



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

21 Nov to 26 Nov



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GS1

Population and associated issues

Changes in Demography

Source: [Indian Express](#)



Direction: Population and related issues can be asked under different themes in multiple papers. Moreover, India is said to surpass China in population is a significant change. Keep notes ready on demography

Context:

- **2022:** China will for the first time register an **absolute decline in its population**
- **2023:** India's population, **projected by the United Nations** to reach 1.428 billion, **will surpass China's** 1.425 billion

What factors are behind this shift?

- **Falling Mortality** due to increased education levels, public health and vaccination programmes, access to food and medical care, and provision of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- **Increasing life expectancy at birth:** Between 1950 and 2020, it went up from 43.7 to 78.1 years for China and from 41.7 to 70.1 years for India.
- **A drop in fertility:** It has slowed down population growth, ultimately resulting in absolute declines (in the case of China).
 - **The total fertility rate (TFR)** — the number of babies an average woman bears over her lifetime
 - A TFR of 2.1 is considered “**replacement-level fertility**”. Simply understood, a woman having two children basically replaces herself and her partner with two new lives. **Since all infants may not survive** to realise their reproductive potential, the replacement TFR is taken at slightly above two
 - **India's TFR is already below-replacement**, but it will take a few generations for the absolute population to start declining

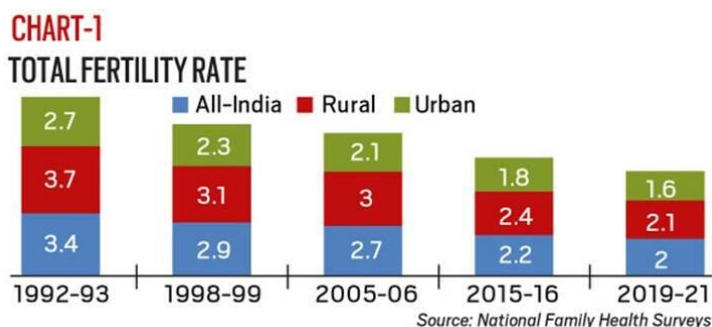


Chart 1 shows how sharply the TFR has fallen for India in the last three decades

Implications of these demographic changes:



- **For China:**
 - **Decline in prime working age population:** It creates a vicious cycle wherein the number of working people to support dependent decreases but the number of dependents starts increasing
 - In response, **China officially ended its one-child policy**, introduced in 1980, in 2016.
- **India has an opportunity of reaping a demographic dividend'**: the working-age population's share in the overall population crossed **50% only in 2007** and **will peak at 57%** towards the mid-2030s (see Chart 2).
 - But reaping demographic dividend is contingent upon the **creation of meaningful employment opportunities** for a young population

Conclusion:

Going forward, the challenge before India's policymakers is to **promote growth that generates jobs outside of agriculture**. The surplus labour from farms should find employment in sectors — **Manufacturing and modern services** — where productivity, value-addition and average incomes are higher. In the absence of such structural transformation, the "**demographic dividend**" could well turn into a "**demographic nightmare**".

Insta Links

[Moving policy away from population control](#)

Mains Links



Q. Despite the Consistent experience of high growth, India still goes with the lowest indicators of human development. Examine the issues that make balanced and inclusive development elusive. (UPSC 2021)

Prelims Links

Population Control Measures- Background

Population control measures; - India was the first country in world to Introduce family planning in 1951, since then it introduced many measures to control population.

- **A population policy committee was established in 1952.** However, the policies framed in the early fifties were largely arbitrary and so no success.
- In **second five year plan**, number of **family planning clinics** increased, but most of them were in urban areas so did not provide adequate results.
- Government established a **family planning department** and promoted adoption of **copper -T** during third five year plan.
- **1976 Population policy; - its main features included**
 - Increasing the minimum legal age of marriage for girls and **boys to 18 and 21** respectively.
 - **Monetary incentives** for birth control.
 - Improving the literacy levels of females both through the formal and non-formal channels.
 - **Forced sterilization** was permitted, which was later on given up.
 - Population was made as a factor for sharing central resources with that of the states.
 - In 1993, an expert group under the chairmanship of **MS Swaminathan** was constituted for formulation national population policy. It finally resulted into **National Population Policy 2000**, its main focus was
 - To bring the total fertility rate (TFR) to **replacement level by 2010**.
 - Achieve goal of **population stabilization by 2045**.

Q. India is regarded as a country with “Demographic Dividend”. This is due to– (UPSC 2011)

- (a) Its high population in the age group below 15 years.
- (b) Its high population in the age group of 15-64 years.
- (c) Its high population in the age group above 65 years.
- (d) Its high total population.

Answers: B



GS2

Indian Constitution

Constitution Day

Source: [The Hindu](#), [Indian Express](#), [Indian Express](#)

Direction: This is important for Mains. Keep ready the points about the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian constitution.

Context: The Constitution of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on **November 26, 1949**, for '**We the people of India**'. After being unnoticed for a long, the day began to be celebrated as **Constitution Day since 2015**

The Constitution of India after **more than 72 years** of its adoption continues to function as the framework within which the government of our country operates.

