



pravahini

Monthly Compendium

of Current Affairs by **SUCCESS MANTRA** (GTB Nagar)

PREFACE

It gives us great pleasure to release the monthly edition of the PRAVAHINI – Monthly e-Compendium & Weekly e-Periodicals of Current Affairs. The magazine's members have shown considerable cooperation as well as devotion. We at successmantra.in work tirelessly to create this magazine and bring it to you with a great sense of gratitude.

The PRAVAHINI MARCH -2023 eBook covers the current events that happened in the month of July. Current Affairs is a crucial component of any competitive exams including CLAT, AILET, DU- LLB, HM, CAT, IAS, PCS, SSC, Banking, MBA and various other competitive examinations.

Current Affairs play the bigger role in many competitive and government exams. It holds the power of making or breaking your chance of success. Therefore, the candidates should cover the Current Affairs thoroughly and smartly.

The PRAVAHINI MARCH -2023 eBook is divided into different sections keeping in mind the need of various exams. The sections covered namely International, National, Economy, Ecology and Environment, Science & Technology, Legal Affairs, Sports, States News Makers and few others.

We would also be pleased to receive any suggestion that could assist us with the upcoming editions.

Success Mantra (GTB Nagar, Delhi)

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Our Goal

Our goal at Success Mantra is to provide Quality education at rational price and thereby to create an environment that guides students towards the path of the success. Along with designing the curriculum and delivering the lectures, we work upon the ways the students think and approach problems asked.

B.S. Shanti



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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

PM AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE MISSION

- The **PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission** was launched in October 2021 with an aim to strengthen healthcare infrastructure across India.
- With a budget of Rs.64,180 crore, the mission has three aspects: strengthening public health institutions, building an IT-enabled disease surveillance system, and expanding research on infectious diseases.
- *Why is PMABHIM in the news?*
- The **World Bank has announced the extension of 2 complementary loans of 500 million USD** each to India to support the PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission.
- One of these loans will prioritize healthcare services in 7 states – **Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.**
- The **Public Health Systems for Pandemic Preparedness Program, with \$500 million**, is to support the government's efforts to improve epidemic surveillance, ensure timely response and prevent the emergence of novel pathogens.
- *Who started PMABHIM?*
- **Union Minister of Health Dr Mansukh Mandaviya. It was launched in Varanasi by PM Modi.** It was launched in 2021 with an outlay of Rs 64,180 crores. The aim was to make the health infrastructure of the country more resilient.



WHAT IS DIBANG HYDROPOWER PROJECT?

- **Dibang Hydropower Project**, which was approved by the Central Government recently, is India's largest-ever hydropower project.
- This multipurpose project is being set up close to China's border on **the Dibang River, in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Dibang Valley District.** Notably, it is being developed in a mountainous region.
- This project will be developed by **National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) Limited.** The estimated cost of this 2,880-megawatt hydropower project is 319 billion INR. It is expected to take 9 years to be completed.
- It involves the construction of a **278-meter-high Concrete Gravity Dam and various horseshoe-shaped head race tunnels**, horseshoe-shaped tailrace tunnels and an underground Power House.
- *What is the Dibang Multipurpose Project?*



- The **project will generate 2,880 MW of hydropower**. The main purpose of the project is flood control and also water storage. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh will receive 1346.76 MU of water after completion.

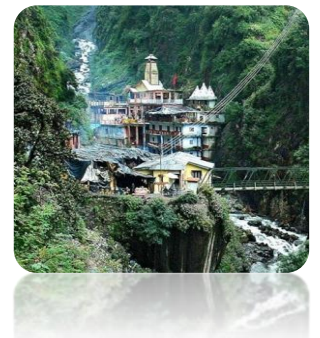
UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION AUTHORITY OF INDIA

- The **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** has recently launched a new security mechanism for Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication. Its aim is to ensure a fast-paced detection of spoofing attempts by making use of artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities.
- The new mechanism uses a combination of both finger minutiae and finger image to check the liveness of the captured fingerprint. This will introduce a two-factor/layer authentication, further boosting the system's security.
- The UIDAI is a statutory body that was established by the Indian Government in January 2009.
- **It comes under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**. It functions based on the provisions of the **Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, benefits and services) Act, 2016**.



WHAT IS YAMUNOTRI DHAM?

- Yamunotri Dham is part of Char Dham – **the four famous Hindu pilgrimages in the Himalayas**. The other famous Hindu pilgrimages in the Himalayas are Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.
- Yamunotri Dham is the starting point of the annual pilgrimage that is held from May to October. **It is situated close to River Yamuna's source**.
- The state government of Uttarakhand has inked a contract to construct a **3.38 km ropeway from Janki Chatti in Kharsali to Yamunotri Dham**. The ropeway will bring down the travel time to just 20 minutes from the current 2 to 3 hours.
- It is estimated to cost Rs. 166.82 crore. This ropeway is to be **built at a height of 10,797 feet, based on Mono-Cable Detachable Gondola system technology**.



HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF GREAT NICOBAR ISLANDS

- **The Holistic Development of the Great Nicobar Island Project** is being criticized for its adverse impact on the island's ecology and indigenous tribes.
- This **166.10 sq. km project involves the construction of an airport, a township, a container transshipment terminal, and a power plant**. The project requires the diversion of 130 sq km of forest land and the logging of 8.5 lakh trees.
- Recently, the Home Ministry asked for 8.45 sq. km. The airport component is kept confidential, citing strategic imperatives.

- The Environment Ministry has withheld all discussions on forest clearance for the entire project recommended by the **Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)**. The FAC authorizes the diversion of forest land for projects, and there is no information on when it cleared the proposal for this project.
- *What is the Great Nicobar Island Project?*
- The **project is to be implemented in the Great Nicobar Island at a cost of Rs 75,000 crores, that is, 9.4 billion USD**. It was prepared by NITI Aayog and to be implemented by ANIIDC (Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation).
- It **mainly aims at developing coastal tourism, logistics, defense, coastal regulation zone, and commerce and industries**. There are four main components in the plan.
- They are Galathea Bay International Container Transshipment Terminal, Great Nicobar International Airport, Great Nicobar Gas and Solar Power Plant, and the two coastal cities.

WHAT IS SAMARTH SCHEME?

- The **SAMARTH (Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector) scheme** is a demand-driven and placement-oriented umbrella skilling initiative that aims to provide incentives and create jobs in the organized textile industry and related sectors, covering the entire value chain of textiles, except spinning and weaving.
- It is **implemented via Implementing Partners like state government agencies, Textile Industry/ Industry Associations and sectoral organizations** of the textile ministry, like the Central Silk Board. It will be implemented until March 2024.
- *Why is the SAMARTH Scheme in News?*
- The Indian Government is now planning to rope in more industry partners **to boost skill development under the SAMARTH scheme**.
- This initiative is part of the steps taken by the government to make the **textile sector worth 250 billion USD by the end of this decade from the present 150-155 billion USD**.

KEY POINTS RELATED TO INS TRIKAND

- INS Trikand is participating in the **International Maritime Exercise/ Cutlass Express 2023 (IMX/CE-23)** being held in the Gulf region from 26 Feb to 16 Mar 2023.
- Exercises will be held with participants from over 50 nations and **international maritime agencies with the common aim** of enhancing maritime security and keeping sea lanes in the region safe for maritime commerce.
- IMX/CE-23 is one of the largest multinational maritime exercises in the world. While this is the Indian Navy's maiden IMX participation, it also marks the second occasion where an **Indian Naval ship is participating in an exercise conducted by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)**.



- On November 22, **INS Trikand** had participated in the CMF-led Operation Sea Sword 2 in the Northwest Arabian Sea.

WHAT IS SWAMIH INVESTMENT FUND?

- The **SWAMIH Investment Fund** is a social impact fund designed to provide debt financing for completing stalled, brownfield, and RERA-registered residential projects.
- **Managed by SBICAP Ventures Ltd., a State Bank Group company**, the Fund is sponsored by the Union Ministry of Finance. It was launched in 2019.
- SWAMIH is regarded as the lender of last resort for distressed projects, **including those with litigation issues or troubled histories**.
- The **Fund has provided final approval to nearly 130 projects worth around Rs 12,000 crore and has raised Rs 15,530 crore to date**. It has completed 20,557 homes and aims to complete over 81,000 homes in the next three years across 30 tier 1 and 2 cities.
- One of the **biggest projects completed using SWAMIH is the Rivali Park residential project in Mumbai**. The Fund has contributed to the growth of ancillary industries in the real estate and infrastructure sectors by unlocking liquidity of over Rs. 35,000 crores.
- The established developers with stalled projects and non-performing assets are identified. **The fund provides financial support to these projects**.



ONE NATION ONE CHALLAN INITIATIVE

- The **One Nation, One Challan initiative** aims to integrate all related agencies **such as traffic police and Regional Transport Offices (RTO)** on a single platform for the seamless collection of traffic fines and data transfer.
- Recently, the state government of Gujarat told the HC during a PIL hearing that it was seeking the setting up of virtual traffic courts and that it is already in the process of **establishing these courts under the 'One Nation One Challan' initiative**.
- *What is the One Nation One Challan initiative?*
- The **One Nation, One Challan initiative**, launched by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, seeks to create a system that can detect traffic violations **through the CCTV network and generate e-challans** with relevant penalty amounts, which are sent to the mobile number linked with the erring vehicle.
- It is to **integrate data from apps like VAHAN and SARATHI**. It also seeks to create virtual traffic courts that eliminate the presence of litigants in court.

NASHA MUKT BHARAT ABHIYAN (NMBA)

- The **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment flagship program**, **Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)**, aims to raise awareness about substance abuse among youth in India, with a particular focus on higher education institutes, university campuses, schools, and community engagement.
- Recently, the **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment** and **Brahma Kumaris** inked a Memorandum of Understanding to make NMBA more effective and widespread. Substance abuse means excessive use of drugs and alcohol.



- ***What is Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan?***
- The program, **started in 2020 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**, was started with a target of 272 of the most vulnerable districts. It has now reached over 9.50 crore people, including 3.10 crore young individuals, in 372 districts across the country, and over 3 lakh educational institutions.
- The NMBA has conducted various activities emphasizing the dangers of drug addiction. The program also prioritizes community involvement to promote a sense of responsibility in tackling substance abuse and promote a healthy, productive society.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC)

- Recently, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) **has been facing allegations of irregularities in its functioning.**
- Established in 1994, **it is an autonomous body under the University Grants Commission (UGC) responsible for assessing the quality of higher educational institutions in India.**
- **Functions of NAAC:** Through a multi-layered assessment process, it awards grades ranging from A++ to C based on parameters such as curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, research and financial well-being.
- **Allegations:** The former chairperson of NAAC's executive committee resigned after alleging that malpractices were **leading to questionable grades being awarded to some institutions.**
- An inquiry commissioned found irregularities in the IT system and allocation of assessors. The inquiry also **highlighted that nearly 70% of experts from the pool of around 4,000 assessors** have not received any opportunity to make site visits.



