- Amid Israel's ongoing military attacks on the Gaza Strip, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter in a bid to establish a ceasefire.

#### What is Article 99 of the UN Charter?

- The UN Charter is the **founding document of the United Nations**. Based on the powers conferred through it, the UN can take action on a wide variety of issues.
- The Charter is considered an **international treaty**, meaning UN Member States are "**bound by it**". However, in practice, there is little that member countries can be forced to do.
- Article 99 states: "The **Secretary-General** may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may **threaten the maintenance of international peace and security**."
- It is seen as a **discretionary power**.
- According to the UN, the President of the Security Council is under the **obligation to call a meeting of the Council** if the Secretary-General brings to the attention of the Council any matter under Article 99.

#### When has Article 99 been invoked in the past?

- The provision has been **rarely invoked**.
- Past examples include the upheaval in the Republic of the Congo in 1960 following the end of Belgium's colonial rule and a complaint by Tunisia in 1961 against France's naval and air forces launching an attack.

#### Related Information About UNSC

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was established in

1946 as **one of the six principal organs** of the UN. It is generally viewed as the apex of the UN system.

- It is responsible for the **maintenance of international peace and security**.
- Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.
- It is the **only UN body** with the authority to issue **binding resolutions** to member states.

#### Membership

- UNSC consists of **15 Members**.
- The council has **five permanent members** (P-5) United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom and France.
- These permanent members can **veto** any substantive Security Council resolutions, including those on the admission of new member states.
- The Security Council also has **10 non-permanent members**, elected on a **regional basis** as follows:
  - five for African and Asian States;
  - one for Eastern European States;
  - two for the Latin American and Caribbean States; and
  - two for Western European and other States.
- Each year the 193-member UN General Assembly (UNGA) elects five non-permanent members for a **two-year term**.
- The body's **presidency rotates monthly among its members**.

#### Vote and Majority Required

- Each member of the Security Council shall have **one vote**.

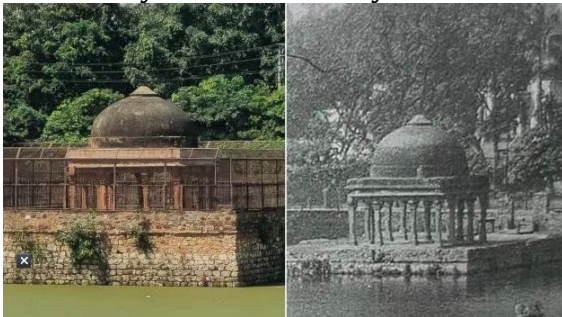
- Decisions of the Security Council on **procedural matters** shall be made by an **affirmative vote of nine members**.
- Decisions of the Security Council on **all other matters** shall be made by an **affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members**.
- However, any member, whether permanent or nonpermanent, must abstain from voting in any decision concerning the peaceful settlement of a dispute to which it is a party.

## Art & Culture

### 1) Hauz-i- Shamsi

#### About Hauz-i-Shamsi

- Hauz-i- Shamsi, also known as the **Shamsi Talab**, is a **water reservoir** located in **Mehrauli, Delhi**.
- It was built between **1211- 1236 AD** by **Iltutmish** of the **Slave Dynasty**.
- It is a **double-storeyed structure** supported on twelve pillars and is built using **red sandstone**.
- A popular legend narrates of **Iltutmish's dream** in which Prophet Muhammad directed him to build a **reservoir** at a particular site.
- Once spread over 100 hectares, this water body has shrunk into a patch of filthy water over the years.



#### Why in News?

- The Ministry of Jal Shakti organised a '**Jal Itihas Utsav**' here to raise public consciousness about safeguarding water heritage sites.

### 2) Warli Painting

#### About

- Warli painting is a form of **tribal mural art** created by the **tribal people** from the **North Sahyadri Range in Maharashtra**.
- It is based on the concept of **Mother Nature** and the **elements of nature** are often kept in focus.
- Warli artists are known to use their **clay huts** as backdrops for creating these warli paintings, similar to the way prehistoric paintings were made.