- Another testimony is that despite amending it more than **100 times its basic premises remain unaltered** because of the **political and judicial maturity**
- An **enduring constitution** is a rare phenomenon and acts as the soul of a nation or the **defining identity** of a country



Sources of Constituion:

- **Tilak's Swaraj Bill of 1895** (which included rights to free speech, free press, and equality before the law)

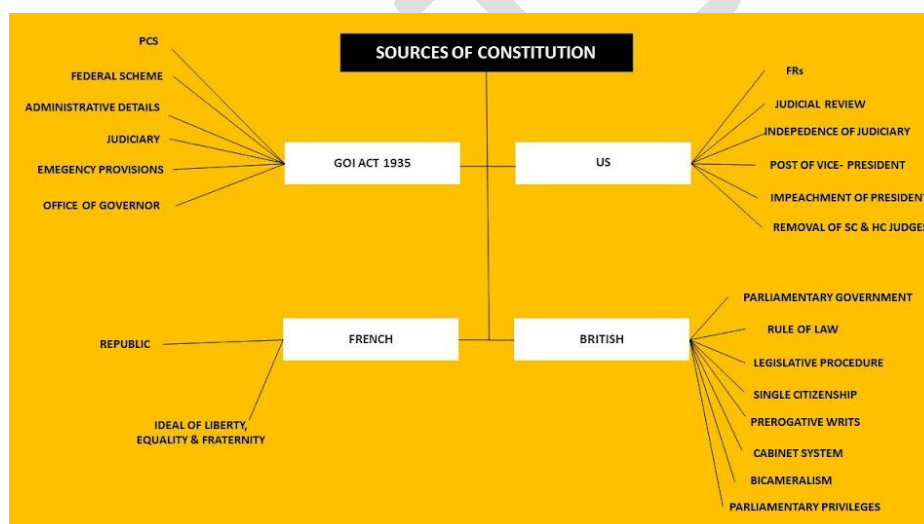


- **Declaration of Rights of 1918** (where the Indian National Congress demanded that civil and political rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom of press and association and for all this to be included in the Government of India Act 1919).
- **Resolution of Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes** at the Karachi Session of the Congress in 1931
- **Government of India Act, 1935**

Constitution has a clear imprint on day-to-day life:

- Rights we enjoy— it is the Constitution which made this possible through fundamental rights.
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom to choose a calling of our liking
- Freedom to buy, sell and carry on any trade
- Freedom to wear garments of our choice

All these **freedoms emanate from the Constitution** in the form of fundamental rights.



Weakness of the constitution:

- **Law is a weak source to bring about change in human thinking and behaviour:** Just because the Constitution declared all Indians as equals, equality does not prevail from the day of such a declaration.
- **Poor awareness:** Constitutional values such as respect for women, empathy towards the weak and the meek, and rejecting dowry, caste and creed as the basis to measure the values of a person are seldom practised.
- Hardly any focus on the Constitution at the **school level**, not to speak of **tertiary education**

Changes in the Indian Constitution:



The Constitution of India is called a **living document rather than a closed and static rulebook**. The procedure of amendment in the constitution is laid down in Part XX (Article 368) of the Constitution of India to meet the aspirations and the need of the coming generations but despite amendments to make the much-needed changes the basic principles have remained inviolable.

Despite amendments, the basic premises remained unchanged:

- ❖ **The farsightedness of the constituent assembly** - It is true that the Constitution makers were very farsighted and provided many solutions for future situations.
 - They wanted the Constitution to be '**flexible**' and at the same time '**rigid**'. They have created a different kinds of amendment procedures ranging from a simple majority to ratification by the states.
- ❖ **Basic structure Doctrine** - The Supreme Court has given a clear list of the basic features of our Constitution, which cannot be amended. Judiciary has the power to decide whether an amendment violates basic structure or not. The Kesavananda Bharati ruling has set clear limits on Parliament's power to amend the Constitution which helps in making the basic premises unchangeable.
 - The doctrine of basic structure restrained the authoritarianism of the government.
- ❖ **Maturity of the Political Leadership**-. Political parties, political leaders, the government, and Parliament, accepted and followed in letter and spirit the idea of an inviolable basic structure. Even when there was talk about a 'review' of the Constitution, that exercise could not cross the limits set by the theory of the basic structure.
- ❖ **Judicial efforts and interventions** – During the controversy between the Judiciary and the Parliament, the Parliament thought that it had the unchecked power and responsibility to make laws (and amendments) but the Judiciary insisted that it has to take place within the framework provided by the Constitution and parliament should not bypass the basic features.
 - **For example** - After the Supreme Court gave the ruling in the Kesavananda case some attempts were made to ask the Court to reconsider its ruling. When these failed, the **42nd amendment was made and parliamentary supremacy** was asserted. But the Court again repeated its earlier stand in the Minerva Mills case (1980).
- ❖ **Indian Constitution accepts the necessity of modifications according to changing needs of society**. - Even after so many changes in society, the Constitution continues to work effectively because of this ability to be dynamic, to be open to interpretations and the ability to respond to the changing situation. This is a hallmark of a democratic constitution
- ❖ **There has been enough flexibility in interpretations**-. In a democracy, practices and ideas keep evolving over time and the society engages in experiments according to these. A constitution, which protects democracy and yet allows for the evolution of new practices, becomes not only durable but also the object of respect from the citizens.

Conclusion

The **Constitution empowers the people as much as the people empower the Constitution**. The framers had realised that no matter how well written and how detailed, it would have little meaning if it failed to establish a symbiotic bond with the institutions and the people.

It was the **foresight, intellect and ingenuity** of the great men in the Constituent Assembly that helped succeed in framing a constitution whose acceptability has only grown with each passing generation.