KERALA GOVT. TO ESTABLISH PATTAYA MISSION

- The **state government of Kerala is planning to establish a Pattaya Mission** by the end of April to tackle land record issues in the state. Under the leadership of MLAs in each district, the mission will work towards providing title deeds for all individuals.

➤ *Why is the Kerala Government launching Pattaya Mission?*

- Despite the **implementation of the Land Reforms Act five decades ago**, land record problems have not been resolved, and the proposed Pattaya Mission will expedite the distribution of title deeds.
- Till now, the government has disbursed 54,535 title deeds. It was announced by **Revenue Minister K. Rajan while inaugurating a State-level Pattaya Mela in Wayanad** and laying the foundation for a smart village office in Vellamunda.



30TH ANNIVERSARY OF 73RD & 74TH AMENDMENT

- The year 2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution. But still India's local government requires many technical, administrative and financial fixes.
- *What are the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments?*
- *73rd Constitutional Amendment Act:*
- Panchayati Raj Institution was constitutionalized through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. This **act has added a new Part-IX to the Constitution of India** and consists of provisions from Articles 243 to 243 O.
- In addition, the act has also added a new **11th Schedule to the Constitution and contains 29 functional items of the panchayats.**
- *74th Constitutional Amendment Act:*
- Urban local governments were constitutionalized through the **74th Amendment Act during the regime of P.V. Narsimha Rao's government in 1992**. It came into force on 1st June 1993. It added Part IX -A and consists of provisions from Articles 243-P to 243-ZG. In addition, the act also added the 12th Schedule to the Constitution. **It contains 18 functional items of Municipalities.**

MANIPUR GOVERNMENT WITHDRAWS SoO PACT

- On March 10, 2023 the Manipur government decided to withdraw from the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with two militant groups, **Kuki National Army (KNA) and Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA)**, alleging their involvement in inciting agitation among forest encroachers.
- *What is Kuki Insurgency?*
- The **Kuki insurgency began after ethnic clashes with the Nagas of Manipur** in the early 1990s, with the Kukis arming themselves against Naga aggression.
- The major reason for clashes is **the land claimed by the Kukis as their "homeland" in the Manipur hills overlaps** with the imagined Naga homeland of Greater Nagaland or Nagalim.
- *What is the Suspension of Operations (SoO) Pact?*



- The **SoO agreement with Kuki** was signed in 2008 as a ceasefire agreement between the Indian government and various Kuki militant groups operating in the northeastern states of Manipur and Nagaland.
- Under the agreement, the Kuki militant groups agreed to stop carrying out violent activities and come to designated camps to be monitored by security forces. **In return, the Indian government agreed to suspend its operations against the Kuki groups**

KALAKKAD–MUNDANTHURAI TIGER RESERVE (KMTR)

- Researchers from Tamil Nadu have spotted a rare moth species for the first time in India in the buffer zone of **Kalakkad–Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR)** after it was last sighted 127 years ago in Sri Lanka in 1893.
- **Mimeusemia ceylonica** is a moth species belonging to the subfamily Agaristinae and family Noctuidae.
- KMTR was created in 1988 by combining the existing and contiguous Kalakkad and Mundanthurai wildlife sanctuaries. Kalakkad – Mundanthurai was declared as the first Tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu.
- It occupies the southern part of the Western Ghats and consists of wet evergreen forests; it is the catchment area of 14 rivers. **It is also part of the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve.** Apart from tigers, the forest is home to **Sambar, spotted deer, elephants, leopards, wild dogs, etc., and a large number of bird species, reptiles, etc.**



REVAMPED SWADESH DARSHAN 2.0 PROGRAMME

- The **tourism industry in India** has always been a major contributor to the country's economy. It not only generates employment opportunities but also promotes cultural exchange and supports local businesses.
- However, the rapid growth of tourism has also led to its negative impacts, including environmental degradation, overcrowding, and exploitation of local communities.
- To address these challenges and promote sustainable tourism, the **Union Ministry of Tourism launched the Swadesh Darshan Scheme (SDS) in 2014.**
- The SDS aimed to develop theme-based tourist circuits across India, such as spiritual, heritage, and eco-tourism circuits. However, the **scheme was criticized for its lack of sustainability and community involvement.**
- *Revamped Swadesh Darshan 2.0 Programme*
- In response to the criticism, the **Ministry of Tourism has launched the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0) programme**, which seeks to develop sustainable and responsible tourist destinations.
- The **SD2.0 aims to address the negative impacts of tourism and promote responsible tourism practices** while also increasing private sector investments in the industry.

CYCLONE FREDDY: DEADLY TROPICAL CYCLONE

- In **February and March 2023**, the world witnessed the **remarkable persistence of a tropical cyclone named Freddy**. The storm crossed the Indian Ocean over a span of more than five weeks, causing severe damage and destruction in its path.
- **Freddy was classified as the fourth named storm of the 2022-23 Australian region cyclone** season and the second very intense tropical cyclone of the 2022-23 South-West Indian Ocean cyclone season. It caused deaths of over hundreds of people. Let's take a closer look at this deadly storm.
- Freddy emerged as a disturbance within the monsoon trough in the Australian region cyclone basin. The storm quickly intensified into a Category 4 severe tropical cyclone, causing significant damage and destruction in its path.
- **As Freddy moved into the South-West Indian Ocean basin**, it intensified even further, becoming a very intense tropical cyclone. The storm's wind speeds reached 155 mph, **equivalent to a Category 5 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale**.



WHAT IS THE PM MITRA SCHEME?

- The **Centre has selected sites in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh** to set up new textile parks under the PM Mega Integrated **Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA)** scheme.
- The parks will be set up by 2026-27. The total outlay for the project is Rs 4,445 crore, though the initial allocation in the 2023-24 Budget is only Rs 200 crore.
- *What is the PM MITRA Scheme?*
- **PM MITRA Park will be developed by a Special Purpose Vehicle** which will be owned by the Central and State Government and in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode.
- **Each MITRA Park will have an incubation center, common processing house** and a common effluent treatment plant and other textile related facilities such as design centers and testing centers.
- *Implementation:*
- **Special Purpose Vehicle:** An SPV owned by the Centre and State Government will be set up for each park which will oversee the implementation of the project.
- **Development Capital Support:** The Ministry of Textiles will provide financial support in the **form of Development Capital Support upto Rs 500 crore per park to the park SPV**.



BCI ALLOWS FOREIGN LAWYERS TO PRACTICE IN INDIA

➤ Recently, the **Bar Council of India (BCI)** has notified Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India, 2022, **allowing foreign lawyers and law firms to practice in India.**

➤ However, it did not allow them to appear before courts, tribunals or other statutory or regulatory authorities.

➤ ***What is the BCI Decision?***

➤ For over a decade, **BCI was opposed to allowing foreign law firms in India.** Now, the BCI has reasoned that its move will address concerns about the flow of Foreign Direct Investment in the country and make India a hub of International Commercial Arbitration.

➤ The rules bring legal clarity to foreign law firms that **currently operate in a very limited way in India.** The **BCI said it** “resolves to implement these Rules enabling the foreign lawyers and Foreign Law Firms to practice foreign law and diverse international law and international arbitration matters in India on the principle of reciprocity in a well-defined, regulated and controlled manner.



MSME COMPETITIVE LEAN SCHEME

➤ Recently, the **Ministry of MSMEs launched the MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme** to provide a roadmap to global competitiveness for the MSMEs of India.

➤ The idea is to **improve quality, productivity, performance and capability** to change the mind-sets of manufacturers and transform them into world class manufacturers.

➤ ***What are the Key Points of the Scheme?***

➤ Through the LEAN journey, MSMEs can reduce wastage substantially, increase productivity, improve quality, work safely, expand their markets, and finally become competitive and profitable.

➤ **Tools:** Under the scheme, MSMEs will implement LEAN manufacturing tools like **5S, Kaizen, KANBAN, Visual workplace, Poka Yoka** etc under the able guidance of trained and competent LEAN Consultants to attain LEAN levels like Basic, Intermediate and Advanced.

➤ **Government Support:** The government will contribute 90% of implementation cost for handholding and consultancy fees.

➤ There will be an **additional contribution of 5% for the MSMEs which are part of SFURTI clusters**, owned by Women/SC/ST and located in the Northeast region.



SC ASKS FOR DATA ON HUMANE METHOD OF EXECUTION

- The **Supreme Court of India** has asked the Centre to provide data that may lead to a more dignified, less painful, and socially acceptable **method of executing prisoners other than death by hanging**.
- The court even suggested the formation of an expert committee to relook at **India's current method of putting criminals to death**.



- *What are the Arguments around Execution of Prisoners?*
- The court clarified that it was not questioning the constitutionality of the death penalty but rather the method of execution. **The government had said the mode of execution is a "matter of legislative policy,"** and the death penalty is awarded only in the rarest of rare cases.
- The court was hearing a petition challenging the constitutionality of death by hanging as a mode of execution.
- **Section 354 (5) of the Code of Criminal Procedure** mandates that a person sentenced to death shall “be hanged by the neck till he is dead”. It is argued that there is a **need to evolve a "humane, quick, and decent alternative"** and termed hanging as "cruel and barbarous" compared to lethal injection.
- *What is the Current Provision of Death Penalty in India?*

Certain offenses under Indian Penal Code, for **which the offenders can be sentenced to punishment of death are:**

- Murder (Section 302)
- Dacoity with murder (Section 396)
- Criminal Conspiracy (Section 120B)
- Waging war against the Government of India or attempting to do so (Section 121)
- Abatement of mutiny (Section 132) and others.

HINDU ST WOMEN EXCLUDED FROM ST LIST

- A **Member of Parliament** has urged the government to issue a **notification** that would include women from the Scheduled Tribe community in the inheritance rights provisions of the Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005.
- Section 2(2) of the Act excludes these women, which results in the denial of their equal rights to inherit their **father's or Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) properties**.
- *What are the Issues Highlighted Around Inheritance Rights?*
- **The Hindu Succession Act, 1956**, was amended in 2005 to grant daughters equal rights to inherit their father's or HUF properties.

- The **Member of Parliament (MoP)** stated that exclusion of women from the Scheduled Tribe in this act is discriminatory based on gender and is against **Article 14 of the Constitution of India**, which advocates for equality before the law.
- Additionally, MoP argues that women from Scheduled Tribes are a **more disadvantaged group due to historic oppression and lack of access to education, employment, and property**.
- The MoP has urged the Government to issue a notification that would include Scheduled Tribe women in the **ambit of the Hindu Succession Act**, except in cases where the customs of a particular Scheduled Tribe give women an advantageous position.

GUILLOTINE IN INDIAN LEGISLATIVE

- The **ongoing stalemate in Parliament** has led to speculation that the government may guillotine the **demands for grants and pass the Finance Bill without any discussion**. This has led to confusion and questions about what exactly guillotine means in legislative parlance.
- *What is Guillotine?*
- The **term guillotine originally referred to an apparatus designed for executions by beheading**. It was introduced in France during the French Revolution to make capital punishment more reliable and less painful.
- In **legislative parlance, guillotine means to bunch together and fast-track** the passage of financial business. It is a fairly common procedural exercise in Lok Sabha during the Budget Session.
- Once the guillotine is applied, any remaining demands for grants are put to vote without further discussion. This **ensures that the budget is passed within the allocated time, and the government can continue its work without any delay**.



PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA

- Recently, the Central government extended the grant of a subsidy of Rs. 200 per gas cylinder under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) for another year, benefiting 9.59 crore beneficiaries. The subsidy is credited directly **to the bank accounts of eligible beneficiaries**.
- In the wake of **sharp increases in international Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) prices** due to various geopolitical factors, the government has decided to shield PMUY beneficiaries from high LPG prices.
- **PMUY is a government flagship scheme** launched in 2016 by the Government of India with the aim to make LPG available to economically weaker households in India. The scheme aims to safeguard the **health of women and children by providing them with clean cooking fuel (LPG)**.

INDIAN AIR FORCE PARTICIPATING IN EXERCISE COBRA WARRIOR

➤ **Indian Air Force (IAF) Mirage-2000 aircraft** have been participating in **Exercise Cobra Warrior in the United Kingdom over the past three weeks.**

➤ This joint training exercise has been taking place alongside six other Air Forces, including those from the **United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Singapore.**



➤ *Participating Countries*

➤ **Finland, India, and Saudi Arabia joined Exercise Cobra Warrior for the first time.** The initial plan was to bring in indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, but they were busy with another exercise, so the Mirage-2000s were deployed.

➤ *Exercise Cobra Warrior*

➤ **Exercise Cobra Warrior** is held twice a year and is the largest air exercise hosted by the Royal Air Force. This edition saw around 70 aircraft take part and was **directed by staff at RAF Waddington air base.**

SETI RIVER-6 HYDROPOWER PROJECT

➤ The Investment Board Nepal has granted permission to NHPC Limited, an Indian company, to **conduct a feasibility study of the proposed 450 MW Seti River-6 Hydropower Project.** The project will be built in the Doti and Achham districts of Nepal and aims to **provide the country with much-needed electricity.**

➤ *Benefits of the Seti River-6 Hydropower Project*

➤ The **Seti River-6 Hydropower Project** is a crucial development in Nepal's efforts to increase its power generation capacity and provide electricity to its people.

➤ The project will create jobs and spur economic growth in the region, **as well as reduce Nepal's reliance on imported electricity.** Additionally, Nepal will receive 21.9% of the West Seti Hydropower Project's energy for free as per the agreement.

INDIA'S 6G VISION DOCUMENT

➤ On March 23, 2023, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the Bharat 6G Vision Document**, which outlines India's plan to launch 6G communication services by 2030.

➤ The document was developed by the Technology Innovation Group on 6G, a group of **experts from various ministries, research institutions, standardization bodies, telecom service providers, and industry.**

➤ The 6G test bed was also launched, **providing a platform for industry, academic institutions, and others to test and validate emerging technologies.**



- The government said that the Bharat 6G vision document and 6G test bed would create an enabling environment **for innovation, capacity building, and faster technology adoption in the country.**
- *India's Progress in Telecommunication 6G Technology*
- *India's Progress in Telecommunication*
- **In August 2022**, while addressing the Smart India Hackathon, PM Modi announced that the government would launch 6G by the end of this decade, demonstrating India's confidence in its progress in the telecommunication industry.
- He also urged youths and innovators to take advantage of the **opportunity and come up with innovative solutions.**

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF PROJECT ELEPHANT

- The Indian Government is set to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Project Elephant with the Gaj Utsav 2023. This two-day event aims to promote elephant conservation, protect their habitat and corridors, and prevent human-elephant conflicts. **It will also ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India.**
- The Gaj Utsav 2023 will be inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu on April 9 at Kaziranga National Park in Assam. **This event is significant as Kaziranga is a UNESCO World Heritage site** and home to the highest density of tigers in the world.
- *Project Elephant: Its Significance*
- **Project Elephant is a centrally-sponsored scheme** launched in 1991-92 to protect elephants and their habitats in India.
- With an **estimated population of 30,000-40,000 elephants**, India accounts for more than 60 per cent of the global wild elephant population. Elephants are considered a national heritage animal protected under **Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972.**



AMIT SHAH INAUGURATED VEDIC HERITAGE PORTAL

- **Home Minister Amit Shah** inaugurated the Vedic Heritage portal in New Delhi. The primary aim of the portal is to communicate the messages enshrined in the Vedas and make it more accessible to the common people.
- According to **Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy**, the Vedic Heritage portal now has audio-visual recordings of the four Vedas. These recordings contain over 18,000 mantras of the four Vedas, with a total duration of over 550 hours.
- The portal will act as a one-stop solution for anyone who wants to search for information about the Vedic heritage, **making it easier for them to understand the messages and teachings of the Vedas.**

- The **portal is expected to be a valuable resource for researchers, scholars, and anyone interested in Vedic heritage**, providing them with access to a wealth of information on this important aspect of Indian culture.
- Its launch is a significant step towards preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage.
- *Project Vrihattar Bharat*
- **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** Member Secretary Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi informed that IGNCA is currently working on a project titled "Vrihattar Bharat," which aims to document the cultural linkages of India with 40 other countries, **including Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Mongolia.**

WHAT IS ARAVALLI GREEN WALL PROJECT?

- On March 25th, 2023, the **Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, inaugurated the Aravalli Green Wall Project.**
- The project aims to green the 5 km buffer area around the **Aravalli Hill Range in four states – Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Delhi.**
- The **project was launched on the International Day of Forests** and is a part of the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Through Forestry Interventions.
- *The Objective of the Aravalli Green Wall Project*
- The **Aravalli Green Wall Project aims to improve the ecological health of the Aravalli range, prevent land degradation, combat desertification, improve biodiversity, mitigate climate change, and promote sustainable development.**
- The initial phase of the project focuses on the rejuvenation of 75 water bodies in the Aravalli landscape, **starting with five water bodies in each district of the Aravalli landscape.**
- The project aims to develop a **synergy between restoration, socio-economic factors, and development activities** to ensure that both conservation and development can be achieved.



NEW INDIA LITERACY PROGRAMME

- Recently, the **Minister of State for Education** provided information about the **New India Literacy Programme (NILP) in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.**
- *What is the New India Literacy Programme?*
- The Government has launched the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "**New India Literacy Programme**" (NILP) for **implementation during five years from the FYs 2022-23 to 2026-27** with financial outlay of Rs.1037.90 crore.
- **Aim:** The scheme aims to cover a target of 5.00 crore non-literates in the **age group of 15 years and above.**



➤ *The scheme has five components:*

- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
- Critical Life Skills
- Vocational Skills Development
- Basic Education
- Continuing Education

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

WHAT IS S-400 TRIUMF SYSTEM?

- The **S-400 Triumph** is a **surface-to-air missile system that was developed in Russia** in the 1990s as an upgrade to the S-300 family. It is a mobile system that was initially known as the S-300 PMU-3. The system was first put into service in April 2007.
- The **S-400 Triumph** has **advanced features such as a long-range**, high-altitude interception capability, and the ability to track multiple targets simultaneously. It can engage enemy targets like fighter jets, UAVs, cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, etc. It has a range of up to 400 km.
- **Deliveries of 5 regiments of S-400 Triumph are expected to be completed by the end of 2023 or early 2024.** The delivery of the third regiment was completed recently. These missile defense systems are delivered as part of the India-Russia 5.43 billion USD deal.
- *What countries have the S400?*
- **Belarus, China, India, Turkey, and Russia.** Belarus received S400 under the deal signed in 2022. China received S400 under the deal signed in 2014. And India received S400 under the deal signed in 2018. Turkey signed the deal in 2017. **However, Turkey faced US sanctions for buying the S400 from Russia.**

INDIA-UK YOUNG PROFESSIONAL SCHEME

- The UK Government recently launched the Young Professionals Scheme. Under the scheme, Indian nationals aged 18 years to 30 years can live and work in Britain for up to two years.
- To avail of the benefits of the scheme, the person should be an Indian citizen, he or she should be between 18 to 30 years old, **should have at least 2,350 pounds in savings.**
- Persons entering through the scheme can set up the company. **However, the equipment used in the company should not exceed 5,000 pounds.**
- And such people cannot hire employees
- The scheme is not for family members
- People availing of the benefits of the scheme cannot work as sportspersons



JAPAN'S ASIA ENERGY TRANSITION INITIATIVE

- Japan looks forward to supporting **India's clean energy transition** by including India in the **Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI).**
- Japan's AETI, launched in 2021, initially supported the **Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** countries towards achieving net zero emissions, including financial assistance of USD 10 billion for renewable energy.

➤ *What is the Asia Energy Transition Initiative?*

- The **Clean Energy Partnership between India and Japan** was published in **March 2022**. It would work on the agenda covered in the India-Japan Energy Dialogue 2007 and will subsequently expand into areas of mutual benefit.
- India and Japan have taken over the presidency of G20 and G7, respectively. In the context of environmental sustainability, **India's Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)** is one of the most important priorities during the G20 presidency.
- Also, the **Feed-in Premium (FiP)** scheme by the government of Japan was implemented in April 2022 and is expected to improve the country's energy transition.
- Japan has set a goal of becoming net-zero by 2050, and the government issued an interim report on Clean Energy Strategy in May 2022. **India has also set an ambitious target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.**
- The **Indian subcontinent's massive renewable energy potential can boost green hydrogen (GH2)** production and immense potential for a GH2 economy.



EXERCISE DESERT FLAG VIII

- **Exercise Desert Flag VIII** is set to be organized from February 27 to March 17 this year. It is a multilateral air exercise involving the participation of **UAE, France, Kuwait, Australia, the UK, Bahrain, Morocco, Spain, the Republic of Korea, and the US.**
- It aims to bring about the interoperability of different fighter engagements and sharing of best practices of various Air Forces. UAE is hosting the exercise.
- The India Air Force Contingent, which is taking part in this exercise, includes **110 Air Warriors along with 5 LCA Tejas and two C-17 Globemaster III aircraft.**
- This is **the first time that LCA Tejas aircraft is included in an international flying exercise** outside India. The Indian contingent recently arrived at the Al Dhafra air base in UAE.
- *What is the objective of the Desert Flag Exercise?*
- To **provide operational exposure to the participating soldiers.** And also to train them to undertake operations in a controlled environment. The exercise provides different fighter engagements. Countries share their best practices during the exercise.



WHAT IS GREEN STRATEGY PARTNERSHIP?

- The **Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change** expressed that India and Denmark can jointly demonstrate the feasibility of achieving ambitious climate and sustainable energy goals during the '**India-Denmark: Partners for Green and Sustainable Progress Conference**' in New Delhi.
- Since the launch of the **Green Strategic Partnership in 2020**, the bilateral cooperation is focused on promoting green and sustainable development.
- *What is a Green Strategy Partnership?*
- The **Green Strategic Partnership** is a mutually beneficial arrangement to advance political cooperation, expand economic relations and green growth, create jobs, and strengthen cooperation on addressing global challenges and opportunities; with a focus on an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**.
- **Danish companies with niche technologies and expertise have offered to help India** in meeting its air pollution control targets, including in the key area of tackling the problem of burning crop stubble.
- Other key points under the partnership include dealing with the **Covid-19 pandemic and cooperation in water efficiency and water loss**.



