



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 APRIL -2023 eBook covers the current events that happened in the month of April. 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 APRIL -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)

Website: [www.successmantra.in](http://www.successmantra.in)

Mail Id: [info@successmantra.in](mailto:info@successmantra.in)



## 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*



Success Mantra (Delhi) is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out, for your accomplishment. Delhi, GTB Nagar, branch of SUCCESS MANTRA Coaching is considered as the paramount choice of Law and Management aspirants, across country. Because, at the end of the day, it is our results which speak !

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**Enquiry Office Center**  
**113, Ground Floor, Mall Road,**  
**Kingsway Camp, GTB Nagar, Delhi- 110009**  
**(Landmark: Oriental Bank of Commerce, GTB Nagar Metro Gate No. 1)**  
**+91 8588 876 885**

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## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

### KEY POINTS RELATED TO KERALA LOKAYUKTA

- **The Kerala Lokayukta**, has referred a case related to alleged nepotism and anomalies in the **Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF)** to a three-member full bench for investigation.
- **What is Lokayukta?**
- The **Lokayukta is the Indian Parliamentary Ombudsman, executed into power**, through and for, each of the State Governments of India.
- It is an anti-corruption authority. The object of the **Lokayukta system in a state is to investigate grievances, allegations against public servants**.
- **Appointment:**
- The **lokayukta and upalokayukta are appointed by the Governor of the state**. While appointing, the governor in most of the states consults (a) the chief justice of the state high court, and (b) the leader of Opposition in the state legislative assembly.
- **Tenure:** In most of the states, the term of office fixed for lokayukta is of 5 years duration or 65 years of age, whichever is earlier. **He is not eligible for reappointment for a second term.**



### SWACHH BHARAT MISSION & ODF PLUS STATUS

- India has been facing several challenges related to sanitation, and to overcome these issues, the Indian government launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in 2014. **The mission aims to achieve universal sanitation coverage and make the country open defecation free.**
- The Centre aims to bring around 50,000 more **villages across India under the Open Defecation Free (ODF) plus status under the SBM by 2024**. This means that these villages will have sustained their ODF status, ensured solid and liquid waste management, and will be visually clean.
- This is a significant milestone for India's sanitation scheme. **To achieve this, the Centre will provide ₹14,030 crore fund in FY24.**
- States that achieved **the ODF plus status:** Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka are the states that have achieved the ODF plus status. Tamil Nadu has a coverage percentage of 96% under the ODF plus status.

### OBCs & THE CURRENT CONFLICT

- A nationwide campaign is taking place against an MP due to his remarks against the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) following which he has also **been convicted of defamation and was disqualified from Parliament.**
- The **Kalelkar Commission (1953)**, was the first to identify backward classes other than the SCs and STs at the national level.
- Based on the recommendation of the Second Backward Classes Commission (**Mandal Commission**), the **Government of India** in August 1990 had notified 27% reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) (or OBCs) in vacancies for civil posts and services that are to be filled on direct recruitment.
- After this was challenged, the **Supreme Court in November, 1992 (Indira Sawhney case)** upheld 27% reservation for OBCs, subject to exclusion of the creamy layer.
- The Justice Rohini committee was constituted in 2017 to submit its report on Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs). **The committee is yet to submit its report.**



## DIAMOND JUBILEE OF CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

- On April 3, 2023, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, inaugurated the **Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi.
- The CBI was established by a resolution of the Ministry of Home Affairs, **Government of India on April 1, 1963**, and has been the premier investigating agency in India since then.
- During the programme, an Investiture Ceremony was held for the recipients of the **President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service and Gold Medal for Best Investigating Officers of CBI**, wherein the Prime Minister conferred medals to the awardees.
- It was a proud moment for the recipients, who had worked tirelessly to uphold the law and order of the country.



## SUBANSIRI LOWER HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

- The **Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric project (SLHEP)** on the Assam-Arunachal border was recently hit by a landslide during pre-monsoon rain.
- However, no damage has been caused to the project and it is set to become operational by June 2023.
- *What is the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project?*
- SLHEP is an **under-construction gravity dam (nearly 90% of the work completed)** with capacity **2000 MW (8x250 MW).**



- It is the biggest hydroelectric project undertaken in India so far and is a run of river scheme on river Subansiri.
- A **run-of-river dam** is one in which the flow of water in the river downstream of the dam is the same as the flow of water upstream of the dam. In other words, the dam doesn't hold back/store water behind it; it runs with the river.
- The construction of SLHEP is being undertaken by **National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) Limited**.

## IT (INTERMEDIARY GUIDELINES & DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS CODE)

- Several amendments were made by the Central Government to the IT Rules related to online gaming and the spread of false and misleading information regarding government business.
- These amendments seek to enforce greater due diligence by online gaming and social media intermediaries.
- The **Ministry of Electronics and IT** allocated the matter related to online gaming rules on December 23, 2022. The draft amendments were uploaded for consultations on January 2, 2023.
- During the **drafting process**, stakeholders such as parents, school teachers, academics, students, gamers, and gaming industry associations, child rights bodies, were consulted to ensure the new rules take into account the interests and concerns of all parties involved.
- **Obligations of Intermediaries**
- According to the amended rules, online gaming intermediaries are obliged to **make reasonable efforts to not host, publish or share any online game** that can cause the user harm or that has not been verified as a permissible online game by an online gaming self-regulatory body/bodies designated by the Central Government.
- The self-regulatory body has the authority to inquire and satisfy itself that the **online game does not involve wagering on any outcome and that the online gaming intermediary and the game comply with the rules.**
- For online games involving real money, the amended **rules cast obligations on online gaming** intermediaries to display a mark of verification by the self-regulatory body on such games, inform their users of the policy for withdrawal or refund of deposit, manner of determination and distribution of winnings, fees and other charges payable, obtain the KYC details of the users, **and not give credit or enable financing by third parties to the users.**
- If in case a notification is issued by the **Central Government in the interest of users or other specified grounds**, the same rules and obligations will be applicable to even those games where the user is not required to make any deposit for winnings.



- The **Cabinet has given its approval for the Green Energy Corridor (GEC) project**, which will be implemented by the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB), to secure a loan from the German development bank, KfW.
- The objective of this project is to facilitate grid integration and power evacuation of Renewable Energy power. The **Central government and KfW signed an agreement on November 11, 2022**, for the ₹1,457-crore Kerala GEC project.
- To move the loan proposal forward, a tripartite agreement will be signed by the **State government, KSEB, and KfW**.
- The Law and Finance departments have given the go-ahead for the proposal. At current rates, the project **will be eligible for a KfW loan of 102.11 million euros (around ₹916 crore) at 3% to 4% interest**. Central government grants of ₹138.71 crore will also be available for the project.
- Three **GEC projects will be undertaken under the programme**.
- These include the **North Green Power Corridor Project for Wayanad, Kannur, and Kasaragod districts, the Attappady Green Power Corridor Project in the tribal areas of the Attappady, Agali, and Kottathara regions, and the Ramakkalmedu Green Power Corridor Project**, which will benefit Idukki district.



## WHAT IS LIGO INDIA PROJECT?

- Recently, the **government approved the construction** of the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) project after seven years of in-principle approval.
- It will be built by the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Science and Technology with the **U.S. National Science Foundation** and several national and international research institutions.
- **What is LIGO-India Project?**
- The project aims to detect gravitational waves from the universe. The **Indian LIGO would have two perpendicularly placed 4-km long vacuum chambers** that constitute the most sensitive interferometers in the world.
- It is expected to begin scientific runs from 2030.
- Location: It will be located in the **Hingoli district of Maharashtra, about 450 km east of Mumbai**.
- **Purpose and Significance:**





- It will be the fifth node of the planned network and will bring India into a prestigious international scientific experiment. **It will make India a unique platform that brings together the frontiers of science and technology of the quantum and the cosmos.**

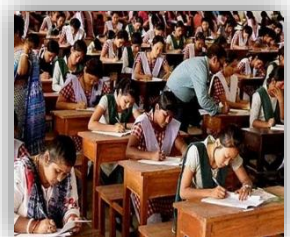
## KUDANKULAM NUCLEAR POWER PROJECT (KKNPP)

- **The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP)** is India's largest nuclear power plant located in Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu. The plant was built in collaboration with Russia's Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation and was constructed in two phases.
- The first phase involved the construction of Units 1 and 2, which started generating power on December 31, 2014. **The second phase involves the construction of four additional reactors**, which are currently under construction.
- Recently, a pressuriser was delivered for Reactor 5 of this power plant by **AEM-Technologies Izhora, which is part of the machine-building division of Rosatom – Atomenergomash.**
- The pressuriser is an important component of a nuclear power plant that is responsible for creating and maintaining pressure and coolant volume in the reactor. **In the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project**, the pressuriser plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and efficiency of the plant.
- **The pressuriser used in Kudankulam was manufactured by the Italian company, Walter Tosto.** It traveled 17,000 km via sea to reach the Kudankulam site.
- **VVER: Water-Water Energy Reactor**
- **The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project uses the VVER (Water-Water Energy Reactor) technology**, which is a pressurized water reactor design developed in the former Soviet Union.
- The VVER technology is one of the most widely used reactor designs in the world and is known for its safety and reliability.



## NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION

- Recently, the **Ministry of Education** released a pre-draft version of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education and has sought feedback from diverse stakeholders.
- The **pre-draft was formulated by a committee led by K Kasturirangan, a former head of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).**
- **What is the National Curriculum Framework?**
- **NCF is one of the key components of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, that enables and energizes this transformation, informed by the aims, principles, and approach of NEP 2020. **The NCF has**



undergone four revisions in the past - in 1975, 1988, 2000, and 2005. The proposed revision, if implemented, would be the fifth iteration of the framework.