Insta Links



Mains Links

Q. 'Despite undergoing many amendments, the constitution of India has remained intact and the basic premises have not changed'. Comment. (15M)

Prelims Links

Q. Consider the following statements (UPSC 2022):

1. Pursuant to the report of the H.N. Sanyal Committee, the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 was passed.
2. The Constitution of India empowers the Supreme Court and the High Courts to punish for contempt of themselves.
3. The Constitution of India defines Civil Contempt and Criminal Contempt.
4. In India, the Parliament is vested with the power to make laws on Contempt of Court.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4
- (c) 3 and 4 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer – B

Q. What was the exact constitutional status of India on 26th January 1950? (UPSC 2021)

- (a) A Democratic Republic
- (b) A Sovereign Democratic Republic
- (c) Sovereign Secular Democratic Republic
- (d) A Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic

Answer: (b)

Q. Constitutional government means (UPSC 2021)



- (a) a representative government of a nation with federal structure.
- (b) a government whose Head enjoys nominal powers.
- (c) a government whose Head enjoys real power.
- (d) a government limited by the terms of the constitution

Answer: (d)

Constitutional Posts and Bodies.

SC calls out centre over short tenures of CEC

Source: [TH](#)

Direction: The article highlights the SC's views on the deficiencies in India's Election Commissioners appointment procedure, as well as solutions to address these shortcomings.

Context: According to the Supreme Court, the government does not give much importance to Election Commissioners' independence, as evidenced by the reduction in average tenures of Chief Election Commissioners (CECs) from over 8 years (in 1950s) to just a few hundred days (after 2004).

Background:

- Presently, Election Commissioners are appointed by the **President of India**, on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- The Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, prescribes that the term of a CEC and Election Commissioners is **6 years or till the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.
- **Article 324** of the Indian Constitution, dealing with the appointment of Election Commissioners, called for the enactment of legislation to oversee such appointments, but the government is yet to do so.
- The SC was hearing **petitions seeking reforms** in the system of appointing the Election Commissioners.

What has the SC said about the Election Commissioners?



- The Constitution of India has vested **vast powers** on the shoulders of the CEC and the 2 Election Commissioners.
- Apart from **competence**, **character** is crucial, so that those appointed as Election Commissioners will not allow themselves to be bulldozed.
- In the absence of a law to oversee such appointments, **the silence of the India Constitution is being exploited** by all.
- The government assures that the person nominated does not serve the full six years by picking someone close to 65, thus **undermining independence**.
- An Election Commissioner should be someone who can take a stand even if it means sacrificing his/her life, rather than a passive "yes-man."
- **If ECs become CECs**, then there is no independent mechanism to consider persons other than ECs for the post of CEC.
- The court gave the government 24 hours to produce the file of appointment of former IAS officer **Arun Goel** as EC, to know the mechanism followed for making this appointment.
 - **Arun Goel**, a former IAS officer from the Punjab cadre, is set to succeed Rajiv Kumar as CEC when his term expires in 2025.

Why are reforms in the system required?

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has earned public trust due to its exemplary work as an **independent and neutral authority**.
- This achievement has been made possible because as a constitutional authority, the ECI's **autonomy is guaranteed and its functioning insulated** from the interference of the executive and judiciary.
- However, there is growing concern on that front. **For example**,
 - The CEC and the two commissioners joined an **online interaction called by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO)**
 - The panel imposed Covid restrictions on electioneering **only after the PM completed his campaign**
 - **ECI's unwillingness to censure the ruling party's leaders** for violating the Model Code of Conduct while pulling up Opposition leaders during the 2019 general election.

The government's reply:

- **Appointment on the basis of a time-tested convention:**
 - A list of serving and retired officials in the position of Secretaries is prepared for consideration of the Prime Minister and President.
 - The PM, after considering the names, recommends one name to the President, along with a note.
 - The appointment of ECs follows seniority and the senior among the two ECs goes on to become the CEC.
- **There is no vacuum** in the Constitution on the issue.
- If the Constitution takes a position despite multiple ideas put forward by the original Constituent Assembly, **that position cannot be contested**.



- The separation of powers cannot be challenged, as it is the **basic feature** of the Constitution.
- This matter is for Parliament to debate and not the court.
- Except for a few odd cases, there had been no complaints about the Election Commission's independence, and its work had even **won worldwide fame**.
- **Suggestions given by the SC:** An appointment committee including the Chief Justice of India to appoint the Election Commissioners to ensure neutrality. **SC has also advised the Government to take a leaf from the Appointment of ECs in UK, Pakistan and Nepal.** According to experts, though the SC is correct in emphasising the need for the ECI to be protected from political pressure, the **CJI's participation** on the appointment panel will provide that cover is **a questionable assumption**.

Conclusion: A CEC of the calibre of **TN Sheshan** is required to ensure free and fair elections and to strengthen democracy in India. Though such personalities appear occasionally, appointments without any bias can provide close to one. There is no reason to change the **arm's length relationship**, which the judiciary has respected and maintained with the ECI previously.

About the Election Commission of India (ECI):

- It is a permanent **constitutional** body established in 1950 to conduct and regulate elections in the country.
- **Article 324** of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to Parliament, state legislatures, the office of the President of India, and the office of Vice-President of India shall be vested in the election commission.
- Thus, the Election Commission is **an all-India body** in the sense that it is common to both the Central government and the state governments.
- It is **a multi-member body** (1 CEC + 2 ECs) and the tenure of election commissioners is not prescribed by Indian Constitution.
- The CEC of India can be **removed** from their office in a manner similar to the removal of a judge of the SC of India, while other ECs can be removed by the President of India on the recommendation of the CEC.
- A CEC has never been impeached in India.