WHAT IS WINDSOR FRAMEWORK?

- The '**Windsor Framework**' introduces a **green lane for goods that will stay in Northern Ireland** and a red lane system for goods that will reach the European Union. It also introduces the '**Stormont Brake**' that allows the lawmakers in Northern Ireland and the UK to veto any **EU regulations that may adversely impact the region**.
- The veto requires support from 30 members from at least 2 parties in Northern Ireland. **The British government is then allowed to veto the legislation.**
- **No, it has not yet been implemented.** It is a post-Brexit agreement. The agreement is launched to address the main issue of the Northern Ireland Protocol.
- **What is the issue with NIP?** The issue is around the movement of goods between the UK and the European Union markets.
- *What are the changes introduced by Windsor Framework?*
- To understand this, we first need to learn about certain political factors. Great Britain is the main island and it includes England, Wales, and Scotland. The United Kingdom includes Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Now, earlier the goods will be checked in Northern Ireland before entering Ireland. **Now with the new framework, some goods are receiving exemptions from the checking.**



YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK IN THE UNITED STATES

- **Yellowstone National Park in the US**, which celebrated its 151st anniversary recently, is considered the first national park in the world. The park, spanning over 9,000 sq km across Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, was established by the US Congress in 1872 with the **Yellowstone National Park Protection Act**.
- **Yellowstone National Park** is famed for its scenic beauty and diverse wildlife, including grizzly bears, wolves, and endangered bison and elk. **The Old Faithful geyser is one of its most notable geothermal features.**
- However, this national park was established after the displacement of Native American communities who had been **hunting and gathering in the area for over 11,000 years before the government took over.**

INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

- India has proposed the **creation of a new global alliance called the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** to protect seven major big cats, namely-tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar and cheetah. The IBCA will be open to 97 countries and organizations interested in protecting these animals.
- India has committed **to providing funding of 100 million USD** over 5 years to support the IBCA. After five years, the alliance will be supported by membership fees and money from other organizations.
- The IBCA will share information about protecting these animals. Its **governance structure includes a General Assembly and a council.**
- **The IBCA Secretary-General will be appointed by the General Assembly** based on the recommendation of the Council.
- *What are the main activities of the International Big Cat Alliance?*
- The alliance will create knowledge e-portal, laws, and partnerships, and will work to improve ecotourism and financial capacity. **The main objective of the alliance is to rehabilitate the big cats.**



ARREST WARRANT ISSUED AGAINST PUTIN BY ICC

- On March 17, 2023, the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** issued arrest warrants against Russian **President Vladimir Putin and Russia's Commissioner for Child Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova**, for the alleged war crime of unlawfully deporting and transferring children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.
- This move has been made under articles 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute, **which relate to the direct or indirect transfer of an occupying power's own civilian population** into occupied territory or the deportation or transfer of the population of the occupied territory within or outside its territory.

- The **ICC issued arrest warrants against Putin and Belova** because they are allegedly responsible for unlawfully deporting and transferring children **from Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.**
- The **ICC believes that Putin bears individual criminal responsibility for these crimes** and has reasonable grounds to believe that he committed the acts directly, jointly with others, and/or through others under article 25(3)(a) of the Rome Statute.
- The ICC has also accused Putin of failing to exercise control properly over civilian and military subordinates under his effective authority, committing or allowing the commission of such acts under article 28(b) of the Rome Statute.
- *What is the ICC?*
- The **ICC is headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands**, and was established under the 1998 treaty called the “Rome Statute.”
- It investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to **the international community, including genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression.**
- Presently, 123 countries are **party to the Rome Statute, including Britain, Japan, Afghanistan, and Germany.**

EXERCISE AL MOHAMMED AL HINDI 23

- The Indian Navy Forces and Royal Saudi Naval Forces met in Mumbai recently to finalize preparations for the upcoming **joint naval exercise, ‘Al-Mohammed-Al Hindi-23’**, which is set to take place in May 2023 in Jubail, Saudi Arabia.
- This is the second such exercise between the two countries, following the first in August 2021.
- The aim of the exercise is **to enhance interoperability between the two naval forces** by conducting tactical maneuvers, search and rescue operations, and an electronic warfare drill. It will provide a platform for the **two countries to strengthen their military ties and deepen cooperation between their navies.**
- The decision to **hold joint naval exercises was taken during the Riyadh Summit held in 2019**, which marked a turning point in India-Saudi Arabia relations.
- The summit was attended by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who emphasized the need to deepen cooperation in various sectors. Over the past five years, the relationship between the two countries have been strengthened.



NUCLEAR POWERED ATTACK SUBMARINE & AUKUS

- The United States, Australia and Britain unveiled details of a plan to provide Australia with **nuclear-powered attack submarines from the early 2030s to counter China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.**
- The agreement is included under the 2021 AUKUS partnership as part of a shared commitment to a free-and-open Indo-Pacific region.
- In September 2021, the US announced a new trilateral security partnership for the **Indo-Pacific, between Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS).**
- The major highlight of this arrangement is the sharing of **US nuclear submarine technology to Australia. Its Indo-Pacific orientation makes it an alliance against China's assertive actions in the South China Sea.**

BIENNIAL SEA DRAGON 23 EXERCISE

- The **Sea Dragon 23 exercise is a biennial coordinated multilateral anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise** for long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft.
- The **exercise is hosted by the United States Navy**, and it involves the participation of other friendly navies from Japan, Canada, South Korea, and India.
- The exercise aims to achieve high levels of synergy and coordination between the participating countries based on their **shared values and commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific.**
- It is being held from March 15 to 30 this year. This is the **third edition of the Sea Dragon Exercise**, which was held for the first time in 2015.
- The **exercise's primary objective is to improve coordination among participating countries** in the multilateral anti-submarine warfare drills.
- The exercise will include advanced ASW drills and simulated scenarios that will test the participating aircraft's capabilities in detecting and tracking underwater targets. **The exercise also aims to foster mutual expertise and knowledge sharing among the participating countries.**
- *About P8I Aircraft*
- The P8I aircraft is a long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft equipped with advanced sensors, radars, and anti-submarine warfare capabilities. **The aircraft is designed to detect, track, and engage enemy submarines and other maritime threats.**

THIRD EDITION OF MULTILATERAL EXERCISE LA PEROUSE

- The **third edition of the multilateral exercise La Perouse** is scheduled to be **conducted in the Indian Ocean Region from 13 to 14 March 2023.**

- This edition will witness participation of personnel, ships and integral helicopters of **Royal Australian Navy, French Navy, Indian Navy, Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, Royal Navy and the United States Navy.**
- The **biennial exercise La Perouse** is conducted by the French Navy and is aimed at enhancing maritime domain awareness and optimizing maritime coordination **amongst the participating navies in the Indo-Pacific Region.**
- **Indigenously built guided missile frigate INS Sahyadri** and fleet tanker **INS Jyoti** will be participating in this edition of the exercise.
- Participation of the Indian Navy in the exercise showcases the **high levels of synergy, coordination and interoperability between the friendly navies**, and their commitment to a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region.



JAPAN'S PLAN FOR FREE & OPEN INDO-PACIFIC

- **Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida** recently introduced a new plan to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region during his visit to India.
- The plan is aimed at forging stronger ties with countries in **South and Southeast Asia to counter China's growing assertiveness in the region**, particularly over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea. This article will delve deeper into Japan's new Indo-Pacific plan.
- *The Four Pillars of Japan's Plan*
- **Kishida outlined four "pillars" to Japan's new Indo-Pacific plan**, which includes maintaining peace, dealing with new global issues in cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries, **achieving global connectivity through various platforms, and ensuring the safety of the open seas and skies.**
- The **plan also includes a pledge of \$75 billion** to the region by 2030 through private investment and yen loans and by ramping up aid through official governmental assistance and grants.



WHAT IS VIENNA CONVENTION ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS?

- **After pro-Khalistan people took down the Indian flag at the High Commission in London**, the Indian government summoned the "senior-most" UK diplomat, Deputy High Commissioner and reminded her of the **basic obligations of the UK Government under the Vienna Convention.**
- *What is the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations?*
- The Convention was adopted on 14th April 1961 by the **United Nations Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities held in Vienna, Austria.** India has ratified the convention.
- It entered into force on April 24, 1964, and is **nearly universally ratified, with Palau and South Sudan being the exceptions.**



- It sets out the special rules – privileges and immunities – which enable diplomatic missions to act without fear of **coercion or harassment through enforcement of local laws and to communicate securely with their sending Governments.**
- It makes provision for withdrawal of a mission – which may take place on grounds of economic or physical security – and for breach of diplomatic relations which may occur in response to abuse of immunity or severe deterioration in relations between sending and receiving States.

ANNUAL BILATERAL MARITIME EXERCISE KONKAN 2023

- The **Annual Bilateral Maritime Exercise Konkan 2023** was a joint maritime exercise conducted between the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy of Britain. The annual military drill was held from 20 to 22 March-2023 off the Konkan coast in the Arabian Sea.
- The Konkan exercise series began in 2004. The exercise exhibited op-readiness, enhanced interoperability, and conducted joint operations. Participating ships included **INS Trishul (Indian Navy), HMS Lancaster (Royal Navy) and Type 23 guided missile frigate.**
- The exercises covered all domains of maritime operations, air, surface and subsurface, and included gunnery shoots on surface inflatable target 'Killer Tomato', helicopter operations, **anti-air and anti-submarine warfare drills, Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), ship maneuvers and exchange of personnel.**
- **Other military exercises of India and the UK include - Konkan Shakti 2021** (first-ever tri-services joint exercise), Exercise Indradhanush (joint air force exercise), Exercise Ajeya Warrior (joint military exercise between India's & UK's soldiers).

UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE HELD IN NEW YORK

- The **UN 2023 Water Conference** is being held from **March 22 to 24 in New York**, marking the first summit on water in 50 years. The conference will be a watershed moment to mobilize member states, the UN system, and stakeholders alike to take action and bring successful solutions to a global scale.
- The conference could be a 'Paris moment' for water, as described by the special envoys **for water from the co-hosting countries, Tajikistan and the Netherlands.**
- The conference seeks to bring greater focus on water, which is a critical foundation for many of the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals, including health, food, gender equity, education, livelihoods, industry, climate, and the environment.**
- *The Global Water Crisis*
- According to the World Meteorological Organization, around 3.6 billion people struggle to get enough water to meet their needs for at least one month every year. Despite safe water and sanitation being a human right, **billions of people lack access to these essentials for life, as stated by the United Nations.**



ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

WHAT IS E-BILL PROCESSING SYSTEM?