➤ **Objective:**

- It aims to help in positively transforming the school education system of India as envisioned in NEP 2020, **through corresponding positive changes in the curriculum including pedagogy.**
- It aims to realize the highest quality education for all children, consistent with realizing an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by the Constitution of India.

## ECI RECOGNISED 'AAP' AS NATIONAL PARTY

- The **Election Commission of India** has recognized the **Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)** as a **national party**. The decision was made based on a review of the parties' poll performances, including the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls and 21 state assembly polls since 2014.
- With this recognition, AAP joins the **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**, **Indian National Congress (INC)**, **Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)**, **CPI(M)**, and **National People's Party (NPP)** as the sixth national party in the country.
- This status ensures that the party's symbol is reserved for its candidates across the country, and it gets land for an office in the national capital.
- In contrast, the **Trinamool Congress (TMC)**, **Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)**, and **Communist Party of India (CPI)** have lost their national party status.
- The EC's decision was based on the criteria stipulated in the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, of 1968**. Among other conditions, a national party must get at least a 6% vote share in four or more states in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and have at least four MPs in Lok Sabha.
- In its review, the EC found that the TMC did not contest the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from **Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur**, while the NCP lost its state party status in **Goa, Manipur, and Meghalaya**. The CPI had its status as a state party withdrawn in West Bengal and Odisha.



## HIMACHAL PRADESH SUKHASHRAYA ACT, 2023

- Himachal Pradesh passed **Sukhashraya (Care, Protection, and Self-Reliance of Children of the State) Act, 2023** to ensure the welfare of orphans and persons with special needs.
- **What are the Key Details of Sukhashraya Act, 2023?**
- The Act defines **orphans** as those without biological parents or whose parents are incapacitated and includes children in need of care and protection such as those without homes or those at risk of forced marriage, crime, or drug abuse.



- The Act offers financial and institutional benefits to the beneficiaries between the age of 18-27 years, along with **vocational training, skill development, and coaching to help them become active members of society.**
- The Act is a step towards ensuring the protection and care of the most vulnerable section of society.
- ***Benefits under the Act:***
- A **Mukhya Mantri Sukhashraya Sahayata Kosh fund of Rs 101 crore** has been formed, and a child welfare committee will be established in each district to oversee the scheme.
- Orphans and persons with special needs will become 'children of the state'. Financial benefits include **Rs 5,000 in summer and winter, Rs 500 for major festivals, and Rs 4,000 monthly allowance for daily expenses in college.**

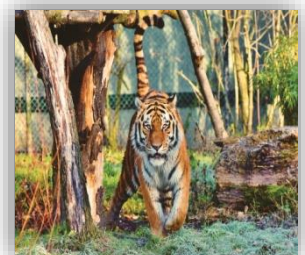
## WHAT IS VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME?

- On April 7 this year, **Home Minister Amit Shah unveiled the Vibrant Village program at Kibithu**, a remote village located at an altitude of 9,000 feet above sea level, near the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh. This program aims to transform rural areas into self-sufficient and prosperous communities.
- Kibithu is the easternmost village of India and is considered the **gateway to the Land of the Rising Sun, Arunachal Pradesh.**
- Despite its strategic location, the village lacks basic amenities such as **electricity, healthcare facilities, and proper roads.** These factors make it difficult for the residents to access necessary services.
- ***Vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat: Self-Reliant India***
- The **Vibrant Village program aligns with the government's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat**, which aims to make India self-reliant and self-sufficient. The program will help enhance the rural population's quality of life and promote the overall economic growth and development of these regions. The government has allocated funds for the successful implementation of this initiative in a phased manner.



## 5TH CYCLE OF INDIA'S TIGER CENSUS

- India is home to the largest population of tigers in the world, and their protection and conservation is of utmost importance.
- The **country conducts a scientific estimation of its tiger population once every four years**, and the latest report was released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently.
- ***The Total Number of Tigers in India***

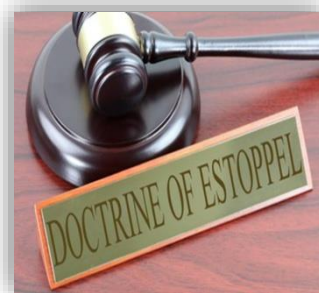




- The report revealed that as of 2022, India's tiger population stands at 3,167, **which is a significant increase from the 2006 figure of 1,411.**
- This **growth indicates that conservation efforts in India are working and that the government's initiatives and measures** are helping in preserving the species.
- ***Tiger Populations in Different Landscapes***
- However, the report also shows a **decrease in tiger population in the Western Ghats landscape.** The **Western Ghats have seen a significant decline in the tiger population due to the overlap between "wildlife and humans"** caused by developmental activities. This area covers about 1,40,000 square km and is a cause of concern for conservationists.
- However, the **tiger populations in areas outside of the reserves such as Wayanad landscape, BRT Hills, and the tiger areas on Goa-Karnataka border have decreased significantly.**

## AGNIPATH SCHEME & DOCTRINE OF PROMISSORY ESTOPPEL

- The **Supreme Court has recently dismissed petitions challenging the Delhi HC's judgment** that upheld the Agnipath scheme for recruitment to the armed forces.
- An argument on **Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel was floated in the Supreme Court** related to petitions of shortlisted candidates in the earlier recruitment process to Army and Air Force which was canceled when **Agnipath scheme was notified.**
- ***What is the Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel?***
- Promissory estoppel is a concept developed in contractual laws. It prevents a "promisor" from backing out of an agreement on the grounds that there is no "consideration."
- The doctrine is invoked in court by a plaintiff (the party moving court in a civil action) against the defendant to **ensure the execution of a contract or seek compensation for failure to perform the contract.**
- **Related Case:** In the **Chhaganlal Keshavalal Mehta v. Patel Narandas Haribhai (1981)** case, the Supreme Court listed out a checklist for when the doctrine can be applied.



## NAGARJUNSAGAR-SRISAILAM TIGER RESERVE

- **Nagarjunsagar-Srisaillam Tiger Reserve** is located in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, making it **one of the few tiger reserves in India that spans across two states.**
- It is also the largest tiger reserve in India, covering a total area of 3,728 km<sup>2</sup> (1,439 sq mi). The **core area of the reserve is 1,200 km<sup>2</sup> (460 sq mi),** which is an area dedicated solely to the conservation of tigers and other endangered species.

- The **Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve** is not just a habitat for tigers, but also a popular tourist destination. The reservoirs and temples of Srisailem are the major attractions for tourists and pilgrims.
- The reserve is also home to several waterfalls, **including Ethipothala Falls, Pedda Dukudu, Gundam, and Chaleswaram.**
- The Krishna river cuts its basin almost 200 meters deep over a distance of **130 kilometers via the Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve.** The reserve is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including tigers, leopards, Indian bison, spotted deer, sambar deer, and wild boar.

## 104 YEARS OF JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE

- Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Day 2023 marks 104 years since the tragic incident **that is seen as a turning point in Indian history.**
- The Jallianwala Bagh massacre was a tragic incident that occurred **on 13th April 1919 in Amritsar, India, where British Gurkha soldiers, on the orders of Brigadier-General Dyer,** fired upon a large crowd of unarmed protestors who had gathered at Jallianwala Bagh to demonstrate against the Rowlatt Act 1919 peacefully.
- The event resulted in the death of over 1000 **innocent men, women, and children** and sparked widespread protests and unrest throughout the country.
- The **incident was a significant turning point in India's struggle for independence from British rule and galvanized the Indian people** to unite and fight for their rights and freedom.
- The **massacre led to widespread condemnation of British colonial policies,** and it played a pivotal role in shaping the Indian independence movement.
- The **incident also marked a significant turning point in Mahatma Gandhi's life** as it led him to launch his first major nonviolent civil disobedience campaign, the Non-Cooperation Movement, **which ultimately paved the way for India's independence in 1947.**
- **Today, Jallianwala Bagh serves as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices** made by countless Indians in the fight for independence, and it continues to inspire people around the world to fight against oppression and injustice.



## SOLAR ENERGY CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED

- Recently, the Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI) has been recognized as a Miniratna Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Govt. of India.
- *What is Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited?*



- **SECI was incorporated in 2011** and serves as the primary implementing agency of the MNRE for Renewable Energy schemes/projects towards fulfilling India's international commitments.
- **Achievement:** SECI has already awarded Renewable Energy (RE) project capacities of over 56 GW and is also involved in setting up of projects through its own investments and for other public sector **entities as Project Management Consultant (PMC)**.
- SECI has **also achieved the highest credit rating of AAA by ICRA**.

## WHAT IS DIGITAL HEALTH SUMMIT 2023?

- Recently, **Digital Health Summit 2023** was organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in Goa.
- CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization.
- *What are the Major Highlights of Digital Health Summit 2023?*
- It highlighted the importance of digital health innovations and how they can empower exponential medicine, **including 3D printing, point-of-care diagnostics, robots, bioinformatics, and genomics**. It aims to create a digital public goods framework to promote standards for interoperability, data privacy, and data security.
- It emphasized the **need for "citizen-centric" digital health systems with equitable access** to high-quality treatments.
- It also highlighted that health-tech is the most significant aspect of the **Fourth Industrial Revolution and taking pre-emptive steps remains the key**.
- *What is Digital Healthcare?*
- **Digital healthcare is a system of medical care delivery** that uses an array of digital technologies to **make quality medical care services accessible, affordable, and sustainable**.