- These rudimentary paintings are made **using a set of geometric shapes - a circle, a triangle, and a square**.
- **People and animals** represented in Warli paintings are depicted by **two inverse triangles** joined at their tips.



- In Warli paintings, **male gods are uncommon** to find and are usually related to **spirits** which have taken human form.
- The **central motif** in every ritual painting is a square known as the "**chauk**" or "**chaukat**". It is depicted by scenes that portray **hunting, fishing and farming. Festivals and folk dances** are also common scenes depicted through Warli art.
- Apart from ritualistic paintings, Warli paintings also represent various day-to-day activities performed by village members.
- **Jivya Soman Mashe** is known as the **Father of Warli art** because he pulled it out of the traditional domain and popularised it beyond the Sahayadri mountains.

#### Why in News?

- Warli painting was in the news recently.

### 3) Garba dance added to UNESCO's List

#### About Garba dance

- Garba dance is a **popular folk dance** of Gujarat.
- The name Garba is derived from the Sanskrit term **Garbha (womb) implying life**.
- It is a **ritualistic and devotional dance** dedicated to the worship of the **feminine energy or Shakti**.
- Traditionally, it is performed during the **nine-day Hindu festival of Navratri**.

#### Key features of garba dance

- Garba is often performed in **circular formations**, symbolizing the cyclical nature of life and the universe.
- Dancers use a variety of **hand gestures and claps in rhythmic patterns**. The hand movements are intricate and expressive, and they often tell stories related to **Hindu mythology or cultural themes**.
- Garba music is characterized by **lively and rhythmic beats**. Traditional folk instruments like **dhol (drum), tabla, and dandiya sticks** are commonly used.



#### Why in News?

- Gujarat's traditional dance form 'Garba' has been included in the list of **Intangible Cultural Heritage** by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**.
- The popular dance form is the **15th cultural item from India** to make it

to the UNESCO list. **Kolkata's Durga Puja** was the last one added two years ago.

- Refer *Pulse August 2023 Digest* edition: "Kalbelia Dance" topic - for details about the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

### 4) Mudiyettu

#### About Mudiyettu

- Mudiyettu is a **traditional ritual theatre and folk dance drama** from **Kerala** that enacts the mythological tale of a battle between the **goddess Kali and the demon Darika**.
- The ritual is a part of the **Bhagavathi or Bhadrakali cult**.
- It is a **community ritual** and generally the whole village participates.
- Mudiyettu performers purify themselves through fasting and prayer, then draw a huge image of goddess Kali, called as **kalam**, on the temple floor with coloured powders, wherein the spirit of the goddess is invoked.
- Mudiyettu is performed annually in '**Bhagavati Kavus**' which are the temples of the goddess Kali in different villages along the rivers called **Chalakkudy Puzha, Periyar and Moovattupuzha**.
- In 2010, Mudiyettu was inscribed in the **UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**, becoming the second art form from Kerala after **Koodiyattam**.



### Why in News?

- Mudiyettu was recently performed in Kerala.

## 5) Sahitya Akademi Awards

### About the Awards

- The Sahitya Akademi award is considered as the **Government of India's second-highest literary honour**, following the **Jnanpith prize**.
- The Akademi is under the central government's **Ministry of Culture**, but works as an **autonomous institution**.
- Every year since its inception in 1954 (and first awarded in 1955), the Sahitya Akademi Award prizes to the **most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the major Indian languages recognised by the Akademi**.
- Akademi bestows 24 prizes on literary works in the languages it has recognised, as well as an equal number of honours for literary translations from and into Indian languages.
- In addition to the **22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution**, the Sahitya Akademi has designated **English and Rajasthani** as the languages chosen.

### Conditions of bestowing the award

- The author must be of **Indian origin**.
- The book/work must be an **excellent contribution to the language and literature**.

- When two or more works have similar worth, **specific factors** such as overall literary contribution and author status must be considered before awarding a prize.