- The **Electronic Bill (e-Bill) processing system** was launched by the Central Government on the occasion of the 46th Civil Accounts Day in 2022. **It was announced during the Union Budget 2022-23.**
- It is part of the various measures taken by the Indian Government to promote 'The **Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)** and Digital India ecosystem.
- All central ministries and departments will be brought on board of the paperless and faceless e-Bill system before **March 2024 to eliminate corruption and ensure the timely clearance of bills** submitted by their vendors and contractors.
- Currently, 350 departments are on this system. 200 more are to do the same in the next year.
- *What is an e-bill system?*
- The e-bill system is transacting bills digitally. It was introduced to improve the digital ecosystem of India and the Ease of doing business. **The main objective of the system is to increase transparency.**
- **With the e-bill system, vendors and suppliers can submit their bills online anytime.** There are no physical interferences between government officials and suppliers.



WHAT IS HAR PAYMENT DIGITAL MISSION?

- At the launch of the '**Har Payment Digital**' mission during the **Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) 2023**, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched a programme to adopt 75 villages and convert them into digital payment enabled villages in observance of 75 years of independence.
- *What is this Initiative?*
- Under the initiative, **Payment System Operators (PSOs)** will adopt these **villages** across the country and conduct camps in each of these villages with an aim to improve awareness and onboard merchants for digital payments.
- PSOs are entities authorized by **RBI to set up and operate a payment system.**
- As of February 2023, there are 67 PSOs under various categories such as retail payments organizations, card payment networks, ATM networks, prepaid payment instruments, etc.



WHAT IS FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVE?

- **Foreign exchange reserves are the assets** that a country's central bank or monetary authority holds to ensure a balance of payments in the country, maintain stability in the financial market, and **influence the foreign exchange rates of the currency.**

- These reserves are made up of foreign currency assets, gold, special drawing rights (SDRs), and reserves with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.
- *India's Foreign Exchange Reserve Falls to 3-Month Low*
- According to the **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) statistical supplement**, India's foreign exchange reserves have declined to a three-month low as of March 10 this year.
- **The reserves stood at \$560 billion**, which is their lowest since early December. In the week to March 3, the reserves were at \$562.40 billion.



IMF'S \$3 BILLION BAILOUT PROGRAMME FOR SRI LANKA

- On March 20, the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** cleared a **\$3 billion-Extended Fund Facility (EFF)** for Sri Lanka, aimed at restoring macroeconomic stability, safeguarding financial stability, and unlocking the nation's growth potential.
- Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt in 2020, and this **nearly-\$3 billion facility** comes after six months of the government's staff-level agreement.
- President Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that the IMF program would **"serve as an assurance to the international community that Sri Lanka has the capacity to service its debt."**
- India, Japan, and China, Sri Lanka's top three bilateral creditors, played a crucial role in unlocking the **IMF assistance to the island by providing financing assurances to the Fund.**
- In an open letter to bilateral creditors, Mr. Wickremesinghe promised that Sri Lanka would be transparent in the debt restructuring process and ensure comparable treatment of all external creditors.
- Identifying corruption as a key issue, the IMF has started assessing Sri Lanka's governance and anti-corruption framework in its first such exercise in Asia. The IMF "governance diagnostic mission" aims to help the country **achieve debt sustainability, increase transparency, and promote inclusive growth.**
- The assessment will also evaluate the effectiveness of Sri Lanka's legal and institutional framework, **as well as its anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime.**



AWARDS AND HONORS

WHAT IS PORTER PRIZE 2023?

- **Porter Prize 2023** was conferred recently to the Indian Government's Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The award recognized the achievements of the ministry in the health sector, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It recognized India's successful delivery of more than 2.5 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines and the role of stakeholders like ASHA workers. The Prize is named after Michael E. Porter- an economist and researcher.
- **Porter Prize 2023** was announced at "The India Dialog", which was jointly organized by the Institute for Competitiveness (IFC) and US Asia Technology Management Center (USATMC) at Stanford University from February 23 to 24. The theme of this conference was "The Indian Economy 2023: Innovation, Competitiveness and Social Progress".



SWACHH SUJAL SHAKTI SAMMAN 2023

- The Ministry of Jal Shakti is commemorating International Women's Day by honoring women who have contributed to various programs of the Ministry through the Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman 2023.
- The award will recognize women for their exceptional contributions to the Swachh Bharat Mission – Grameen (SBM-G), Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), and National Water Mission (NWM) under various categories.
- The objective of Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman is to emphasize the outstanding efforts of women in the water sector and encourage others to work towards a water-secure future.
- This event will bring the accomplishments



ts of women at the grassroots level to the forefront and provide them with national leadership connections.

RRR'S 'NAATU NAATU' WON BEST ORIGINAL SONG AT OSCARS

- The 95th Academy Awards (Oscars 2023) have announced that RRR's "Naatu Naatu" won Best Original Song. The song had to beat out songs like "Applause" from Tell It Like a Woman, "Hold My Hand" from Top Gun: Maverick, "Lift Me Up" from Black Panther: Wakanda Forever, and "This is Life" from Everything Everywhere All At Once.
- The song's words were written by Chandrabose, with music by MM Keeravaani, and it was performed by Kala Bhairava and Rahul Sipligunj. "Naatu Naatu" received the Golden Globe for best song.



- RRR became the first Indian film to win a Golden Globe as a result of the victory. **The Elephant Whisperers, a Netflix documentary short** from Kartiki Gonsalves and Guneet Monga, has won the 95th Academy Awards' Best Documentary Short award.
- The movie was up against 'Stranger At The Gate', 'Haulout', and 'How Do You Measure a Year?' The award is an honour of "my motherland, India," said director Gonzalves.

MATHEMATICIAN LUIS CAFFARELLI WINS ABEL PRIZE

- The **Abel Prize, named after Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel**, is considered one of the highest honors in mathematics. The prize is conferred every year by the King of Norway and is awarded to one or more outstanding mathematicians.
- This year, the Abel Prize was awarded to Argentine-American mathematician **Luis Caffarelli for his groundbreaking contributions to several areas of mathematics.**
- *Who is Luis Caffarelli?*
- Luis Caffarelli is a **distinguished mathematician who was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1948.** He obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of Buenos Aires in 1971 and his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1974.
- After completing his PhD, **Caffarelli went on to hold academic positions at several universities, including the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Chicago, and the University of Minnesota.** Since 2010, he has been a professor of mathematics at the University of Texas at Austin.
- *Caffarelli's Contributions to Mathematics*
- Caffarelli's work has had a significant impact on several areas of mathematics, including partial differential equations, calculus of variations, and free boundary problems. He is best known for his work on the regularity of solutions to partial differential equations. His research has helped to establish **fundamental results on the regularity of solutions to nonlinear elliptic and parabolic equations.**

SPORTS

WORLD ATHLETICS BANS TRANSGENDER WOMEN

- World Athletics, the governing body for athletics, has announced a **ban on transgender women** from competing in **elite female competitions** if they have gone through male puberty.
- The council has also imposed stricter **regulations on athletes with Differences in Sex Development (DSD)** by reducing the maximum amount of plasma testosterone for athletes in half, from 5 to 2.5 nanomoles per liter.



- ***What are the Major Points Related to the Ban?***
- According to World Athletics, the ban on transgender women competing in **elite female competitions** is **based on the need to protect the female category**. The tighter rules will impact DSD athletes such as Caster Semenya, Christine Mboma, and Francine Niyonsaba.
- At the 2020 Olympics, **Semenya and Niyonsaba were both barred from the 800m race and turned their attention to the 5,000m**, while Mboma won silver in the 200m. Swimming's world governing body, World Aquatics, has also banned transgender women from elite competition if they have experienced any part of male puberty.

WOMEN'S WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIP

- Recently, **Nikhat Zareen (2nd world title)** and **Lovlina Borgohain (1st world title)** won two gold medals for India in the Women's World Boxing Championship.
- The **Women's World Boxing Championship** was organized by the International Boxing Association (IBA).
- The **mission of IBA is to promote, support and govern the sport of boxing** worldwide in accordance with the requirements and spirit of the Olympic Charter.
- The Olympic Charter is the codification of the fundamental principles of Olympism, and the rules and by-laws (**a set of rules or laws established by an organization or community so as to regulate itself**) adopted by the International Olympic Committee.



IMPORTANT DATES & DAYS

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 3RD

- **World Wildlife Day** is celebrated on March 3 by the United Nations. The main objective of the celebrations is to increase awareness of wild flora and fauna.
- *Why is World Wildlife Day celebrated on March 3?*
- Because the CITES – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was adopted on March 3, 1973. It is a multilateral treaty.
- The 2023 World Wildlife Day is special because this year CITES is celebrating its 50th anniversary. The main objective of CITES is to protect endangered plants and animals. The **members of IUCN passed a resolution to form CITIES in 1963**. CITES ensures the prevention of the trade of endangered plants and animals.
- *What is the theme of World Wildlife Day 2023?*
- Partnerships for wildlife conservation. It is essential that world countries come together in conserving wildlife. **Pollution and global warming are the major threats to wildlife apart from habitat destruction.**
- Transboundary forests shall be protected only through international cooperation. Water resource depletion in **the forest is a major threat to wildlife. This is happening due to a reduction in rainfall.**

5TH JAN AUSHADHI DIWAS ORGANISED

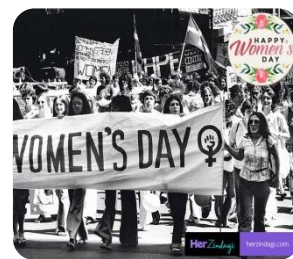
- The 5th Jan Aushadhi Diwas is organized across India based on the **theme “Jan Aushadhi – Sasti bhi Achi bhi”**. It was organized from March 1 to 2 this year. It kicked off with the Jan Aushadhi Jan Chetna Abhiyan across India. It was organized by the Union Health Ministry in collaboration with the **Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India and states and union territories.**
- The event has witnessed the organization of more than **34 Pratigya Yatras across India, with 8 of them led by Members of Parliament on the first day.** Over 5,000 citizens, including doctors, have committed to using generic medicines on the MyGov platform.
- **Jan Aushadhi Pratidya Yatra, Pad Yatra was also carried out.** The main objective of the divas is to spread awareness of generic medicines and also about PMBJP.
- **Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana:** The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana was launched in November 2008 by the **Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.** There are 9,082 PM Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras as of January 31, 2023.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 8TH

- **International Women’s Day is celebrated annually on March 8th.** Its origins can be traced back to the activities of labor movements in **North America and Europe** at the turn of the twentieth century. It was first observed in 1911 by a few European countries. **It was officially recognized in 1977.**

➤ *The theme of International Women's Day 2023*

- Theme for this year's International Women's Day is Embrace Equity or #EmbraceEquity, which aims to highlight the importance of gender equity in every society.
- The difference between equity and equality is also emphasized, with equity recognizing that each person has different circumstances and allocating resources and opportunities accordingly to achieve an equal outcome.