## WHAT IS NAMAN PROGRAMME?

- The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) and NGO Ashraya Hastha Trust (AHT) signed an MoU recently to test the feasibility of a model comprehensive rural mental health program named "NAMAN" (NIMHANS-AHT Comprehensive Mental-Health Action Program for Rural Communities) in two taluks before launching it nationwide.
- NAMAN envisions to **deliver promotive, preventive, therapeutic, and rehabilitative care** for the entire population of the target taluks utilizing the existing human resources in the community.





- **It will be implemented over 3 years in 4 phases.** The first phase includes resource building, which involves staff recruitment and training. The second phase will involve the conducting of the situational analysis to assess the mental health of the respective taluks.
- The third phase is intervention, which involves therapeutic and rehabilitation services. **The final phase is evaluation.**

## GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF CHILD SUSPECTS

- The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** has issued guidelines for the assessment of child suspects in heinous offenses to determine whether a child should be treated as a minor or not in criminal cases which come under the “heinous” offenses category of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- *What are the Guidelines?*
- **Child suspects should be assessed by a team of experts**, including a child psychologist or psychiatrist, a medical doctor, and a social worker.
- **The assessment should take into account the child's age, developmental stage, and maturity level**, as well as any history of trauma or abuse.
- The team should also consider the child's cognitive abilities and capacity to understand the charges against them. The child suspects will be provided with legal aid and support from child welfare agencies.
- The **Juvenile Justice Board (JJB)** will be responsible for conducting a preliminary assessment of the child suspect. The JJB must complete this assessment within three months from the date the child is first brought before it.



## REGULATIONS RELATING TO ONLINE REAL MONEY GAMES

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has released an amendment to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, to regulate online real money games.
- *What are Online Real Money Games?*
- **Real money in the hopes of winning more money.** These games can include casino-style games such as poker, blackjack, and slot machines, as well as **sports betting, fantasy sports, and other types of online gaming that involve the exchange of money.**
- In India, these types of games have become increasingly popular, leading to concerns **about their regulation and potential negative effects on users, such as addiction and financial losses.**
- *What are the New Rules?*



- **No Promotion of Betting Platforms:** The rules have advised media entities, media platforms and **online advertisement intermediaries to refrain from carrying advertisements/promotional content of betting platforms.**
- **Self-Regulatory Body:** As per the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023, real money gaming platforms **will have to register with a Self-Regulatory Body (SRB)** that will determine whether or not the game is "permissible."

Success Mantra

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

### FINLAND BECOMES 31ST MEMBER OF NATO

- Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has announced that Finland has become the **31st member of the alliance, thanks to Turkey's unanimous vote.**
- Despite Russia's opposition to Finland's membership, Turkey's approval has allowed the extension of NATO. Finland shares a long border of over 1,300 kilometers with Russia, and its decision to **join NATO was prompted by security concerns following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.**
- However, **Sweden's application to join NATO has been declined by Turkey and Hungary.**
- **Finland's membership in NATO has been a topic of discussion for many years**, with some arguing that it would help to strengthen Finland's defense capabilities, while others have expressed concerns about potential tensions with neighboring Russia.
- With Finland's membership, **NATO now includes most of the countries in Europe and North America.**
- *What is NATO and its history?*
- **NATO, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization**, is an intergovernmental military alliance established in 1949. It was formed as a collective defense pact between North American and European nations to deter Soviet expansion and protect member states from potential Soviet aggression during the Cold War.
- The founding members of NATO were the United States, Canada, and ten European nations **including Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.** Since then, the alliance has expanded to include 31 member countries.
- The organization operates on the principle of collective defense, with members agreeing to mutual defense in response to an attack by an external party. **NATO also engages in crisis management, conflict prevention, and peacekeeping operations around the world.**



### INDIA & MALAYSIA AGREE TO SETTLE TRADE IN INDIAN RUPEES

- India and Malaysia have agreed to settle trade in Indian rupees. This mechanism is expected to enhance **India-Malaysia bilateral trade which touched USD 19.4 billion during 2021-22.**
- Malaysia is the third largest trading partner of India in the ASEAN region, after Singapore and Indonesia that account for USD 30.1 billion and USD 26.1 billion bilateral trade with India respectively.
- *What is the Significance of India's Move to Settle Trade in Indian Rupee?*





- In July 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allowed the **settlement of international trade in Indian rupees**.
- In December 2022, **India saw its first settlement of foreign trade in rupee with Russia** – as part of the 'International Settlement of Trade in Indian Rupee' mechanism initiated by the RBI.
- In March 2023, **banks from 18 countries were allowed by the RBI to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs)** to settle payments in Indian rupees.
- **It includes:** Botswana, Fiji, Germany, Guyana, Israel, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Russia, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and the United Kingdom.

## DISSOLUTION OF NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY

- **Myanmar, also known as Burma, has been in political turmoil** since the military coup on February 1, 2021. The military junta, led by General Min Aung Hlaing, seized power and detained the country's elected leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and other prominent figures.
- The military claimed voter fraud in the 2020 election, in which the **National League for Democracy (NLD) won by a landslide**.
- The coup sparked widespread protests and violence across the country, with the junta using brutal tactics to suppress dissent. **In the latest development, the military junta dissolved the NLD, the ruling party, last week.**
- ***The NLD's Dissolution and its Leader***
- **The NLD is the party founded by Aung San Suu Kyi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize** for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights in Myanmar.
- She has been under house arrest for many years and faced numerous legal challenges from the previous military regime. **The NLD won the 2020 election by a landslide**, but the military coup prevented them from taking power.
- On March 23, the military junta dissolved the NLD, citing alleged election fraud. **The move follows a new Political Party Registration Law** that requires all parties to re-register by March 28, or they would face dissolution.



## AZERBAIJAN & TAJIKISTAN DECLARED MALARIA FREE

- **Azerbaijan and Tajikistan were declared malaria-free by the WHO on March 29, 2023.** This came as the result of an extensive century-long campaign by the two nations to eradicate the disease.
- Malaria is a serious and life-threatening disease caused by the Plasmodium parasite and transmitted by the Anopheles mosquito.
- The declaration by the **WHO that Azerbaijan and Tajikistan are malaria-free** is a significant achievement for the two nations. They have eliminated the Anopheles mosquito-borne disease in their territories.
- To be certified as malaria-free by the WHO, a country must provide rigorous, **credible evidence showing that the malaria transmission cycle has been broken for at least the last three years.**
- In Tajikistan the last cases of regional spread of **Plasmodium vivax malaria** were discovered in 2012. In Azerbaijan, it was last recorded in 2014.



## UNITED NATIONS WATER CONFERENCE 2023

- Recently, the **United Nations held its first water conference in 46 years on March 22-24 in New York.** The conference coincided with the mid-term review of the International Decade for Action.
- The U.N. recognized that we are not doing enough to meet SDG 6, which aims to provide clean water and sanitation for everyone by 2030. The urgent need for action was demonstrated by a report "Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028."
- **What is a Water Conference?**
- The water conference brings together people from different countries and organizations to work together on solving global water challenges.
- **Water problems are usually local,** but by working together, countries can learn from each other, share technology, and invest in solutions.
- The UN 2023 Water Conference's theme, "**Our watershed moment: uniting the world for water,**" aimed to support the achievement of water-related global goals and objectives, including those enumerated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## GULF OF MANNAR MARINE NATIONAL PARK

- Located in the southernmost part of India, the **Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park (GoMMNP)** is a protected area covering an area of around 560 square kilometers.
- The park includes a **group of 21 islands situated in the Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu**. The area was declared a marine national park in 1980 and later included in the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve (GoMBR) in 1989.
- The **vegetation in the GoMMNP is threatened by an invasive plant species called Prosopis chilensis**. This plant species is native to Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru.
- It is known for its ability to spread rapidly, forming dense thickets that can displace native plant species. **Another invasive plant species, Prosopis juliflora, was introduced in Tamil Nadu** by the British in 1877, which is equally threatening to the natural vegetation of the area.
- ***Bird Species in the Gulf of Mannar***
- A study conducted in the Gulf of Mannar recorded 96 bird species belonging to 13 orders. Out of these, 58 were waterbird species, indicating the importance of the area for these birds.
- The **highest number of waterbird species was recorded on Manoli island of the Kilakarai group**. Eight bird species were found on all the islands, including Kentish plover, ruddy turnstone, lesser black-backed gull, greater crested tern, little cormorant, great egret, Indian pond heron, and Brahminy kite.



## INDIA & SRILANKA BILATERAL MARITIME EXERCISE

- SLINEX-2023 is the 10th edition of the annual India-Sri Lanka Bilateral Maritime Exercise.
- The exercise is aimed at improving mutual understanding, enhancing interoperability, and exchanging best practices/procedures in multi-faceted maritime operations between both Navies.
- The exercise features two phases i.e., the Harbour Phase and the Sea Phase. **The Harbour Phase is being organized in Colombo, Sri Lanka** from April 3-5, followed by the Sea Phase from April 6-8, off Colombo.
- India and Sri Lanka have a long-standing bilateral relationship, particularly in the maritime domain. The cooperation **between the two nations has been robust, covering various areas such as political engagement, economic and commercial ties**, people-to-people connections, and cultural exchanges.
- The bilateral naval exercise, SLINEX-2023, is a testament to the strong ties between the two countries. **It aims to further enhance the cooperation between the two navies and reinforce** the shared values and bonds of friendship and camaraderie.