Insta Links: [Appointment of Election Commissioners](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Critically analyse the role and powers of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in conducting free and fair elections. (250 words)

Prelims Links:



Consider the following statements about the Election Commission of India:

1. Since inception, the Election Commission has been a multi-member body consisting of three election commissioners.
2. Election commissioner or a regional commissioner cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the chief election commissioner.
3. They determine the territorial areas of the electoral constituencies throughout the country.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1, 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 2, 3 only
- d) 1, 2 only

Solution: c)

Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

India is losing its cherished right to know

Source: [TH](#)

Direction: This is an editorial article. The article highlights how the 2019 amendments to the RTI Act affected the functioning of the Central Information Commission.

Context:

- The Central Information Commission's (CIC) most important role is to decide whether particular information sought by a person should be disclosed or not.
- However, the commission appears to have abandoned its core task in matters of greater public importance.

Background:

- Citizens can file applications under the **Right to Information (RTI) Act** with any public entity and are guaranteed a response from that public body's public information officer **within 30 days**.
- If the citizen does not receive a response or is **dissatisfied with the response**, s/he may **file an appeal** at the departmental level, followed by a second and ultimate appeal with the Information Commission.
- Each state has its own State Information Commission that handles second appeals involving state agencies. The CIC is in the centre.



Functioning of CIC as a transparent body:

- The commission was an **outspoken supporter of transparency** in public life.
- It had issued orders in a wide range of **public-interest cases**. For example,
 - Boldly declaring that political parties were subject to the RTI Act and thus accountable to the public.
 - Requiring disclosure of the current Prime Minister's educational qualifications and the Reserve Bank of India's list of wilful loan defaulters.

The 2019 amendment to the RTI Act:

KEY POINTS OF DIFFERENCE		
The bill seeks to empower the central govt on deciding salaries, and other terms of service of information commissioners.		
RTI Act, 2005 RTI (Amendment) Bill, 2019		
Term	Quantum of salary	Deductions in salary
CHIEF information commissioner (CIC) and information commissioners will have a tenure of five years	CIC pay equivalent to CECs, Central ICs and state CIC to election commissioners and state ICs to chief secretary	IF such officials are receiving pension or other retirement benefits, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to the pension
CENTRE will notify the tenure of all information commissioners (ICs) at state and central level	SALARIES and allowances of these officers will be determined by the Central government	THESE provisions have been removed
Source: PRS Legislative Research		

Impact of amendments on the functioning of CIC:

- **Delegating its mandate to the Home Ministry:**
 - The Commission has delegated matters of public concern to the Ministry, such as cases demanding disclosure of files related to the COVID-19 national lockdown or data pertaining to phone tapping orders.
 - In most cases, the Ministries reiterate their previous position of **non-disclosure**, usually on the **vague grounds of national interest**.
- **Violation of the cardinal rule of natural justice:** No one should be a judge in their own cause. However, the Ministry that stands accused of violating the RTI Act decides whether a disclosure is necessary.
- **Huge pendency of cases fairly simple to adjudicate:** For example, in a case seeking disclosure of documents relating to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019, the commission has kept the matter pending for more than three months now.
- **New hurdles to a citizen's demand for accountability:** As the disclosure of information in public-interest matters is denied.
- **Protection against irritants:** Bureaucrats reject RTIs as they are not afraid of facing penal provisions outlined in Section 20 of the RTI Act.

**Way ahead:**

- Citizens must exert intense pressure on authorities to appoint **commissioners of integrity**.
- Lawyers must assist willing citizens in taking cases to court and seeking justice.

Conclusion: There is a need for civil society and citizens to pressurise authorities to ensure transparency and neutrality of CIC. If they fail to do so, India will lose its cherished right to know.

Central Information Commission (CIC):

- Established by the Central Government in 2005, under the provisions of the Right to Information Act (2005).
- **Members:** The Commission consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioners.
- **Appointment:** They are appointed by the **President** on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
- **Tenure:** The Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner shall hold office for such term as prescribed by the Central Government or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They are not eligible for reappointment.

Power and Functions of CIC:

- It is the duty of the Commission to receive and inquire into a complaint from any person regarding information requested under RTI, 2005.
- The Commission can **order an inquiry** into any matter if there are reasonable grounds (suo-moto power).
- While inquiring, the Commission has the powers of a **civil court** in respect of summoning, requiring documents etc.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the Right to Information Act in India and the UK Freedom of Information Act came into force in the same year – 2005?

Insta Links: [Pending RTI pleas](#)

Mains Links:

Q. The Central Information Commission, the apex body under India's transparency regime must take urgent steps to remove hurdles in the citizens' quest for accountability. Examine. (250 words)



Government policies and interventions

The need to have full disclosure electoral bonds and political funding

Source: [TH](#)

Direction: This article demonstrates how electoral bonds have concealed funding to political parties even more, its impacts, way ahead and a best practice in the conclusion.

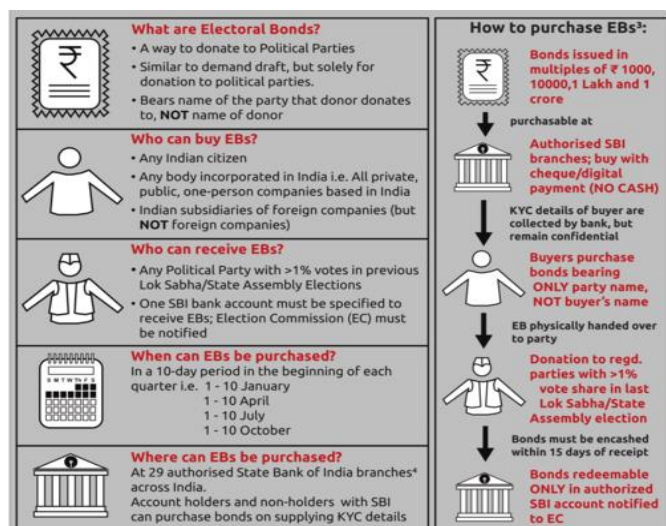
Context: According to an RTI reply, electoral bonds worth ₹10,246 crore have been sold by the State Bank of India (SBI) since the instrument was launched in March 2018.