NATIONAL VACCINATION DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 16TH

- **National Vaccination Day, also known as Immunization Day or Polio Ravivar,** is an annual event celebrated in India on March 16th.
- The day holds significant importance in India's public health calendar, **as it promotes vaccination campaigns and raises awareness about the importance of vaccines in preventing infectious diseases.**
- *When National Vaccine Day was first observed?*
- The **first National Vaccination Day was celebrated in India in 1995** to eradicate polio from the country. At that time, polio was a major public health concern in India, with thousands of children being affected every year.
- Since then, **National Vaccination Day has become an essential event in India's public health calendar.**



WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 15TH

- **World Consumer Rights Day 2023** was celebrated on March 15 with the theme **"Empowering consumers through clean energy transitions."**
- The **Department of Consumer Affairs** marked this day by leveraging **technology to minimize the dependence on traditional energy sources and promote** a rapid transition to clean energy solutions that are sustainable, secure, affordable, and accessible to consumers.
- **World Consumer Rights Day** has been celebrated since March 15, 1983, with the goal of empowering and protecting consumers worldwide.
- It originated from **US President John F. Kennedy's address to Congress on March 15, 1962**, where he highlighted the importance of consumer rights and was the first world leader to do so.
- Since then, organizations such as Consumer International commemorate the day **by hosting various activities and campaigns to defend consumer rights.**



- The Indian Parliament passed the Consumer Protection Act on December 9, 1986, to give customers **more power and create consumer councils, forums, and appellate courts for the resolution of consumer complaints.**
- This Act significantly improved the rights of consumers in India, giving them protection against unfair trade practices, access to goods and services at competitive prices, and the right to be informed about the quality, standard, and price of goods and services.

WORLD WATER DAY OBSERVED ON 22ND MARCH

- World Water Day (WWD) is celebrated on 22nd March Every Year. The United Nations General Assembly issued a resolution in 1993 declaring every year March 22 as **World Day for Water.**
- The theme for WWD 2023 is '**Accelerating the change to solve the water and sanitation crisis**', emphasizing the necessity of taking stern action to address the global water crisis.
- The **main objective of the day** is to raise awareness and inspire people to sustainably manage freshwater resources and learn more about water-related issues like water pollution, water scarcity, inadequate water, and lack of sanitation, and take appropriate steps to make a difference.
- According to the United Nations, the idea behind celebrating the day is to "**support the achievement of sustainable development goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.**"



WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 23RD

- World Meteorological Day is a significant day for meteorologists, weather enthusiasts, and anyone interested in climate and weather patterns.
- The day aims to raise awareness about the importance of meteorology and weather forecasting and the role of the **World Meteorological Organisation in promoting international cooperation in these fields.** Here is a brief overview of the history, theme, and significance of World Meteorological Day.
- **World Meteorological Day commemorates the establishment of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on March 23, 1950.** The WMO is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for promoting international cooperation in the fields of meteorology, climatology, hydrology, and related geophysical sciences.
- *Theme of World Meteorological Day 2023*
- Each year, the WMO chooses a theme for World Meteorological Day that reflects current weather and climate issues. The theme for World Meteorological Day 2023 is "**The future of weather, climate, and water across generations.**"
- This theme aims to highlight the impact of changing weather patterns on the environment and future generations.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO WASTE: MARCH 30TH

➤ Every year on March 30, people around the world celebrate the **International Day of Zero Waste**, a day designated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote reducing waste and sustainable consumption and production patterns.

➤ This day promotes the creation of a more sustainable and waste-free world.

➤ *History of the International Day of Zero Waste*

➤ The **United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on December 14, 2022**, designating March 30 as the International Day of Zero Waste.

➤ The proposal was co-sponsored by Turkey and 105 other countries and is part of a series of resolutions dealing with waste. It **aims to achieve all the objectives and targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** by promoting zero-waste initiatives.

➤ *Theme of the International Day of Zero Waste 2023*

➤ The theme of the International Day of Zero Waste in 2023 is “**Achieving sustainable and environmentally sound practices of minimizing and managing waste.**” This theme emphasizes the importance of promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns to reduce the negative impact of waste on the environment.

- Disposal of complaint



REPORTS AND INDEXES

CO2 EMISSIONS IN 2022 REPORT

- According to the **CO2 Emissions in 2022 Report by the International Energy Agency** released on March 2, 2023, global energy-related CO2 emissions increased by less than 1% in 2022.
- This is despite many countries shifting from natural gas to coal as an energy source. **This was due to the increased use of clean energy technologies such as solar, wind, EVs, heat pumps, and energy efficiency**, which helped to limit the impacts of coal and oil use amid the global energy crisis.
- The report highlights that this rise in emissions was significantly lower than the exceptional increase of over six per cent in 2021. **It recommended stronger steps to accelerate the clean energy transition to achieve energy and climate goals.**
- *Emissions by the EU, US and China*
- According to the report, **emissions in China decreased in 2022 due to the COVID lockdown**. In the European Union, emissions decreased by 2.5%. This was because, with Russia invading Ukraine, many countries stopped importing gas and oil from Russia and moved towards clean energy. In the US, emissions increased by 0.8%.



INDIAN STATES ENERGY TRANSITION REPORT

- The “**Indian States’ Energy Transition**” Report was released recently by the **Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) and EMBER**.
- The report analyzed 16 states, which make up 90% of India’s annual power requirement, and devised a scoring system called **States’ Electricity Transition (SET) to measure performance**.
- The report tracks 4 dimensions- decarbonization, the performance of the power system, the readiness of the power ecosystem and policies and political commitment.
- According to this report, Karnataka and Gujarat are leading the way in India’s transition to clean electricity. Karnataka is the only state that scored well across all four dimensions of **clean electricity transition and has proactive policies for open access, solar park development and public awareness**.
- Meanwhile, Gujarat scored just behind Karnataka in decarbonising its electricity sector. Other states like **Haryana and Punjab are also taking major steps in the electricity transition**.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM INDEX REPORT

- The **Academic Freedom Index report evaluates academic freedom in 179 countries** by analyzing five indicators, including the freedom to teach and research, academic exchange and dissemination, university autonomy, campus integrity, and academic and cultural expression.

- The report is based on assessments from over 2,197 experts from around the world. **The Academic freedom of India is in the bottom 30% of the 179 countries.**
- According to the report released on February 2, 2023, India scored 0.38 on a scale of 0 (low) to 1 (high), which is lower than **Pakistan's score of 0.43 and the United States' score of 0.79.**
- It **performed poorly in campus integrity, institutional autonomy and academic and cultural expression.** It did slightly well in freedom to teach and research and space for academic exchange and dissemination.
- China scored 0.07, putting it in the bottom 10% of the countries. The report noted the pressure on all aspects of academic freedom in the country.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION REPORT 2023

- **In its Technology and Innovation Report 2023, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** has stated that developed countries are benefiting more from green technologies than developing countries, and this could deepen global economic inequality.
- *What are the Key Findings and Recommendations of the Report?*
- Green technologies can **create a market worth USD 9.5 trillion by 2030, up from USD 1.5 trillion in 2020.** The total exports of green technologies from developed countries jumped to more than USD 156 billion in 2021 from about USD 60 billion in 2018.
- While exports from developing countries rose to only about USD 75 billion from USD 57 billion. According to the 'frontier technology readiness index' included in the report, only a few developing countries have the capacity to take advantage of frontier technologies such as blockchain, drones, and solar power.
- Green frontier technologies such as electric vehicles, solar and wind energy, and **green hydrogen are expected to reach a market value of USD 2.1 trillion in 2030.**



ANNUAL WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT

- The annual World Happiness Report, published by the **United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network**, has just been released, and it reveals that Finland remains the happiest country in the world for the sixth consecutive year.
- The report is based on data from the main life evaluation question in the **Gallup World Poll, which measures how happy citizens perceive themselves to be.**
- *About the World Happiness Report*
- **Top 10 Countries in the World Happiness Report:**
- The report ranked the top 10 happiest countries, with Finland in the lead followed by Denmark, Iceland, Israel, and the Netherlands.

- Other European countries such as **Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, and Luxembourg** also made the top 10. New Zealand was the only non-European country to make it to the top 10. The rankings are based on a range of factors such as social support, life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption.
- ***India's Position in the World Happiness Report***
- **India's position in the World Happiness Report** has improved from 136 to 126, although it is still behind its neighboring countries such as Nepal, China, and Bangladesh.
- Despite having the world's fastest-growing economy, India's ranking in the report has consistently been low, **leading some to question how it can be ranked lower than countries in turmoil.**

INDIA RANKS 5TH IN NATIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO WARMING

- Recently, the **research published in the journal "Scientific Data" ranked India fifth** among the top 10 contributors to global warming.
- ***What are the Key Highlights of the Report?***
- **Top Contributor:** The United States topped the list with its emissions causing 0.28°C (17.3%) of rise in temperature. **China stood second and Russia took third place.**
- **India's Position:** Since 2005, India climbed to the fifth spot from the 10th. **India is responsible for 0.08 degrees Celsius of warming** from the 1850s through 2021.
- India's emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) from 1851-2021 have resulted in **0.04°C, 0.03°C and 0.006°C of global warming over pre-industrial levels, respectively.**



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL POLICY 2022

- Government of India notified the **National Geospatial Policy 2022 in December last year** as a replacement for the National Map Policy, 2005.
- The objective of the 2022 policy is to strengthen the location-centric industry to assist with the information economy. The **policy provides a framework for the development of a geospatial ecosystem** that will facilitate the growth of the industry.
- ***The Importance of Geo-referencing***
- Geo-referencing involves identifying the exact location of a **land parcel, building, or other infrastructure on the earth's surface.**



- This information is crucial for a wide range of applications, **including urban planning, disaster management, precision agriculture, and natural resource management.** The **National Geospatial Policy 2022 recognizes the importance of geo-referencing** and aims to accelerate the process by leveraging technology and creating a comprehensive geospatial database.

WHAT IS ALMA TELESCOPE?

- **Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array (ALMA)** is a radio telescope located in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile. It is set to receive software and hardware upgrades.
- The upgrades will **enable ALMA to collect more data and produce sharper images.**
- *What is ALMA?*
- ALMA is a state-of-the-art telescope that studies celestial objects at millimeter and submillimetre wavelengths — **they can penetrate through dust clouds and help astronomers** examine dim and distant galaxies and stars out there.
- ALMA is an **international partnership of the European Southern Observatory (ESO), the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)** and the National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS) of Japan, together with NRC (Canada), MOST and ASIAA (Taiwan), and KASI (Republic of Korea), in cooperation with the Republic of Chile.
- The database will include information on land use, ownership, and other relevant details. The government hopes that this **will improve the efficiency and transparency of land management and facilitate the development of the real estate sector.**



1, WORLD'S FIRST 3D-PRINTED ROCKET

- On March 8, **Relativity Space, a startup company based in California,** made history with the launch of Terran 1, the world's first 3D-printed rocket. The launch is part of the "Good Luck, Have Fun" (GLHF) mission.
- **Terran 1 will be the largest 3D-printed object to attempt an orbital flight,** weighing 9,280 kilograms and standing 110 feet tall and 7.5 feet wide. 85% of the rocket was manufactured using 3D-printing technology.
- It is a two-stage satellite, which means the fuel burns in **two different stages to give the required escape velocity to the satellite.**
- Terran 1 is an expendable launch system, which means it can be launched only once. Satellites like Falcon 9 are reusable and can be launched multiple times. Terran 1 is a small lift launch vehicle, that is, it can carry loads of up to 2000 kg.