## WHAT IS COPE INDIA EXERCISE?



➤ India and the United States are set to conduct the **next edition of their bilateral air exercise called 'Cope India'**. This is aimed at enhancing the interoperability between the air forces of the two countries.

➤ The **air exercise will take place from April 10 to 21, 2023**, at the air force base in Kalaikunda, West Bengal. This will mark the first major air exercise between India and the US after a gap of five years.



➤ ***Participants of the Exercise***

➤ The Indian Air Force will participate in the exercise with its **frontline fighters SU-30MKI, Rafale, and the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)**, among other elements. On the other hand, the US Air Force contingent will reportedly participate with its F-15 fighter jets.

➤ ***Observer Nation***

➤ The air exercise will have Japan as an observer nation. **As per the Agreement of the Defence Ministers' Conference organized on August 20, 2018, the Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF)** participated in Cope India for the first time in December 2018 as an observer. Japan's participation in the upcoming exercise is a part of a phased plan proposed by the US to make it a trilateral event.

## CHINA & JAPAN SET UP MILITARY HOTLINE

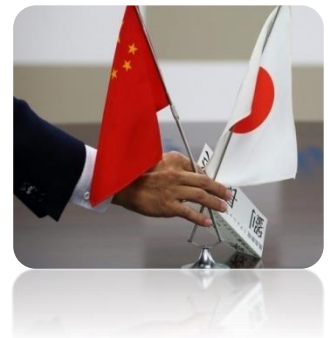
➤ Recently, China and Japan set up military hotlines (a direct phone line set up for a specific purpose) **to manage maritime, air incidents over disputed islands (Senkaku Island).**

➤ China & Japan have a long-festering dispute over uninhabited **East China Sea islands controlled by Japan but claimed by China.**

➤ ***Why was the Hotline Established?***

➤ This move was made to strengthen their capability of managing and controlling incidents arising due to their aggressive patrolling of the disputed waters.

➤ The hotline will enrich the communication channels between the **defense departments of China and Japan, strengthen the capabilities of the two sides to manage and control maritime and air crises, and help maintain regional peace and stability.** This move will further maintain regional peace and stability.



## AL AQSA MOSQUE: SIGNIFICANCE & CONTENTIONS

➤ Recently, a **raid by Israeli police on Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque** sparked an intense reaction from Palestinians across the occupied West Bank and the wider Arab and Muslim world.



➤ The incident underscores the sensitivity and significance of the Al-Aqsa mosque, **a flashpoint for deadly violence over matters of sovereignty and religion in Jerusalem.**

➤ The Al-Aqsa mosque sits at the heart of Jerusalem's Old City on a hill that is named by Jews as Har ha-Bayit, or Temple Mount, **and by Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif, or The Noble Sanctuary.** The site is a compound that overlooks the Western Wall, a sacred place of prayer for Jews.

➤ *Significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims*

➤ **Al-Aqsa mosque is considered by Muslims** as the third holiest site in Islam, after Mecca and Medina. The compound of Al-Aqsa mosque hosts two Muslim holy places: the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, **also known as the Qibli Mosque, which was built in the 8th century AD.**

➤ The compound holds great religious significance for Muslims, and any perceived threats or encroachments on it trigger strong reactions from the Muslim world.

## AUSTRALIA GENDER PAY GAP LAW

➤ **Australia has recently passed a new law** aimed at

➤ addressing the gender pay gap in the country. The law requires companies with over 100 employees to reveal their gender pay gaps, a move **towards transparency that is expected to make businesses accountable for their actions.**

➤ **The new law, which takes effect early, next year,** will require the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to publicly publish details of companies' gender pay gaps.

➤ Until now, companies were required to report income inequality to the **WGEA, which publishes the information by industry.** However, the agency did not have the power to publicly publish details of the company.

➤ The new federal laws mandate the agency to release **data for private businesses from early 2024 and for Commonwealth public sector employees from 2025.**

➤ This move towards transparency is expected to help jobseekers get a clearer indication of a prospective employer's commitment to ensuring the contributions of all employees are equally valued and rewarded.

## INT. CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

➤ Recently, **the Prime Minister of India** addressed the 5th International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (ICDRI) 2023.

➤ **What is ICDRI?**

➤ **ICDRI is the annual international conference of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** in partnership with member countries, organizations and institutions to strengthen the global discourse on disaster and climate-resilient infrastructure.

➤ **Highlights of ICDRI 2023:**

➤ The Prime Minister said that since India is leading the G20 group, the **CDRI will be included in many important discussions.**

➤ This means that the solutions discussed in the CDRI will be **considered at the highest levels of global policymaking.**

➤ **What is CDRI?**

➤ **CDRI is an Independent International Organization** consisting of a global partnership of national governments, United Nations agencies and programs, multilateral development banks and financing mechanisms, the **private sector, and academic and research institutions.**



## TWO MONTH LONG JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE NAMED 'EX KAVACH'

➤ The **Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)** recently concluded a two-month-long joint military exercise named 'Ex KAVACH.'

➤ The **exercise involved the assets of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard** and aimed at fine-tuning joint warfare capabilities and enhancing interoperability and operational synergy between the forces.

➤ It involved amphibious landing, air-landed operations, heliborne operations, and rapid insertion of the Special Forces on a remote Island of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

## UKRAINE SECURITY ASSISTANCE INITIATIVE

➤ The **ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia** has raised concerns over Ukraine's security and stability. The United States has pledged significant military aid to Ukraine to help them defend themselves against Russian aggression.

- One such initiative is the **Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI)**, a funding program aimed at increasing Ukraine's capacity to defend itself.
- The **US recently approved \$2.6 billion military assistance for Ukraine**. Major portion of this funding is for the USAI and the rest is for existing US stocks.
- **Leadership and Purpose of USAI Program**
- The **USAI program is led by the U.S. Department of Defense** and is designed to provide training, equipment, and advisory initiatives to Ukraine's armed forces.
- The primary purpose of the program is to **counter Russian aggression and support Ukraine's sovereignty**. The **new military aid package for Ukraine is \$2.6 billion**, and it includes ammunition, rocket systems, small arms, equipment, and logistics support.
- The USAI package is worth \$2.1 billion and includes additional munitions for air defenses, precision aerial munitions, Soviet-era GRAD rockets, anti-tank rockets, armored bridging systems, and fuel trailers.

## FRANCE HOSTING MULTINATIONAL WARGAME 'ORION'

- France is hosting **the multinational wargame codenamed Orion**, which is expected to be held from the third week of April to May 5. This exercise will involve various countries, including India, and will test their combat capabilities in a simulated war scenario.
- **Background of the Wargame**
- The **backdrop of this wargame is the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, where NATO** led by the US is opposing Russian moves against Ukraine. The aim of the exercise is to test the preparedness of the participating countries' air forces and their ability to operate in a multinational environment.
- **Indian Participation in Orion**
- The **Indian Air Force (IAF) will participate in Orion with its Rafale fighter jets** from the Western Air Command's Golden Arrows squadron.
- The IAF has already inducted 36 Rafales, and these fighter planes have participated in wargames with foreign countries earlier, **including Desert Knight with the French Air Force in Jodhpur**.
- **Other Participating Countries**
- Apart from India, **several other countries are taking part in the war games with their fighter planes. These include France, NATO, and other allies**. The exercise is significant for the French defense forces as it is reportedly the largest ever multinational exercise they have carried out.





- This wargame involves not only their Air Force but also their **Army and Navy along with their allies, the US and the UK.**

## PREVALENCE OF HAY FEVER IN JAPAN

- **Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida** has recently vowed to tackle hay fever, a pollen allergy that affects a **significant portion of the Japanese population.**
- In a recent parliamentary committee, **Kishida referred to hay fever as a "social problem"** and pledged to work with ministers to devise a response to the issue.
- *What is Hay Fever?*
- **Hay fever is a pollen allergy** that typically causes itchy, watery eyes and sneezing. It is **usually caused by the pollen of specific plants or trees, and its symptoms can range from mild to severe.**
- Hay fever is a common ailment in many parts of the world and is estimated to affect up to 30% of the global population.
- *Prevalence of Hay Fever in Japan*
- In Japan, hay fever is particularly prevalent, with approximately 40% of the population experiencing symptoms. **The main culprits responsible for the outbreak of hay fever in Japan** are cedar and cypress trees, which are widely planted throughout the country.

## 25 YEARS OF GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

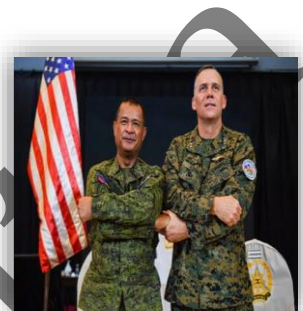
- The **Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, is a historic peace agreement** that ended the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, commonly referred to as "The Troubles." The agreement was signed on April 10, 1998, by the British and Irish governments, along with political parties in Northern Ireland.
- The aim of the agreement was to establish a power-sharing government and **bring an end to the decades-long conflict that had claimed more than 3,500 lives.**
- The **division in Northern Ireland was primarily between Unionists**, who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK, and nationalists, who wanted Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland.
- The conflict was fueled by deep-rooted political, social, and religious differences. **Armed groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA)** and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) used violence to advance their agendas, leading to a cycle of violence that lasted almost 30 years.
- *Negotiators of the Good Friday Agreement*



- The Good Friday Agreement was negotiated by political leaders from various factions, **including Tony Blair, Bertie Ahern, and George Mitchell.**
- The agreement addressed key issues such as power-sharing, policing, justice, and human rights. **It also established the Northern Ireland Assembly, a devolved legislature with powers** to make decisions on issues such as education, health, and the environment.