Background in which electoral bonds were introduced:

- **Political parties violating FCRA:** In 2014, the Delhi HC found the leading political parties guilty of illegally accepting donations from a foreign company, in contravention of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 1976.
- **Amending FCRA:** Following this, the two parties came together to amend the FCRA to retrospectively legalise the violations, **bringing in full anonymity** to corporate and foreign political donors.
- **Old vs new provisions:**
 - Previously, only profit-making domestic companies could contribute to political parties, now, loss-making can as well.
 - Foreign companies could not previously contribute. A foreign firm operating in India or a foreign entity through a shell company may fund Indian political parties now.
- **Capping cash donations:** In 2017, the anonymous cash donations to political parties were reduced from ₹20,000 to ₹2,000 **to ensure greater transparency** in political funding.

Introduction of Electoral bonds:

- The Electoral Bond Scheme (EBS), announced in the 2017 Union Budget, was notified by the Central Government in **2018**.
- These bonds can be purchased from select SBI branches by any Indian person or corporation incorporated in India under the scheme.
- The introduction of electoral bonds brought a **new form of anonymity** to thousands of crores of donations.



How did electoral bonds introduce a new type of anonymity?

- **By reducing public and legislative oversight:** For example, only the ruling party via the SBI has a full account of all donations being made via electoral bonds.
- **Political parties do not disclose electoral bond donors:** The only requirement is the annual audit reports with all donations received via electoral bonds. However, these reports are submitted with great delays.

Impact of anonymity:

- **Dilutes one voter-one vote principle:** This is because electoral bonds give political power to companies, wealthy individual donors and foreign entities, to influence public policies.
- **Undue advantage to the ruling party,** whether at the Centre or in a State.

Suggestions given by the SC: In 2021 (in response to ADR PIL challenging EBs as unconstitutional), the SC refused to stay the sale of electoral bonds and suggested matching the following (between the purchaser of the bond and political party) to bring in transparency.

Problems with the match the following approach:

- **No ordinary person has the time or money** to go through documents on government websites or go through income tax returns.
- **The total number of registered companies is unknown,** and many do not report political donations even if they file annual financial statements.
- **All private companies' annual reports are not easily accessible** on the government's website since they are not mandated to produce them aside from filing annual returns.

Way ahead:

- The information regarding donors and donations should be accessible to the Parliament, the Election Commission of India, and the Opposition via SBI.



- The **RTI** must be strengthened, as only RTI petitions filed with the SBI provide insight into the millions of dollars spent on political parties.

Conclusion: Companies and political parties can show moral leadership by voluntarily disclosing the identities of recipients and donors, as the **Jharkhand Mukti Morcha** did recently.

Insta Links: [Opaque political financing could cost democracy dear](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Trace the changes witnessed in political funding with the introduction of the electoral bond scheme. Critically analyse the potential of electoral bonds in fulfilling the goal of transparency in political fundraising. (250 words)

A tougher law to prevent cruelty to animals: Need and Concerns

Source: [IE](#)

Direction: The article discusses how the shortcomings of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960 led to the creation of a new draft on the subject, key provisions in the draft and future challenges.

Context: The Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying have opened a draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill, 2022, for public comment.

Background:

- The draft is an attempt to overhaul **the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960**, introducing 61 amendments to the law.
- Along with animal welfare organisations, **the Supreme Court** (in A Nagaraja case 2014) asked the Parliament to amend the PCA Act to provide an effective deterrent.
- In 2020, **a group of MPs** cutting across party lines wrote to the then Animal Husbandry Minister, urging that the punishment in the 1960 Act be increased.
- **The main changes proposed in the 1960 law:**
- **Five freedoms to animals:** Every person in charge of an animal must ensure that the animal has freedom from -
 - Thirst, hunger and malnutrition;
 - Discomfort due to environment;
 - Pain, injury and diseases;
 - Fear and distress, and the
 - Freedom to express normal behaviour for the species
- **Defining “gruesome cruelty”:** Any act involving animals that causes extreme pain and suffering and is likely to leave the animal disabled for life. It proposed to include “**Bestiality**” as a crime under “Gruesome cruelty.”
- **Several offences have been made cognizable:** This means offenders can be arrested without an arrest warrant.



- **Responsibility of local governments:** In the case of a community animal, the local government (municipality/panchayats) shall be responsible for taking care of such animals in a manner developed by the State Government or by the Board.
- **More stringent punishments:** The draft proposes fines from Rs 50,000 - 75,000 or the cost of the animal, whichever is more, or with **imprisonment of 1-3 years**, or with both, for the offence of gruesome cruelty. It suggests a maximum of **5 years imprisonment** for killing an animal.

Need for strengthening the law:

- **Increasing instances of cruelty to animals in India.**
- **Poor deterrence for potential offenders:** First-time offenders under the PCA Act are punished with a fine of Rs 10-50, otherwise a fine between Rs 25 - 100, a jail term of three months, or both.