(NASA-ISRO SYNTHETIC APERTURE RADAR)

- **NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) Mission** is a collaborative project between NASA and ISRO aimed at building and launching an Earth observation satellite equipped with dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar.
- Notably, the satellite carries the **most advanced radar system ever to be launched in a NASA Mission**. It also has the largest radar antenna of its type.
- The satellite will be the first of its kind and will be used to remotely sense natural phenomena on Earth, such as the Antarctic cryosphere. NISAR is expected to be **the most expensive Earth-imaging satellite, with a total cost of around 1.5 billion USD**.
- The **mission will map the elevations on the earth's surface**. It will mainly focus on the ice masses. The mapping is to be done four to six times a month.
- The **resolution of the mapping is to be in the range of 5m to 10m**. With this, the mission will provide details about ice sheet collapses, landslides, etc.



WHAT IS MOON TIME ZONE?

- The **Moon Time Zone** has been proposed for establishing a universal timekeeping system that will simplify communication and coordination among different lunar missions.
- The proposal has come in response to the increasing number of lunar missions being planned and launched by different countries and entities- with some of the upcoming missions including **Japan's M1 lunar lander and the Nova-C lander** of Houston-based Intuitive Machines.
- Its creation will help in future space explorations, including the possibility of establishing a Martian time zone.
- The **European Space Agency (ESA)** has recently proposed the need for a lunar time zone. It has called for international coordination and consensus to establish it. One of the questions that need to be settled is whether lunar time should be set on the moon or synchronized with Earth.
- ***What is the Moon's Time Zone?***
- Like the **GMT of the earth which has 24 different time zones**, a moon time zone is the need of the **moment. The earth time zone is divided into 24**. The difference between the consecutive zones of the earth is one hour and each time zone is 15 degrees wide.
- The zero time zone starts at Greenwich Meridian. Similarly, based on the rotations and revolutions of the moon, a time zone should be created for the moon. **This is referred to as the Moon Time Zone.**



MEDIUM RANGE SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE (MRSAM)

- On March 7 this year, the Indian Navy conducted a successful test-firing of a **Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM)** from **INS Visakhapatnam**, a frontline warship.
- The successful test-firing validated the capability to use the **weapon as an anti-ship missile, demonstrating the Navy's preparedness** to safeguard its assets from attacks by adversary forces.
- The MRSAM was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The missile was produced at Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- The **MRSAM technology is an important milestone for India's indigenous defense industry** and is expected to enhance India's self-reliance in defense technology. The **Army and Air Force use different variants of missiles.**
- **What is MRSAM?**
- The missile can be used against any kind of airborne threat. This includes helicopters, combat jets, cruise missiles, aircraft, etc. **It was jointly developed by India and Israel.**
- It is a medium-range missile. Meaning, the range of the missile is between 1000 km and 3000 km. Most of the medium-range missiles developed by India including the MRSAM are theater ballistic missiles.



NASA's MULTI-ANGLE IMAGER FOR AEROSOLS (MAIA) MISSIONS

- **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Italian Space Agency (Agenzia Spaziale Italiana: ASI)** will build and launch the Multi-Angle Imager for Aerosols (MAIA) missions before 2024.
- The three-year mission will focus on 11 primary target areas including New Delhi from India. **MAIA is a satellite instrument that will collect data** to examine the health effects of different types of air pollution.
- It will use measurements of sunlight reflecting off airborne particles to **determine the abundance, size, chemical composition, and optical properties of pollutants in the atmosphere.** The data will be collected from sensors on the ground and atmospheric models. These results will then **be related to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, adverse reproductive outcomes, and human birth, death and hospitalization records** to understand impacts of contaminated air we breathe.
- The observatory **will consist of the PLATiNO-2 satellite, which ASI will provide.**
- The observatory's science instrument contains a pointable spectropolarimetric camera, which captures **digital images at multiple angles in the ultraviolet, visible, near-infrared and shortwave infrared portions of the electromagnetic spectrum.**



WHAT IS CHANDRAYAAN-3 SPACECRAFT?

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has achieved yet another milestone in its space exploration journey. The space agency announced that the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft has successfully completed crucial tests that confirm its capability to endure the **harsh acoustic and vibration conditions during its launch**.
- This significant accomplishment brings the mission one step closer to its scheduled launch in June 2023.
- **Chandrayaan-3** is India's third lunar exploration mission, following the Chandrayaan-1 in 2008 and the Chandrayaan-2 mission in 2019. The **primary objective of the Chandrayaan-3 mission is to demonstrate a soft landing on the lunar surface, which was not achieved in the Chandrayaan-2 mission**.
- The spacecraft will include a lander, rover, and propulsion module **that will act as a communication relay satellite**.
- The propulsion module will carry the lander and rover configuration to the 100 km lunar orbit. Once in lunar orbit, the lander and rover will detach from the propulsion module and make a soft landing on the lunar surface. The lander and rover will then carry out scientific experiments on the lunar surface.



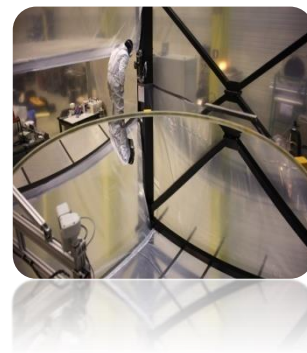
ISRO ANNOUNCED TO LAUNCH ITS LARGEST ROCKET: LVM3

- The **Indian space agency, ISRO, has announced that it will launch its largest rocket, LVM3**, on March 26th for its second commercial mission.
- This is the shortest duration in which **ISRO has carried out two missions of the LVM3 rocket**, as it aims to meet the timelines of the customer whose satellites are being launched. This is the 6th mission to be carried out with the rocket.
- OneWeb, a UK-based firm backed by India's Bharti Group, aims to **offer high-speed, low-latency internet connectivity from space via its constellation of satellites in Low Earth Orbit**.
- OneWeb has already flown 17 times, utilizing launch services from SpaceX, Arianespace and ISRO to place all its 1st generation constellation satellites in orbit. ISRO will be carrying the 18th set of satellites for OneWeb.
- ***Dedicated Commercial Mission***
- The upcoming mission will be carried out through **ISRO's commercial arm NSIL (NewSpace India Limited)**. It will carry 36 OneWeb Gen-1 satellites with a total mass of 5,805 kg, into a 450 km circular Low Earth Orbit with an inclination of 87.4°.



INTERNATIONAL LIQUID MIRROR TELESCOPE

- Recently, **India inaugurated the largest International Liquid Mirror Telescope (ILMT) in Devasthal, Uttarakhand.** This four-meter telescope is designed exclusively for astronomical observations and is the first optical survey telescope in India.
- The observatory will explore the deep celestial sky, classifying objects from asteroids to supernovae, and space debris.
- The **ILMT has a 4-meter-diameter rotating mirror made up of a thin layer of liquid mercury**, which is highly reflective and designed to survey the strip of the sky passing overhead each night.
- The **telescope has three components: a bowl containing reflecting liquid mercury metal, an air bearing (or motor) on which the liquid mirror sits, and a drive system.** The mercury is protected from the wind by a scientific-grade thin transparent film of mylar.
- The reflected light passes through a sophisticated multi-lens optical corrector that produces sharp images over a wide field of view. **A 4k × 4k CCD camera**, located above the mirror at the focus, records 22 arcminute wide strips of the sky.



LVM3 M3/ONE WEB INDIA - 2 MISSION

- **On March 25, 2023, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) successfully launched the OneWeb India-2 mission, a significant achievement in space connectivity.**
- The mission's primary objective was to deploy 36 satellites into a 450 km circular orbit with an inclination of 87.4 degrees, which was accomplished using the LVM3 rocket.
- The **OneWeb India-2 mission utilized the LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark 3) rocket**, which is India's largest rocket to date. The total weight of the payload carried by LVM3 was 5,805 kg, which included the 36 OneWeb satellites.
- The satellites were designed to provide high-speed, low-latency broadband connectivity to governments, businesses, and communities worldwide.
- **OneWeb's Mission and Milestones**
- **OneWeb's mission** is to provide connectivity for everyone, everywhere, through a global communication network powered from space.
- The company **aims to bridge the digital divide by providing affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet access** to remote and underserved regions.
- The OneWeb India-2 mission was a crucial milestone in achieving this goal, as it brought the total number of satellites in OneWeb's constellation to 618. This number enables global service, making it the first low Earth orbit (LEO) operator to reach this milestone.

MISCELLANEOUS

WHAT IS SMART- PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM?

- As per the **Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**, **SMART-PDS is an important technologically** driven initiative, therefore, all states and union territories should make earnest efforts to implement it at the earliest.
- **SMART-PDS is a system** where smart ration cards are issued to beneficiaries of the public distribution system, and ration is given through fair price shops on the **production of the smart ration card by any member of the beneficiary family.**
- Major initiatives are undertaken by the Government of India to strengthen the **Public Distribution System (PDS) in India** which includes the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) implemented from April 2020 to December 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic in **coordination with States & UTs and One Nation One Ration Card plan** implemented to support migrant population, promoting millets in the PDS is important for strengthening nutrition security in the country.

INDIA'S FIRST VACCINE FOR DENGUE

- Researchers at India's National Centre for Biological Sciences, in collaboration with nine other institutions in India, Africa, and the US, have developed **India's first and only DNA vaccine candidate for dengue fever.**
- In preliminary trials on mice, the candidate generated a robust immune response and improved survival rates after exposure to the disease.
- *What is DNA Vaccine?*
- A **DNA vaccine is a type of vaccine that uses a small piece of DNA** that codes for a specific antigen (a molecule that triggers an immune response) from a pathogen, such as a virus or bacterium, to stimulate an immune response.
- The DNA is injected directly into the body's cells, where it instructs the cells to produce the antigen. The immune system then recognizes the antigen as foreign and mounts an immune response against it, which helps to **develop immunity to the pathogen.**
- **DNA vaccines are third-generation vaccines.**
- The **ZyCoV-D is the world's first and India's indigenously developed DNA based vaccine** for COVID-19.



FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION REGULATION ACT (FCRA)

- Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs suspended the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR).
- CPR (not-for-profit society), along with **Oxfam India and the Independent and Public-Spirited Media Foundation (IPSMF)**, was surveyed by the Income Tax department earlier.

- *What is the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act?*
- **FCRA was enacted during the Emergency in 1976** amid apprehensions that foreign powers were interfering in India's affairs by pumping money into the country through independent organizations.
- The law sought to regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations so that they functioned in a manner consistent with the **values of a sovereign democratic republic**.
- **Amendments: An amended FCRA was enacted in 2010 to "consolidate the law"** on utilization of foreign funds, and "to prohibit" their use for "any activities detrimental to national interest". The law was amended again in 2020, giving the **government tighter control and scrutiny over the receipt and utilization of foreign funds by NGOs**.