## BALIKATAN DRILLS BETWEEN US & PHILIPPINES

- The Balikatan drills are annual military exercises conducted between the United States and the Philippines. The name “Balikatan” is derived from the **Tagalog word “shoulder-to-shoulder,”** reflecting the strong partnership between the two countries.
- *Involvement and Types of Exercises*
- More than 17,600 military personnel are involved in the Balikatan drills, **with about 12,200 from the US and 5,400 from the Philippines.**
- The drills involve various exercises, including live-fire exercises and a boat-sinking rocket assault. **The drills are aimed at enhancing the interoperability and readiness of the US and Philippine armed forces.**
- *China’s Response*
- **China has expressed its concerns over the Balikatan drills,** as it considers the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait as its own territory. The drills have the potential to inflame tensions in the region, which **China claims as part of its sovereign territory.**



## G7'S COMMITMENT FOR CARBON FREE ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION

- The **Group of Seven (G7) countries' Climate and Energy Ministers** and envoys have committed to ensuring carbon-free electricity production by 2035 and accelerating the phase-out of coal.
- The **agreement was made at Sapporo, Japan, ahead of the G7 summit in Hiroshima in May 2023.** India was also invited to the summit as a ‘guest’, in the context of its G20 presidency.
- *What are the Major Highlights of the Agreement?*
- Recognising the current global energy crisis and economic disruptions, **the agreement calls for accelerating the clean energy transition to net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050.**
- The **G7 states cited the urgent need to reduce GHG emissions by around 43% by 2030 and 60% by 2035.**



- The participants agreed to **accelerate solar and wind energy investments to produce 1,000 gigawatts of solar power and 150 gigawatts** of wind power from off-shore platforms by 2030 in line with IPCC's AR6 Report that repeats the need to ensure that global temperatures do not increase by more than **1.5°C of pre-industrial levels by the end of the century**.
- They reaffirmed that fossil fuel subsidies are inconsistent with the **goals of the Paris Agreement and committed to eliminating inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2025**.

## GHANA APPROVES OXFORD MALARIA VACCINE R21

- **Ghana has approved a new malaria vaccine from Oxford University**, making it the first country in the world to do so, and a potential step forward in the fight against the disease.
- The vaccine, known as R21, has been approved domestically for children aged between 5 months and 36 months, **who are at the highest risk of death from malaria**.
- It is unclear when the vaccine may be rolled out in Ghana as other regulatory bodies, **including the World Health Organization (WHO)**, are still assessing its safety and effectiveness.
- The Oxford vaccine is the second malaria vaccine to be approved for use and the **first major vaccine to be approved in an African country** ahead of rich nations. The approval is rare as it comes before the publication of final-stage trial data.
- The **Serum Institute of India has a deal with Oxford to produce up to 200 million doses of the vaccine annually**. The WHO has said that in the areas where the Mosquirix vaccine has been given, all-cause child mortality has dropped by 10 percent, a sign of its impact.



## ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

### WHAT ARE THE IMF BAILOUTS?

- The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** is an international organization that provides financial assistance to member countries facing economic crises.
- The organization works towards maintaining **international monetary cooperation, promoting exchange rate stability, and facilitating international trade.**
- IMF lending comes with strict conditions, and countries must adhere to these conditions to receive financial assistance.
- *The Bailout Plan for Sri Lanka*
- Recently, the IMF approved a bailout plan for Sri Lanka worth nearly \$3 billion. **The plan includes immediate disbursement of \$333 million to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the country.** This bailout comes as Sri Lanka struggles with economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *Negotiations with Pakistan*
- The **International Monetary Fund is negotiating with Pakistan to resume 1.1 billion USD funding held since November since early February.** To receive a bailout, Pakistan is required to fulfill commitments from friendly countries on external financing.
- *Factors Leading to Economic Crises*
- According to the IMF website, economic crises occur due to inappropriate fiscal and monetary policies, exchange rates fixed at an inappropriate level, **a weak financial system, political instability, and weak institutions.**



### WHAT IS 'CPTPP' TRADE PACT?

- The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a trade pact that **originated from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)** after the United States withdrew in 2017.
- The agreement includes 11 countries, namely Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.
- The CPTPP aims to enhance trade between member countries by reducing tariffs, improving market access, and promoting economic growth. On December 31, 2022, **Britain formally applied to join the CPTPP, which will make it the first European country to join the partnership.**

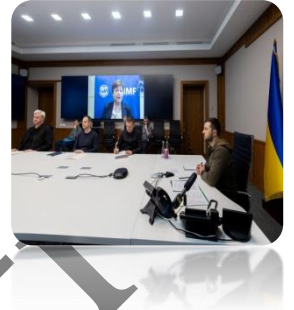




- With Britain's membership, the CPTPP will cover a market of 500 million people, accounting for approximately 15% of global GDP.

## IMF'S \$115 BILLION LOAN FOR UKRAINE

- The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has approved a loan program worth **\$15.6 billion** for Ukraine as part of a larger \$115 billion package to aid its war-torn economy.
- With one-third of Ukraine's population displaced, the IMF's support **comes as a crucial aid in reconstructing the country's economy.**
- *Two-Phase Loan Program for Ukraine*
- The IMF's loan program for Ukraine will span four years and run in two phases. **The first phase aims to close Ukraine's massive budget deficit and stabilize disinflation.**
- The IMF's support will ease the pressure on government spending by providing immediate financial assistance of \$2.7 billion. **Ukraine is required to focus on financial stability and undertake ambitious structural reforms**, particularly in the energy sector.



## FOREIGN TRADE POLICY 2023

- Recently, the **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles** launched the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023 which comes into effect from April 1, 2023.
- **FTP 2023 is a policy document** which is based on continuity of time-tested schemes facilitating exports as well as a document which is nimble and responsive to the requirements of trade.
- *What are Details of FTP 2023?*
- The **policy is based on the principles of trust and partnership** with exporters and aims at process re-engineering and automation to facilitate ease of doing business for exporters.
- *The Key Approach is based on Four Pillars:*
  - **Incentive to Remission,**
  - Export promotion through collaboration - Exporters, States, Districts, Indian Missions,
  - Ease of doing business, reduction in transaction cost and e-initiatives, and
  - **Emerging Areas** – E-Commerce Developing Districts as Export Hubs and streamlining Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment, and Technologies (SCOMET) policy.



## INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH TO DECELERATE: UN

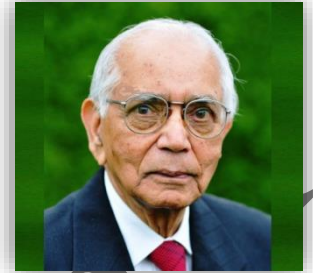
- As per the **latest Trade and Development Report Update released by the United Nations Trade and Development Conference (UNCTAD)**, India's economic growth is expected to slow down from 6.6% in 2022 to 6% in 2023.
- The report also predicts a decline in global growth in 2023 to 2.1% from the previously projected 2.2% in September 2022.
- However, **this projection is based on the assumption that the adverse impact of higher interest rates on the financial sector** is limited to the first quarter's bank runs and bailouts.
- According to the report, **India's economic growth rate was 6.6% in 2022, and it lost its top position among G20 countries to Saudi Arabia**, which has a higher growth rate of 8.6% due to its oil-rich economy.
- Although India's export orders are increasing, its GDP growth rate is **expected to slow down to 6.0% in 2023 as the current government spending is declining.**
- In 2022, South Asia witnessed a growth rate of 5.7%. However, despite the growth, the poverty rates in the region have continued to rise. UNCTAD predicts that the region will maintain a fast pace of growth at 5.1% in 2023, primarily due to the expansion of its biggest economy, India.



## AWARDS AND HONORS

### CR RAO TO RECEIVE 2023 INT. PRIZE IN STATISTICS

- **Calayampudi Radhakrishna Rao**, a prominent Indian-American mathematician and statistician, will be awarded the 2023 International Prize in Statistics, the equivalent of a Nobel Prize in the field.
- *What are the Works of C R Rao?*
- Rao's remarkable paper, published in 1945 in the Bulletin of the Calcutta Mathematical Society, demonstrated three fundamental results that paved the way for the **modern field of statistics and provided statistical tools heavily used in science today.**
- **Theory:**
- **The Cramer-Rao Lower Bound:** Provides a means of knowing when a method for estimating a quantity is as good as any method can be.
- **The Rao-Blackwell Theorem:** Provides a means of transforming an estimate into an optimal estimate. Together, these results form a foundation on which much of statistics is built.
- **The Information Geometry:** Provided insights that pioneered a new interdisciplinary field that has flourished as "information geometry. **Information geometry is the study of the geometrical structure of families of probability distributions.**



### ORDER OF THE WHITE EAGLE: POLAND'S HIGHEST ORDER

- **Poland's highest order, the Order of the White Eagle**, has a rich history dating back to its official institution on November 1, 1705, by Augustus II the Strong, **King of Poland and Elector of Saxony.**
- Originally bestowed on only eight of his closest diplomatic and political supporters, the order **has become a symbol of prestige, honor, and service to the nation.**
- Over the centuries, the **order has been awarded to the most distinguished Poles** for their merits and to the highest-ranking representatives of foreign countries.
- The **Order of the White Eagle** is attached to a purple ribbon slung over the left shoulder to the right side, and the star of the order, once embroidered, is worn on the left side of the chest.
- The order has maintained its significance throughout the years, **remaining one of the oldest distinctions in the world still in use.**
- *Volodymyr Zelensky's Visit to Poland*



- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky** recently visited Poland, a close ally that has provided refuge to millions of **Ukrainian citizens** and **has assisted the Kyiv government with vital weaponry**.
- As Ukraine prepared to conduct a counter-offensive to recapture its land in the east and south from Russian control, **Zelensky's visit held great significance**.
- **Poland and Ukraine share a border, and the former has played a critical role** in persuading other Western powers to supply the latter with battle tanks and other weaponry for its offensive against Moscow.
- *Awarding of the "Order of White Eagle"*
- During his visit to **Poland, President Zelensky was awarded the "Order of White Eagle"**. In Warsaw, Zelensky met with President Andrzej Duda, who honored him with the order.