### Why in News?

- Sahitya Akademi has announced its annual Sahitya Akademi Awards in 24 languages. 9 books of poetry, 6 of novel, 5 of short stories, 3 Essays and 1 Literary Study have won the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023.
- The award consists of an engraved copper-plaque, a shawl and a cash prize of ₹1 lakh.

## 6) Lingayats & Veerashaivas

### About Lingayat sect

- The Lingayat sect is believed to have stemmed from the principles of the **12th century social reformer and Kannada poet Basava**.
- **Inspired by the 'Bhakti' movement**, Basava **rejected temple worship and Brahmin rituals** and envisaged a **religion free of gender and religious discrimination**.
- Several people from backward castes opted to be Lingayats over the centuries to escape the rigid Hindu caste system.

### Who are veera shaivas?

- Veerashaivas are **worshippers of Lord Shiva**. They precede

**Basavanna, the founder of Lingayatism.**

- Veerashaivas do not worship any God other than Shiva and can be found spread across India.
- They believe that they are born straight out of the **Shivalingam** – the phallic symbol worshipped by Shaivas.
- People from the community are found largely in **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh** and **Kerala**.
- Veerashaivas are the followers of the **five peethas** (religious centres), called **pancha peethas**. Kashi mutt, Rameshwaram Mutt, Ujjaini Mutt, Rambhapura Mutt and Srishaila Mutt are the core holy places for the community.

**Are Lingayats and Veerashaivas the same?**

- **No.** While both Veerashaivas and Lingayats pray to the **Hindu god**

**Shiva, the two sects are not synonymous.**

- The major difference between the Lingayats and the Veerashaivas is that while the former **reject the Vedas and the caste system, the latter don't.**
- The **Lingayats worship Shiva as a formless entity (ishta linga)**, while **Veerashaivas worship the Vedic idol of Shiva with a snake around his neck.**

**Why in News?**

- The Veerashaiva Mahasabha has asked its community members not to describe themselves as Hindu in the forthcoming caste census in Karnataka.



# Defence

## 1) INS Imphal

### What is Project 15B?

- Between 2014 and 2016, the **Indian Navy** commissioned **three guided missile destroyers of Kolkata class** under a project codenamed '15A'. The Kolkata class included INS Kolkata, INS Kochi and INS Chennai.
  - *A ship class signifies a group of ships built with similar tonnage, usage, capabilities and weaponry. The class is identified by its lead ship.*
- These ships were a step ahead of their precursor **Delhi class of ships**, which included INS Delhi, INS Mysore and INS Mumbai, built under **Project 15** and commissioned between 1997 and 2001.
- **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL)**, one of India's key Defence Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), has **built all these ships**.
- In 2011, **Project 15B** was initiated for building the **advanced variants of the Kolkata class guided missile destroyers**.
- The lead ship of Project 15B, **INS Visakhapatnam** was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2015 and the second ship **INS Mormugao** in 2016. The fourth ship, **INS Surat**, was launched in May last year.

### Why in News?

- The third of four P-15B 'Visakhapatnam' class stealth guided missile destroyers, **INS Imphal**, was recently commissioned into the Indian Navy.

### About INS Imphal

- Built by **Mazgaon Dock Limited**, the ship boasts a **high indigenous content** of approximately 75 per cent.



- With a length of 163 meters and 7,400 tons displacement, Imphal is a formidable naval presence.
- The ship has a '**combined gas and gas**' (COGAG) configuration integrating four gas turbines. The propulsion system allows the ship to reach a **maximum speed of 30 knots and a maximum range of 4000 nautical miles**.
- The ship is a potent and versatile platform equipped with **state-of-the-art weapons and sensors**, including surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles, and torpedoes.
- Imphal has the unique distinction of being the **first warship to be named after a city in the Northeast**.