Concerns:

- Simply increasing the quantum of punishment may not be enough to stop cruelty against animals.
- **Some already marginalised communities** like madaris and snake charmers **may be disproportionately affected.**

SC on cruelty to the animal while recently hearing the Jallikattu case:

- Prevention of cruelty is not an "absolute idea".
- The Constitution commands us to be compassionate to all living creatures, but it should have a **balance**. Should we, for example, be compassionate if a mosquito lands on us?
- Animals should be treated as **friends, and brothers** and they have the **same rights** as human beings.
- The Constitution recognises **liberty**, which is inherent in every living being, whether it be in any form of life.

Way ahead:

- Behavioural changes through sensitisation programs.
- **Steps are needed to mitigate the larger issues** of vanishing animal habitats and climate change exacerbating man-animal conflict.

Insta Links: [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Critically comment on the Centre's move to notify new rules to regulate livestock markets under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (PCA). (200 Words)



New draft digital data protection bill: How it compares with the older version and laws elsewhere

Source: [TH](#)

Direction: Previously we have seen [the key provisions of the new Bill](#). These are extra points and will help in understanding how the new Bill differs from its older version and data protection laws around the world.

Context: The draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022, was recently opened by the Union Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) for public comments.

How the 2022 Bill differs from its older version:

	2022 Bill	2019 Bill	Conclusion
Personal data	Completely inapplicable to data processed manually	Only excluded data processed manually specifically by small entities	The new Bill provides a lower degree of protection
Data localization	Relaxes data localization rules and permits data to flow to certain global destinations, based on their data security landscape.	Mandated enterprises to keep a copy of sensitive personal data within India and prohibited the transfer of critical personal data from the country	The new Bill made the changes to address the concerns expressed by IT firms
Regulation of social media and non-personal data	Drops provisions to regulate non-personal data (information that does not reveal the identity of an individual) and social media	Included	
The right to post-mortem privacy	Included	No such provision	It would allow the data principal (users) to nominate another individual in case of death or incapacity
Territorial application of the law	Excludes data processing by Indian data fiduciaries that collect and process personal data outside India, of data principals who are not located in India	Included	Impact statutory protections available for clients of Indian start-ups operating overseas, thus impacting their competitiveness
Penalty	The focus is more on financial penalties	Criminal conviction	



Data protection laws in other geographies:

- **EU model:**
 - In the EU, the **right to privacy** is enshrined as a **fundamental right**, protecting an individual's dignity and her right over the data she generates.
 - **The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, a comprehensive data protection law, has been criticised for being stringent, but it serves as the **model for most legislation** produced globally.
- **US model:** Privacy protection is largely defined as "liberty protection" focused on the protection of the individual's personal space from the government.
- **China model:** New Chinese laws on data privacy and security gives Chinese data principals new rights as it seeks to prevent the misuse of personal data.

Conclusion: Though the new data protection bill of India is significantly simpler this time excluding non-personal data, it will require several modifications before it is practical.

Insta Links: [New draft digital data protection bill tabled for comments](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Critically analyse the provisions of the Data Protection Bill. Mention the changes suggested by various committees on the data protection bill.

Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections

Govt. forms panel to look into MGNREGA's efficacy

Source: [TH](#)

Direction: There have been demands from several quarters in India to scrap the MGNREGA. The article emphasises that, while the scheme has flaws, it is not useless. This is why the government has established a committee to reform the scheme.

Background:

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was enacted in **2005**, and the **demand-driven** scheme promises **100 days of unskilled work** per year to every rural household that wishes to participate.
- It was launched as a **poverty alleviation instrument** for the rural region, providing them with a **safety net** in the form of guaranteed work and wages. The scheme now has **15.51 crore** active workers enrolled.



- However, it was felt that states like **UP and Bihar** where there is a higher level of poverty, **haven't been able to utilise the scheme optimally.**
- The scheme has also been criticised by economists like Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Panagariya as an **"inefficient instrument of shifting income to the poor"**.

About the committee:

- **The Sinha committee** (named after former Rural Development secretary Amarjeet Sinha) has now been tasked to study -
 - The various factors behind the demand for MGNREGA work,
 - The expenditure trends and inter-State variations, and
 - The composition of work.
- It will suggest (within 3 months) what changes in focus and governance structures are required to make MGNREGA more effective.

Criticism of the scheme:

- **Lack of tangible asset creation:** Bihar, for example, despite its levels of poverty, does not generate assets to make a concrete difference, while Kerala which is economically better has been utilising it for asset creation.
- **Allocation of funds is not as per the needs of the states:** From the above example, while Bihar needs MGNREGA more, Kerala cannot be denied funds because of the current structure of the programme.

Conclusion: Regardless of all the criticism, MGNREGA acted as a **crucial safety net during the COVID pandemic**. Thus, the scheme needs to be reformed to provide not only social (safety net for the vulnerable) but also economic (tangible asset creation) benefits.



Insta Links: [MGNREGA](#)

**Mains Links:**

Q. Discuss the key features and significance of MGNREGA. What are the recent concerns regarding the implementation of the scheme? (15M)

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements**India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) approved**

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Direction: The agreement is significant since it is 1st such agreement for India with a developed country in the past 10 years.

Context: Australian Parliament ratified India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) in a landmark moment for India.

Why the deal is a landmark?

- **It is 1st such agreement for India with a developed country:** India has free trade deals mostly with South Asian countries and hardly served India's trade interests.
- Shows **India's negotiating skills**
- The deal has the potential to raise bilateral trade between India and Australia to **nearly \$50 bn** in the next five years and create **at least 10 lakh jobs** esp. in the start-up economy.
- Provide a **model for future FTA** with other developed countries.