## ASSAM'S BIHU DANCE SETS TWO GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

- **Assam's Bihu dance has made history by breaking two world records** with 11,304 dancers and musicians performing at Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati.
- The performers attempted to create world records in two categories - **the largest Bihu dance performance and the largest performance by folk musicians**.
- This marks a significant moment for the traditional folk dance of Bihu, **which is popular across Assam and especially performed during Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu**, the spring festival that heralds the Assamese New Year in mid-April.
- The President of India has extended greetings on the occasion of various Traditional New Year Festivals celebrated across India, **including Vaishakhi, Vishu (Kerala and other neighboring areas), Naba Barsha (West Bengal), Puthandu-Pirappu (Tamil Nadu), and Vaisakhadi**.
- These festivals, **observed during the spring season, signify the beginning of the new year according to different regional calendars in India**. Vaishakhi is celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs and marks the formation of the Khalsa panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh.
- These festivals bring together people from various castes and religions **across India and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the country**.

## KEY POINTS ABOUT MAHARASHTRA BHUSHAN AWARD

- The **Maharashtra Bhushan award is the highest civilian award** presented annually by the state government.
- It is a prestigious recognition that celebrates **outstanding achievements and contributions in various fields**.
- The award has a rich history and has been conferred upon numerous notable individuals who have made significant contributions to society.





- The Maharashtra Bhushan award was conferred for the first time in the year 1996. Initially, it was conferred in the **fields of literature, art, sports, and science, but over the years**, the categories have expanded to include social work, journalism, and public administration and health services.
- This **expansion reflects the evolving landscape of contributions and achievements that are worthy of recognition.**
- *Notable Recipients and Recent Events*
- In recent years, the Maharashtra Bhushan award has been **presented to individuals who have made exceptional contributions to society.** Recently, **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** conferred the award upon Appasaheb Dharmadhikari, a renowned personality known for his philanthropic efforts.

## IMPORTANT DATES & DAYS

### ODISHA DAY OR UTKAL DIWAS OBSERVED ON APRIL 1ST

- **Odisha Day or Utkal Divas is a significant day for the people of Odisha, India** as it marks the formation of the state on April 1, 1936. Every year on this day, the state celebrates with cultural programs, parades, and flag hoisting ceremonies.
- Odisha, also known as the **Land of Lord Jagannath, is famous for its scenic seas** and ancient temples, such as the Jagannath Puri Temple and the Sun Temple of Konark, which attract tourists.
- Odisha, also known as Orissa, is a state in eastern India with a rich history dating back to ancient times.
- The earliest evidence of **human habitation in the region dates back to the Stone Age**, with archaeological sites such as Golbai Sasan providing evidence of early settlements.
- In the **3rd century BCE**, the region was ruled by the powerful emperor Ashoka, who is known for his conversion to **Buddhism and his role in spreading the religion across the Indian subcontinent**.
- Following **the decline of the Mauryan Empire**, the region came under the control of various dynasties, including the Satavahanas, the Ikshvakus, and the Kharavela of the Mahameghavahana dynasty.
- During the medieval period, **Odisha was ruled by various Hindu dynasties, including the Eastern Ganga dynasty**, which oversaw a period of cultural and artistic development.
- The state was also an important center for the spread of the Bhakti movement, with **saints such as Jayadeva and Ramanuja contributing to the development of the tradition**.
- In the 16th century, Odisha came under the control of the Mughal Empire, and later the British East India Company. The state played an important role in the Indian independence movement, with leaders such as **Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, Gopabandhu Das, and Biju Patnaik contributing to the struggle for freedom**.
- **After India gained independence in 1947**, Odisha became a state on April 1, 1936, and has since emerged as a center for industry, agriculture, and tourism.
- The state has a rich cultural heritage, with a vibrant arts and crafts tradition, ancient temples, and festivals such as the **Rath Yatra in Puri attracting visitors from across the country and around the world**.

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CONSCIENCE

- The International Day of Conscience is an annual worldwide awareness event celebrated on April 5th.
- It came into existence on July 25th, 2019, when the **United Nations General Assembly** passed a resolution entitled "Promoting the Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience" and designated April 5th as the International Day of Conscience.



- His **Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa**, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, organized the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, which passed the resolution.
- The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** Preamble mentions that disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts that have outraged the conscience of humankind.
- This highlights the significance of the International Day of Conscience to establish a culture of peace based on the **principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, all human rights, tolerance, and solidarity.**

## NATIONAL MARITIME DAY: APRIL 5TH

- On **April 5th, India celebrated National Maritime Day**, which commemorates the maiden voyage of the first Indian commercial vessel, the SS Loyalty, from Mumbai to London in 1919. **This year's theme was "Propelling Indian Maritime to Net Zero."**
- It was **organized by the Directorate General of Shipping, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways in Mumbai** and concluded with a ceremony at the Domestic Cruise Terminus in Mumbai Port Trust, highlighting the need for a coordinated and collaborative approach to achieve the net-zero targets in the maritime sector.
- The Government has acknowledged the contribution of seafarers during the pandemic and emphasized India's efforts to promote 'Ease of Doing Business' to reduce logistics costs and facilitate shipping to make India a pre-eminent player in the maritime sector.
- And the importance of academic partnerships with global maritime universities and enhancing the skills of Indian maritime institutes to achieve the goals of Maritime Vision 2030. During the program, **Sagar Samman Awards** were awarded to the contributors to the growth of the Indian maritime industry.



## WORLD HEALTH DAY OBSERVED ON APRIL 7TH

- **World Health Day** is celebrated globally on April 7 every year to raise awareness about physical, mental, and social wellness.
- It is an **initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO)** to promote health and well-being for all individuals.
- The day aims to raise awareness about health issues, **encouraging conversations and discussions about ways to maintain good health, and advocating actions on a global scale.**
- This year, it marks the **75th anniversary of the World Health Organization**, which was established in 1948. Each year, WHO picks a specific theme relevant to the wellness and medical field? **The theme for World Health Day 2023 is 'Health for all'.**



- The theme highlights the public health successes of the **WHO that played a role in improving the quality of life of the past seven decades**. It also calls on the world to address the present and future health-related challenges.

## WORLD HOMEOPATHY DAY OBSERVED ON APRIL 10TH

- **World Homeopathy Day is observed on April 10** to mark the birth of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy. This alternative form of medicine has been gaining popularity worldwide and is known for its gentle and natural healing approach.
- Homeopathy is an alternative form of medicine based on **the principle of “like cures like.”** The idea is to use a substance that causes symptoms in a healthy person to treat similar symptoms in a sick person.
- Homeopathy aims to treat the entire person and not just the symptoms of an illness. **This gentle approach is focused on natural healing and avoiding invasive medical procedures.**
- *Origins of Homeopathy*
- Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician, developed the principles of homeopathy in the late 18th century. He was disillusioned with conventional medical practices, such as bloodletting and the use of toxic substances like mercury.
- In the late 1700s, **Hahnemann commenced brainstorming the idea of homeopathy**, and by 1796, he published a book outlining his principles and practices. Hahnemann believed that homeopathy offered a safer and more effective alternative to conventional medicine.

## WORLD CHAGAS DISEASES DAY: 14TH APRIL

- **Chagas disease, also known as American trypanosomiasis**, is a life-threatening illness caused by the protozoan parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi* (T. cruzi).
- This disease is mostly present in endemic regions of **21 continental Latin American countries**, where it is transmitted through contact with infected blood-sucking triatomine bugs' feces and/or urine (vector-borne transmission).
- However, it can also be transmitted through infected donor organ transplants, laboratory mishaps, congenital (mom-to-child) transmission during pregnancy or childbirth, and transfusions of infected donor blood or blood products.
- **World Chagas Disease Day** is observed every year on April 14 to **raise awareness about Chagas Disease**.
- This date was chosen to commemorate the discovery of the first human case of Chagas disease, which was diagnosed by **Brazilian doctor and researcher Carlos Ribeiro Justiniano Chagas on April 14, 1909**.





- The theme for World Chagas Disease Day 2023 was “Time to integrate Chagas disease into primary health care,” reflecting the importance of early detection and treatment of this disease.