PROCEDURE FOR COURT MARTIAL

- An Army court has recommended life imprisonment for a **Captain involved in the staged killings of three men** at Amshipora in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district in 2020. The sentence will be final after it is confirmed by the Northern Army Commander.
- The **Captain was court-martialed after a Court of Inquiry (CoI)** and subsequent summary of evidence found that troops under his command had exceeded their powers under the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act**.
- *What is the Process of Court Martial?*
- When the Army wants an allegation against its personnel investigated, it first sets up a CoI for the purpose. This stage is similar to the **registering of a First Information Report (FIR) by police**.
- A Court of Inquiry investigates the complaint but cannot award a punishment. **The CoI records the statements of witnesses**, which is comparable to the examination of witnesses by a police officer under **Section 161 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**.
- Based on the findings of the CoI, a tentative charge sheet is drawn up by the commanding officer of the accused officer.
- After this, the hearing of charges takes place (**just like the initial summoning of an accused by the magistrate in a case involving civilians**). The summary of evidence is then recorded.
- Once this process has been completed, a **General Court Martial (GCM)** is ordered; similar to the conduct of a trial by a judicial court for civilian matters.



WORLD'S LONGEST RAILWAY PLATFORM IN HUBBALLI

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated **World's longest railway platform of 1.5 kilometers** at Sri Siddharoodha railway station in Hubballi in the state of Karnataka.

- The inauguration of the platform was done during the PM's Karnataka visit in the **presence of Union Minister Pralhad Joshi**.
- It is to be noted that **Indian Railways, South Western Railway Zones Hubli** is now registered in the Guinness Book of World Records for having the longest platform.
- *Gorakhpur platform slips to 2nd in the ranking:*
- Gorakhpur platform in **Uttar Pradesh** is the **second longest at 1,366.33 meters**, and **Kollam Junction in Kerala** has the **third longest platform** at 1,180.5 meters.
- Meanwhile, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** also inaugurated the **118-km long Bengaluru-Mysuru expressway**.
- This new project is expected to aid the social and economic growth in the region.
- The new e-way built at a cost of Rs 8,480 crore will reduce the travel time **between the cities from 3 hours to around 75 minutes**. Furthermore, the project entails widening NH 275 to six lanes along the **Bengaluru-Nidaghatta-Mysore stretch**.

GREEN & SELF-POWERED DESALINATION PLANT

- Recently, the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), an autonomous institute under the **Union Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** is establishing a Green and Self-powered Desalination Plant in Lakshadweep.
- The NIOT is working on an initiative to provide potable water in six islands of Lakshadweep using Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) technology. The NIOT is now trying to make this process emission-free.
- Currently, the desalination plants, each of which provides at least 100,000 liters of potable water every day, are powered by diesel generator sets.
- *What is the Green and Self-powered Desalination Plant?*
- The **proposed desalination plant will use a combination of renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and wave energy** to power the plant. The plant will be equipped with reverse osmosis (RO) technology to desalinate seawater and produce potable water.
- The NIOT plans to set up the plant in one of the islands, where there is a high potential for renewable energy generation.
- The plant is the first of its kind in the world as it will generate drinking water from sea water using indigenous technology, green energy and environmentally friendly processes and it is self-powered.



INDIA' BAN ON BLOOD DONATIONS BY GAY & TRANSGENDER

- In India, **gay and transgender individuals face discrimination in many forms**. One such discrimination is the ban on them donating blood.

- After a petition was filed to challenge this ban, the Indian government defended the exclusion by citing scientific evidence that **categorized the transgender and gay community in the “at-risk” group** for HIV, Hepatitis B, and C infections.
- The ban on gay and transgender people donating blood was **introduced in the 1980s when information on detecting and transmitting HIV/AIDS** was less advanced.
- At that time, people were not fully aware of the modes of transmission of the virus, **and there was no reliable test to detect HIV in blood donations**. The **fear of HIV transmission led to the exclusion of gay and transgender people** from donating blood in many countries, including India.
- The Indian government justifies the ban on scientific grounds, stating that the community is at a **higher risk of HIV, Hepatitis B, and C infections**.
- However, activists argue that the ban is discriminatory and violates the fundamental right to equality. They argue that the government’s stand is based on outdated stereotypes and is not in line with the current medical knowledge of HIV transmission and prevention.

WHAT IS NET NEUTRALITY?

- The **Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI)**, which represents **Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea, and Reliance Jio**, the three major telecom operators in India, has been demanding that platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp pay a share of revenue to make up for the network costs.
- This has reignited the debate around net neutrality.
- *What are the Arguments and Recent Developments on the Issue?*
- Telecom operators are demanding payment for enormous usage on their networks. **Telecom operators in the European Union** are also demanding similar usage fees from content providers.
- Content providers argue that imposing such a fee, even on a limited number of large players, **was a distortion of the internet’s architecture**.
- In 2016, the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** **ruled in favor of net neutrality**. In 2018, the Department of Telecommunications embedded the net neutrality concept into the Unified Licence, whose conditions all telecom operators and internet providers are bound by.
- *What is Net Neutrality?*
- Net neutrality is the principle that all internet traffic should be treated equally, **without discrimination or preference given to any particular website, service, or application**.
- Net neutrality ensures that everyone has equal access to information and services on the internet, regardless of **their financial resources or the size and power of the websites they use**.

- It is an important principle that **helps to ensure a level playing field on the internet, and to protect the free flow of information and ideas**. Without net neutrality, **Internet Service Providers could potentially use their market power** to steer users towards certain websites and services, or to limit access to others.

WHAT IS INLAND WATER TRANSPORT (IWT)?

- Government intends to **increase the share of Inland Water Transport (IWT)** to 5% as per Maritime India Vision (MIV)-2030.
- *What is the IWT?*
- Inland water transport refers to the transportation of people, goods, and materials via waterways such as rivers, canals, lakes, **and other navigable bodies of water that are located within a country's boundaries**.
- IWT is the most economical mode of transportation, especially for **bulk cargo like coal, iron ore, cement, food grains and fertilizer**. Presently, it remains underutilized at a share of 2% in India's modal mix.
- *Socio-Economic Benefits of IWT:*
 - Cheaper **operating cost and relatively lesser fuel consumption**
 - Less polluting mode of transportation
 - Lesser requirement of land relative to other modes of transportation
 - **More environment friendly mode of transportation**
 - Moreover, waterways can be used for recreational purposes such as boating and fishing.

CORAL REEFS IN GULF OF MANNAR

- Recently, the **dead coral reefs were observed near Kurusadai (Tamil Nadu)**, one of the 21 uninhabited islands forming the **Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park**.
- The **primary reason behind this loss is Kappaphycus alvarezii**, a seaweed species deliberately introduced for commercial cultivation some two decades ago.
- *What are Seaweeds?*
- Seaweed is the name given to the many species of marine algae and plants that grow in water bodies such as rivers, seas and oceans. **They vary in size, from microscopic to large underwater forests**. Seaweed is found on the shores across the world, but is more commonly a staple in Asian countries.
- *Gulf of Mannar:*
- It is an inlet of the Indian Ocean, between southeastern India and western Sri Lanka. It is bounded to the northeast by Rameswaram (island), Adam's (Rama's) Bridge (a chain of shoals), and Mannar Island.
- It receives several rivers, including the Tambraparni (India) and the Aruvi (Sri Lanka). **The gulf is noted for its pearl banks and sacred chank (a gastropod mollusk)**.

WHAT IS VERNAL EQUINOX?

➤ **The vernal equinox** is observed on March 21st 2023.

➤ *What is Equinox?*

➤ **Equinox happens twice a year when the sun is directly above the equator** and it occurs on approximately 21st March and 23rd September. During an equinox, both the **Northern and Southern Hemispheres have equal day and night time.**

➤ The vernal equinox (spring equinox) takes place in the Northern Hemisphere around **20th or 21st March, while in the Southern Hemisphere, it happens on 22nd or 23rd September.**



➤ Conversely, during the autumn season in the Northern Hemisphere on 23rd September (autumn equinox), it is springtime in the **Southern Hemisphere, and on 21st March, it is the opposite.**

➤ *Significance:*

➤ As a result, the **Sun is located directly above the equator**, and both hemispheres receive an almost equal amount of sunlight. After the spring equinox, the northern hemisphere tilts closer to the sun in March, **resulting in more hours of daylight, with earlier sunrises and later sunsets.**

DNA PROFILING FOR ELEPHANTS

➤ While celebrating the **30 years of 'Project Elephant'**, the MoEF&CC has announced the completion of the DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) Profiling of 270 elephants, aiming at ensuring better protection.

➤ *What is the Project?*

➤ The **DNA profiling was started in August 2022 for Gaj Soochna Mobile Application for forest officials.** DNA profiling is the process where a specific DNA pattern, called a profile, is obtained from a sample of bodily tissue.

➤ The DNA profiling will act as the **'Adhaar card of captive elephants'**. The captive elephants had earlier been chipped electronically, but the method was not a success.

➤ With the **mobile app, forest officers can identify each elephant and track it** and therefore its transfer, which often happens in the case of captive elephants, can be recorded.

➤ After the elephant profiling, more focus can be put on elephant care – **with unique information about elephants. Unlike Project Tiger, the Project Elephant looks at the welfare and health of captive elephants as well.**

➤ *What is Project Elephant?*

➤ It was **launched in 1992 as a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme** with an aim to protect elephants and improve their habitat and corridors, reduce Human-elephant conflict and ensure their welfare. As many as **33 elephant reserves, spanning 80,777 sq km, have been notified.**

- It provides financial and technical support to wildlife management **efforts by states for their free-ranging populations of wild Asian Elephants**. The project aims to ensure the long-term survival of the populations of **elephants in their natural habitats by protecting the elephants, their habitats and migration corridors**.

WHAT IS SPECIAL COURT?

- Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has suggested a **State-specific approach to setting up special courts** for speedy trial of legislators.
- The SC said that a "one-size-fits-all" approach may not resolve the problem of long **pendency of criminal cases involving MPs and MLAs because the burden of cases is different for each state**.
- *What is the Background?*
 - In 2017, the SC had ordered that special courts be set up across the country to fast-track the long-pending trials of lawmakers.
 - Following this, 12 special courts were set up across 11 States exclusively to try sitting MPs and MLAs. In September 2020, an **SC-appointed amicus curiae (friend of the court), in his two reports**, highlighted that despite the best efforts by the court to constitute special courts for trying cases against legislators, close to 4,442 criminal cases involving 2,556 sitting members of Parliament (MP) and members of legislative assemblies (MLAs) are pending.
 - These cases have now crossed the **5,000-mark, with 400 of them concerning heinous offenses**.
- *What is a Special Court?*
 - A Special Court is a court with constrained purview, that manages a specific field of law as opposed to a specific regional ward. In **India, these courts are established under the Special Courts Act of 1979**.

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