Key features of the deal:

- **Duty-free access to the Australian market** for over 6000 broad sectors e.g., labour-intensive exports in textiles, leather, furniture, jewellery etc. (dairy and agriculture excluded)
- **Reduce the import prices for a number of commodities for India:** duty-free import of Indian wines, and Australian coal at competitive rates.
- **Includes service sector** (important for India labour) such as IT, Health, ITES etc.
- **Covers India's concerns** on Rules of Origin (RoO), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, movement of persons etc.
 - **E.g., the 'Melt and Pour' provision for the steel industry:** It only allows Steel that is produced locally in Australia can be imported into India
- **Movement of Trained Professional:** The deal provides for **an annual quota of 1,800 for yoga teachers and Indian chefs** and a commitment to over one lakh of India's outgoing students to Australia for post-study work visas.
- **Resolves DTAA:** The trade deal also resolves the long-pending Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) related to IT/ITES.

India-Australia Trade Relations:

- **Trade:** Currently India's trade with Australia is around **\$25 bn**



- **India's exports to Australia:** Manufactured goods such as petroleum, medicaments, diamonds, jewellery, railway coaches and vehicles, milled rice and herbicides
- **India's imports:** Eighty-two per cent of its imports from Australia are coal, gold, copper ore, aluminium oxide, liquified natural gas, manganese ore, aluminium waste, pigments, lentils, etc.

Inst-Links

[India Australia: Basics](#)

[Transparency in FTA](#)

Insta Curious

The commonality between India and Australia: India and Australia both are **Commonwealth countries** and **parliamentary democracies** with **similar legal systems**. Besides, India and Australia also are members of the **Quad**, a trilateral **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** and the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**.

Insta Mains

Q. Australia's interests do not just align with India's; they are inextricably entwined. Discuss. (150 words)

Insta Prelims

Q. The term 'Digital Single Market Strategy' seen in the news refers to (UPSC 2017)

- (a) ASEAN
- (b) BRICS
- (c) EU
- (d) G20

Ans: C

Q. 'Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of negotiations held between India and (UPSC 2017)

- (a) European Union
- (b) Gulf Cooperation Council
- (c) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- (d) Shanghai Cooperation Organization



Ans: A

GS3

Indian Economy

RBI, banks discuss lagging deposit growth, asset quality

Source: [TH](#)

Direction: The article will give a brief insight of the current economic scenario in India amid global challenges.

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor met heads of public and private sector banks to discuss various issues including slower deposits growth compared to credit and asset quality.

Background:

- **The current world is going through:**
 - **Russian wars in Ukraine**, which have an effect on energy supplies and prices.
 - **China's economy is slowing** due to its Zero tolerance to Covid induced lockdown.
 - **Inflationary pressures** have increased the cost of living.
- **Economic impacts of these happenings:**
 - Advanced economies' monetary policies are tightening, raising concerns about the **risk to financial stability** in emerging and developing economies.
 - Lower external demand reduces export demand, causing **economic growth to be driven primarily by local demand**.
 - Increased global inflation and interest rates have influenced capital flow into the economy, resulting in **local currency depreciation** and higher imported inflation.

Current economic scenario in India:

Credit demand	Deposit growth in relation to credit growth	Asset quality



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit demand rises in sync with economic activity. • Credit growth has increased as economic activity (domestic demand) has returned to normal. • Services, personal loans, agriculture and industry have led commercial bank credit growth, indicating a rising desire for bank borrowing to meet working capital needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the recent RBI data for scheduled commercial banks, aggregate deposits rose by 8.2% year on year (YoY) versus 11.4%, while credit off-take increased by 17% versus a 7.1% YoY increase. • Deposit growth has not slowed much, but it has slowed in comparison to credit growth. • As a result, banks' net interest margins have improved, but their ability to disburse loans has not increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the RBI, the bank's net non-performing assets (NPAs) have fallen to 1% of total assets. • Though MSME NPAs (about 15% of banks' loan books) are predicted to rise, overall NPAs for banks are expected to reduce as the corporate category (approximately 45% of loan books) drives the downward trend. • The increase in asset quality on the corporate loan book is attributed to de-leveraging (lowering debt levels and improving credit profiles) and the establishment of the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd. (take over some of the legacy corporate loan NPAs still held by banks). • However, the macroeconomic scenario raises concerns about corporate lending.
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Insta Links: [Indian economy in the present times](#)

Why is it essential to contain domestic inflation?

Source: [IE](#)

Direction: This article throws light on the basic economic concept of rupee depreciation, its impacts and how to curb it, in the context of the present scenario in India. The article is important as it is an analysis by C Rangarajan

Context: According to former RBI Governor C Rangarajan, containing domestic inflation is critical to halting the rupee depreciation.

Inflation: It is a rise in prices, which can be translated as the decline of purchasing power over time.

Depreciation: It reduces the value of a country's currency when compared with the currency of other countries (say \$, measured by an exchange rate of the local currency with respect to \$).