### Strategic Significance

- Technically, destroyers are a category of warships that have **high speed, manoeuvrability and longer endurance**. They are designed to be part of naval formations like a fleet or a carrier battle group also known as **carrier strike group**.
- The modern destroyers that are **swift, sleek and difficult to detect**, primarily protect the fleets and carrier battle groups from the short-range attackers from surface, air and sub-surface.
- The **guided-missile destroyers** are the destroyers that are armed with guided missiles for anti-aircraft

warfare, anti-surface operations and anti-submarine warfare.

- The **state-of-the-art stealth feature** makes Visakhapatnam class have the **radar signature of a very small ship**. A **very high indigenous component** gives this platform a strategic edge.

## 2) Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness Initiative

### Quad grouping

- The grouping of four democracies – **India, Australia, US and Japan** – known as the **quadrilateral security dialogue or quad**, was first mooted by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in **2007**. Quad was revived in **2017**.
- The QUAD partners share a **commitment towards a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region** based on shared values and principles and respect for international law.
- There is a focus on **practical cooperation** in the areas of connectivity and infrastructure development, and counter-terrorism, cyber security, maritime security, humanitarian and disaster relief, with the **objective of promoting peace, security, stability and prosperity** in an increasingly inter-connected Indo-Pacific region.

- With growing concerns in all four quad countries about **Chinese foreign policy and regional influence**, the group has found renewed relevance.

### Why in News?

- India said that the **Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative**, announced by the Quad grouping, is a testament to our commitment to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

### About IPMDA

- The IPMDA was announced by the Quad grouping in **2022** to build a **near-real-time, integrated, and cost-effective maritime domain awareness** to partners in the Indo-Pacific.
- Essentially, the IPMDA initiative focuses on monitoring regional maritime spaces, securing open sea lines of communication (SLOCs), and providing capacity-building measures for regional partners.
- It aims to combat challenges from natural disasters to human and weapons trafficking to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and **dark shipping**.
  - *"Dark Shipping" is a term used to describe vessels with their Automatic Identification System (AIS) – a transponder system – switched off so as not to be detectable.*

## Miscellaneous

### 1) Guru Gobind Singh

#### About

- Guru Gobind Singh was the **tenth and last Sikh Guru** who became the leader of the Sikhs at the **age of 9** after **Guru Tegh Bahadur** was beheaded.
- He was a **spiritual master, warrior, poet and philosopher**.
- In 1699, he established the Sikh warrior community called **Khalsa**.
- Guru Gobind Singh started the tradition of the **Five K's** for the Khalsa. The Five K's are **kesh** (uncut hair), **kanga** (wooden comb), **kara** (iron or steel bracelet), **kirpan** (dagger) and **kacchera** (short breeches).
- His literary contributions include the **Jaap Sahib, Benti Chaupai, Amrit Savaiye**, etc.
- **Chandi di Var** was his famous composition in Punjabi.
- In 1708, he declared that **Guru Granth Sahib** would be the holy scripture of Sikhism and would be the **permanent Guru of Sikhs**.

#### Why in News?

- **Veer Bal Diwas** was observed on 26th December to honor the martyrdom of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh in the 17th century.

### 2) Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya

#### About

- Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya was born in **1861**, in **Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh**.
- He is known for his **contribution to India's education system and his**

**role in the Indian Independence movement.**

- He played a key role in the Indian independence struggle against British rule and founded the **Banaras Hindu University (BHU)** in 1916. BHU is one of the largest and oldest universities in Asia.
- One of the most famous slogans, **'Satyamev Jayate'** was said by Pandit Malviya in the session of 1918 when he was the President of the Indian National Congress.
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya was the **President of the Indian National Congress for four sessions** (1909, 1913, 1919, and 1932).
- He played a big role in the **Civil Disobedience and Non-cooperation movement** which were led by Mahatma Gandhi.
- He was given the **title of 'Mahamana' or great soul by Mahatma Gandhi**, who considered him as an elder brother.
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya was also **one of the founders of Scout and Guide in India**.
- In 2014, Pandit Malviya was posthumously conferred with **Bharat Ratna**, the country's highest civilian award.

#### Why in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi remembered Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya on his birth anniversary.