## WORLD HEMOPHILIA DAY OBSERVED ON APRIL 17TH

- **World Hemophilia Day is observed globally on April 17** to raise awareness about hemophilia, a rare genetic blood disorder that inhibits the clotting of blood.
- **Hemophilic individuals lack two crucial clotting factors, Factor VIII (8) or Factor IX (9),** which can lead to significant bleeding during injuries and surgeries.
- Although minor wounds are usually not a concern, severe hemophilia can cause internal bleeding that can damage organs and even result in death.
- The **first-ever World Hemophilia Day** was established in 1989 by the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) to raise awareness about hemophilia and other bleeding disorders.
- **April 17 was chosen as the date in memory of Frank Schnabel,** who was born on that day in 1942 and dedicated his life to improving the lives of people affected by bleeding disorders.
- ***Theme for World Hemophilia Day 2023***
- The theme for World Hemophilia Day 2023 is “**Access for All: Prevention of Bleeds as the Global Standard of Care.**” The objective of this theme is to urge local policymakers and governments to improve access to care for all individuals with bleeding disorders.

## REPORTS AND INDEXES

### WORLD ENERGY TRANSITIONS: OUTLOOK REPORT 2023

- The **International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)** released its **World Energy Transitions: Outlook 2023 report**, highlighting the need for a more aggressive approach to transition towards renewable energy sources.
- The report outlines the current state of renewable energy generation and provides insights into the challenges that need to be **overcome to achieve the goals outlined in the Paris Agreement**.
- **Renewable energy has come a long way in recent years**, and the report reveals that 40% of installed power generation globally comes from renewable sources.
- In 2022, **renewable accounted for 83% of global power additions**, indicating the growing trend towards cleaner energy. However, there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve the **target set by the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels**.
- *The Targets for the Energy Transition*
- To **keep the 1.5°C target alive**, the report outlines that **over 10,000 GW of renewable energy deployment must be achieved by 2030**. Additionally, the report suggests that yearly investments of over \$5 trillion are needed to stay on the 1.5°C pathway.
- To achieve this, the report highlights that 80% of planned investment by 2030 must go towards transition technologies, **and USD 1 trillion of planned annual fossil fuel investment** must be redirected towards transition technologies and infrastructure.



### WORLD'S 'MOST CRIMINAL COUNTRIES' RANKING

- **World of Statistics** has shared the ranking of the world's "most criminal countries". On the list, Venezuela has been ranked top, followed by Papua New Guinea (2), Afghanistan (3), South Africa (4), Honduras (5), Trinidad (6), Guyana (7), Syria (8), Somalia (9) and Jamaica (10), respectively.
- India stood at 77 spots while the US and UK were ahead of India in the criminal ranking country. **The USA was at 55th number and the UK at 65th rank, according to the World of Statistics.**
- **Turkey, Germany, and Japan** was among the least criminal countries, ranking at 92nd, 100th, and 135th ranks.
- Separately, **World Population Review (WPR)** yesterday ranked **Afghanistan** in the fourth spot on the list of countries with the highest crime rate in 2023.



- It said that the **country has the fourth-highest crime rate more than 76 crimes are committed in Afghanistan for every 100,000 people**. The crimes have various forms including corruption, drug trafficking, kidnapping, and assassination.

## FREEDOM IN THE WORLD INDEX 2023

- A recent report by Tibet Press highlights that, according to the **Freedom in the World Index for 2023 published by international watchdog Freedom House**, Tibet is the country with the least freedom in the world.
- The report, titled “**Freedom in the World 2023 Report**,” was released by Freedom House on March 9 and identified Tibet, South Sudan, and Syria as the “least-free countries” in the world.
- This is the third consecutive year that **Tibet has been ranked at the bottom of the list in Freedom House’s surveys conducted in 2021 and 2022**.
- The report stated that residents of Tibet were deprived of basic rights, both Chinese and Tibetan, and that the Chinese government is ruthless in suppressing any signs of dissent among Tibetans.
- The **UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights** recently published its Third Periodic Review report on March 6, which emphasized that numerous issues related to the human rights of Tibetans require urgent attention from the international community. As the Chinese government continues to pursue its policy of “Chineseizing” Tibet, the world is closely monitoring its actions.



## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### SKY CANVAS: ARTIFICIAL METEORS SHOWER

- **Recently, a Japanese company, ALE,** plans to launch satellites that will trigger an artificial meteor shower, called Sky Canvas in 2025.
- *What is the Sky Canvas Project?*
- The Sky Canvas project aims to give people all over the world “**the opportunity to view the world’s first live human-made meteor shower.**”
- **ALE plans to use a pressure-driven system of gas tanks** that will shoot pellets at a speed of 8 kilometers per second to trigger the artificial meteor shower.
- The metal “shooting star” particles will be taken to a low-Earth orbit by small satellites. Once the orbit stabilizes, the **particles will be released, and they will travel around part of the planet before entering the atmosphere at an altitude of 60 to 80 kilometers.**
- The company also hopes to collect atmospheric data in the mesosphere (**the third layer of the atmosphere**) to further scientific understanding of climate change.

### WHAT IS UPWARD LIGHTNING?

- The phenomenon of upward lightning, also known as upward flashes, has **long been a fascinating sight for scientists and observers alike.**
- Recently, Brazilian researchers succeeded in capturing high-speed images of the event, showcasing a self-initiated lightning streak that develops from tall objects, traveling upward towards electrified storm clouds.
- *Where Was Upward Lightning Captured?*
- The **research was conducted in São José dos Campos, a city northeast of São Paulo in Brazil.** The Brazilian researchers were successful in photographing the upward lightning with the help of high-speed video cameras, at very high resolution.
- *Factors Enabling Upward Lightning*
- For upward lightning to occur, storm electrification and a cloud charge region’s presence are essential factors.
- The vertical elevation of a tall object increases the electric field’s local intensity on the ground, creating **favorable conditions for the initiation of an upward streak or leader from a tall object.**
- It can also develop in response to an electric field change created by a nearby preceding lightning flash.





- The Mesosphere is too low to be observed by satellites and too high for weather balloons or aircraft.

## AKASH WEAPON SYSTEM & ₹8,161 CRORE BDL CONTRACT

- **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** signed a contract worth **₹8,161 crore** with the Ministry of Defence for the production and supply of Akash Weapon System (AWS) for two regiments of the Indian Army.
- This Hyderabad-based defense **public sector unit** is **gearing up to meet the production demands of the weapon system**, which will be completed within three years.
- *The Akash Weapon System*
- The **Akash Weapon System (AWS)** is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system designed and developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- The missile can target aircraft up to 30 km away and engage targets at an altitude of up to 18 km. The system has advanced radar that can track multiple targets and can be launched from both tracked and wheeled platforms. **The missile system has been inducted into the Indian Army and Indian Air Force.**
- *Countermeasure Dispensing System*
- In addition to the contract for the Akash Weapon System, BDL received an order worth **₹261 crore for CounterMeasure Dispensing System (CMDS)**, which protects aircraft from missiles. This system deploys flares and chaffs to distract and decoy incoming missiles and has been installed on **various aircraft in the Indian Air Force and Indian Navy.**



## EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY'S (ESA) PROBA-3 MISSION

- The **European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 mission**, consisting of two spacecraft, will demonstrate precision formation flying in space. It is set to revolutionize scientific observation and space applications.
- *Mission Overview*
- **Proba-3 is an ambitious mission that aims to form a 144-m long solar coronagraph**, allowing scientists to study the Sun's faint corona closer to the solar rim than has ever before been achieved.
- Achieving precise formation flying opens up a whole new era for science and applications, **including Earth observation and in-orbit satellite servicing.**
- *Mission Objectives*
- **Proba-3's primary goal is to validate strategies, guidance, navigation and control**, and other algorithms in space. Maintaining formation throughout the orbit is difficult due to high fuel costs.

Therefore, each orbit will be divided between 6 hours of **formation flying maneuvers at apogee and the rest of the orbit in passive safe drifting.**

## STARSHIP'S FIRST UNCREWED FLIGHT TEST

- **SpaceX, the private space exploration company founded by Elon Musk,** is set to launch its Starship rocket from its facility in South Texas.
- **The Starship rocket is the most powerful rocket ever constructed, generating nearly 16.5 million pounds of thrust at liftoff.** The inaugural launch of the Starship rocket is scheduled to take place on April 17.
- **The Starship rocket, consisting of a Super Heavy booster and a Starship spacecraft, is designed to be fully reusable.**
- **The Super Heavy booster houses 33 next-generation Raptor engines,** while the Starship spacecraft has six Raptor engines. The upcoming test flight will involve a Super Heavy prototype **called Booster 7 and the Ship 24 upper-stage variant.**
- **The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)** has granted SpaceX's request for an uncrewed flight test of the Starship rocket. The regulatory body has **also issued a restriction in the launch area to ensure the safety of air traffic.**
- **SpaceX had to wait for more than a year to get FAA approval for an orbital launch attempt.** Government personnel will be on the ground to ensure the private space company complies with its license during the test launch.



## QUANTUM TECH. FOR SECURING MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS

- **RRI (Raman Research Institute)** has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Navy on Quantum Tech. to develop secure maritime communications.
- **RRI is an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST).**
- **Under this agreement, RRI's Quantum Information and Computing (QuIC) lab** will lead the research efforts towards developing Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) techniques that the Indian Navy could leverage in the nation's efforts towards securing free space communications.
- **Note: Quantum Technology** is a field of science and engineering that deals with the study and application of quantum mechanics principles. Quantum mechanics is the branch of physics that describes the **behavior of matter and energy at the atomic and subatomic level.**
- *There are Four domains of Quantum Technology:*



1. Quantum communication
2. Quantum simulation
3. Quantum computation
4. Quantum sensing and metrology

## WHAT IS DARK MATTER?

- Recently, researchers have created a detailed map of the **invisible dark matter that makes up 85% of the universe.**
- *What do the Findings Suggest?*
- The **new findings align with the standard model of cosmology based on Einstein's theory of gravity.** The **researchers used the Atacama Cosmology Telescope (ACT)** to map dark matter using light from the early universe, known as the cosmic microwave background (CMB) radiation.
- They used the CMB radiation to map dark matter by observing **how it interacts with the gravity of massive objects like galaxy clusters and lumps of dark matter.**
- The gravitational field generated by these objects bends and distorts the light that passes through them, which helps in detecting dark matter.
- *What is Dark Matter?*
- **Dark matter is a hypothetical form of matter** that is believed to exist in the **universe but is invisible and does not interact with light.**
- **Importance of Dark Matter:** Dark matter is essential to explaining the observed structure of the universe. It helps to **account for the distribution of matter in galaxies and the cosmic web.** Understanding dark matter is important for developing a complete understanding of the universe and its evolution.

## GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION TAG FOR CUMBUM GRAPES

- **Tamil Nadu's famous Cumbum Panneer Thratchai**, also known as Cumbum grapes recently earned the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- The Cumbum Valley located at the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu is known as the **'Grapes City of South India'** and cultivates the **Panneer Thratchai**.
- This variety, **also known as Muscat Hamburg**, is popular for its quick growth and early maturity, ensuring that the crop is available in the market almost throughout the year.
- The **Panneer grapes were first introduced in Tamil Nadu by a French priest in 1832** and are rich in vitamins, tartaric acid and antioxidants and reduce the risk of some chronic diseases.
- They are also known for a superior taste apart from the purplish brown-color. A **GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin** and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India. **It is governed and directed by the WTO Agreement on TRIPS.**

## NATIONAL PANCHAYAT AWARDS WEEK

- The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** is celebrating the National Panchayat Awards Week from 17th to 21st April this year. This week-long celebration is aimed at recognizing the efforts of Panchayati Raj institutions in achieving sustainable development goals and promoting good governance at the grassroots level.
- The **National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated every year on 24th April** to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 that institutionalized Panchayati Raj in India.
- **Theme and Duration**
- The theme of the **National Panchayat Awards Week Celebrations 2023** is **"Panchayaton ke Sankalpon ki Sidhi ka Utsav,"** which means "Celebration of the Success of Panchayat's Aspirations."
- The week-long celebration will last for five days and will include various events and conferences.

## KEY POINTS RELATED TO BANDIPUR TIGER RESERVE

- **Bandipur Tiger Reserve, located in Karnataka**, completed 50 years as a Project Tiger Reserve on April 1, 2023. The reserve was launched in 1973 by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, with the aim to stop the decline in population of tigers.
- Initially, there were 12 tigers in Bandipur when Project Tiger was launched, as a result of protection measures, **there are currently 173 tigers using the area.**
- *What are the Key Points of Bandipur Tiger Reserve?*
- **Bandipur Tiger Reserve lies in one of the richest biodiversity areas** of our country representing “Western Ghats Mountains Biogeography Zone”, surrounded by **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (Tamil Nadu) in the South, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) in the Southwest & on the North West Side the Kabini Reservoir** separates the Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserve.
- The reserve is recognized as one of the Mega Biodiversity Areas in the country and is home to rich floral and faunal diversity.
- Establishment: It was established in 1973 under Project Tiger. In 1985, by including adjacent areas from **Venugopala Wildlife Park**, it was enlarged and named **Bandipur National Park.**



## FIRST EVER ANTI-SPYWARE DECLARATION

- On March 30, **the US and 10 other nations issued the first-ever significant anti-spyware declaration.** It recognized the threat posed by the misuse of commercial spyware and seeks to realize the importance of stringent domestic and international controls on the proliferation and use of this technology.
- The declaration stated that Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States would take decisive steps to create robust guardrails and procedures within their respective systems.
- US President Joe Biden issued an executive order on March 29, **prohibiting the US federal government from using spyware.**
- This move came after several high-profile incidents, including the **Pegasus spyware scandal involving the Israeli company NSO Group.**
- Although Israel was not singled out in the anti-spyware declaration, the **NSO Group was frequently brought up in a media briefing** by a senior US administration official.

## KEY POINTS RELATED TO ERAVIKULAM NATIONAL PARK

- **Eravikulam National Park (ENP)** is a 97 km<sup>2</sup> national park located in the Idukki and Ernakulam districts of Kerala, India. Established in 1978, it is the first national park in the state.
- Administered by the Kerala Department of Forests and Wildlife, Munnar Wildlife Division, ENP is known for its rich biodiversity and is home to various endemic species.
- *New Attraction in ENP*



- ENP has a new attraction – a Fernarium, which is the first of its kind in the hill station. The Fernarium is a collection of **ferns that have been planted inside the park.**

## WHO IS CHRISTINA HAMMOCK KOCH?

- In a significant moment for space exploration, astronaut Christina Hammock Koch has been **announced as the first woman to circle the Moon.**
- The US space agency, NASA, has declared that Koch will be the mission specialist when **four humans board the Orion spacecraft for a trip around the Moon.**
- *Christina Koch – A Career Overview*
- **Christina Koch joined NASA in 2013** and has served as a flight engineer on the International Space Station (ISS) for Expeditions 59, 60, and 61. She holds Bachelor of Science degrees **in Electrical Engineering and Physics and a Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering**, all from North Carolina State University.
- Before joining NASA, she worked as an Electrical Engineer at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), **where she contributed to scientific instruments on several NASA space science missions.**
- Koch was first launched into space in 2019 on the Soyuz MS-12 spacecraft and has spent a total of 328 days in space, **conducting six spacewalks, including the first three all-women spacewalks.**
- *Artemis II Mission: What is it all about?*
- The **announcement of Christina Koch's involvement in the mission has officially kicked off the preparation for the Artemis II mission**, which will bring humanity one step closer to landing on the Moon since the Apollo missions.



## GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAG FOR BASOHLI PAINTINGS

- The world-famous Basohli Painting from the Kathua district in Jammu and Kashmir has obtained the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag. This is the first time in the history of **GI registration that the Jammu region got a GI tag for handicrafts.**
- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) Jammu granted the GI tag to Basohli Painting after a long legal process.
- *What is Geographical Indication (GI)?*
- Geographical Indication (GI) is a type of **Intellectual Property right granted to goods that originate in a specific geographical location** and have distinct nature, quality, and characteristics that are linked to that location.



- GI tagging provides legal protection to registered products and promotes economic prosperity for producers and related stakeholders, including contribution to the GDP of the country.
- *Initiation of the GI Tagging Process*
- In **December 2020**, **NABARD in consultation with the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom** initiated the process for GI tagging of 9 products of the Jammu region during the difficult times of COVID. The GI tags have now finally been granted to these products, including Basohli Painting, after a long legal process.

## WHAT IS COPYRIGHT ACT, 1957?

- Recently, the Bombay High Court has disposed of the petitions by an actor, who challenged **the sales tax levied on her income from advertisements and performances in award shows**.
- The case has raised questions about whether actors hold a Copyright for their performances and whether they are liable to pay sales tax for it. It also **deals with how Intellectual Property is treated for taxation purposes**.
- *What is the Case about?*
- The actor challenged the imposition of a sales tax on her **revenue from advertisements and award show performances**. The tax department argued that she was selling her copyright and thus owed an indirect tax.
- However, **the actor argued that, as per Section 2 (d) of the Copyright Act**, the producers of the shows are the original creators and possess the respective videos' copyright and she couldn't sell or transfer it adding that she is a 'performer' **under the law and acquired performer's rights under section 38 and 38A of Copyright Act**.



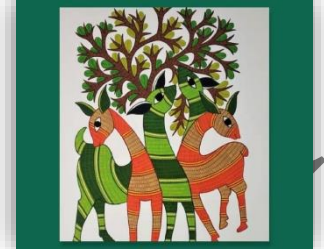
## UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND

- India is the **fourth highest donor to the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF)**, which funds at least 68 projects worldwide linked to George Soros's Open Society Foundation. India has put George Soros's NGO on watchlist in 2016.
- *What is UNDEF?*
- **UNDEF was established in 2005 by UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan** as a United Nations General Trust Fund to support democratization efforts around the world.
- It was welcomed by the **General Assembly in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit**.
- UNDEF plays a unique role in complementing the UN's other work with governments to strengthen democratic governance around the world.
- *UNDEF's Mandate and Projects:*

- UNDEF funds projects that empower civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. The majority of **UNDEF funds go to local civil society organizations (CSOs)**.

## MADHYA PRADESH'S GOND PAINTINGS GRANTED GI TAG

- The **well-known Gond painting of Madhya Pradesh** has been granted the **coveted Geographical Indication (GI) tag**, which safeguards and acknowledges the work of tribal artists and requires approval from a committee for non-tribal artists to use the art.
- A **GI tag is a symbol used on items that are exclusively produced** in a specific geographical region and have characteristics or a reputation that are associated with that location.
- This **tag is applied to a variety of goods, including food products, handicrafts, industrial items, agriculture products, and alcoholic beverages**. The GI Tag certifies that only the registered and authorized user is permitted to use the name of the popular product.
- **Patangarh village in Dindori district is a noteworthy village** where every household has an artist, and their artwork is not only popular in the state but also internationally recognized.
- Narbadiya Armo, a physically disabled tribal woman from Khannat village, **produces mouth paintings and serves as a role model for women who feel helpless**.
- **With the GI tag**, Narbadiya Armo's paintings will receive recognition, a unique identity, and a fair price for her artwork.



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