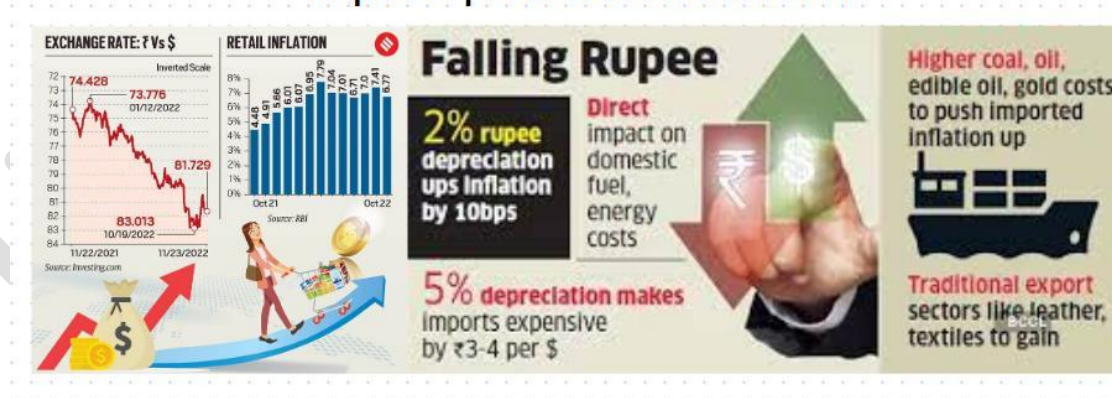
The value of the currency and its depreciation:

- The **current account** (export and import of goods and services) and **capital account** (inflow and outflow of funds) in the balance of payments are important elements to determine the value of the currency.
- **The value of a currency can be strong** despite the **high current account deficit** because there is enough capital flowing from outside into the country.
- Therefore, the **supply of foreign currency increases** not because of trade but because of the decision to invest or because of the decision to keep deposits in the country.
- The **main reason for the rupee depreciating** in its value (against the dollar) is because of the **capital account** - the outflow of funds and the lack of funds coming from outside.
- That is because the US Fed, with a view to controlling inflation in the US, really **raised the rate of interest**. Therefore, investors find the US more attractive.

Impact of depreciation of rupees:

- An undervalued currency is better because it is **more attractive for exports** and reduces the current account deficit.
- It discourages imports because the **imported goods become more expensive** (due to the reduction in the value of the rupee) and which leads to **rising inflation**.
- **Because India imports more than it exports**, the steady deterioration in the value of the rupee is not helping the economy.
- So long as inflation in India is higher than the inflation in other countries, the value of the rupee will continue to depreciate.

Rupee depreciation and inflation



Steps to be taken to stabilise the rupee's exchange rate:

- **Must reduce inflation rate**: The RBI and the government must work together to keep the inflation rate in the margins set under the inflation targeting scheme (4+/-2%).



- **Raising the rate of interest:** It helps to control inflation while also having an impact on the value of the rupee.

Challenges ahead for India:

- **Poor outlook for exports:** This is mainly due to the global slowdown driven by the confluence of stubbornly high inflation, rising borrowing costs and geopolitical tensions.
- **Rising risks of stagflation:** Stagflation is a period when slow economic growth and joblessness coincide with rising inflation.

Some relief for the Indian economy: Resilient domestic demand and a revived investment cycle will propel the economy's growth and create more jobs in the coming months.

Insta Links: [Currency Depreciation](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Examining the current account balance of a country's BOP can provide a good idea of its economic activity. Discuss.

Prelims Links:

Consider the following statements:

1. When the value of the currency is made cheaper by the central bank it is called the devaluation of the currency, and when the market forces bring down the value of the currency due to falling demand it is called depreciation of the currency.
2. In the Balance of Payments, the movements of money without an exchange for goods or services and charities are part of the Capital account.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: a)

States ask the centre to rein in reliance on surcharges, and cess while raising revenue

Source: [TH](#)

Direction: This article discusses an issue related to **fiscal federalism - how cess and surcharges** are impacting the revenues of states.

Context:



- Several states have recently urged the central government to reduce its reliance on revenue-raising cesses and surcharges, which lower their portion of the divisible pool of taxes.
- They also want more financial support to help the economy recover, as well as an extension of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation period.

Background:

- Recently, the Union Finance Minister presided over a **consultation meeting for the Union Budget of 2023-24**, which was attended by Chief Ministers, Deputy Chief Ministers, and State Finance Ministers.
- The issues of the **federal fiscal framework** were flagged by the states in the meeting.
- **For example**, Tamil Nadu Finance noted that the share of cesses and surcharges had grown from 10.4% of gross tax revenue in 2011-12 to 26.7% in 2021-22.
- This has **deprived the States of their legitimate share of revenue** collected by the Union Government.
- The states also raised concerns about **pending dues from the five-year GST compensation** window for states that expired on June 30 this year.

Revenue sharing between centre-states:

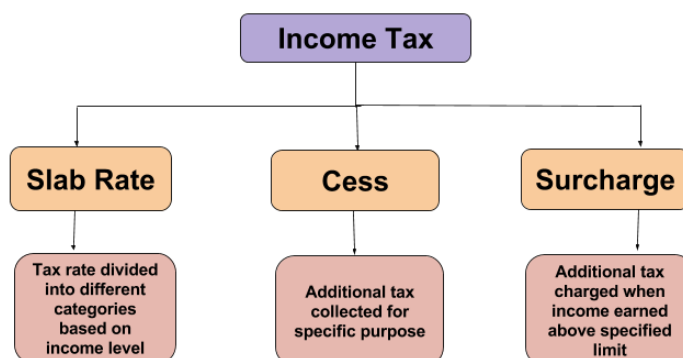
- **The Indian Constitution** grants the Union government **more revenue-raising powers** while the States are tasked to undertake most of the development and welfare-related responsibilities.
- This allocation of taxation powers and expenditure responsibilities results in an **imbalance**.
- Therefore, the Constitution provides **for sharing** of the Union government's revenue with the States. Although the 14th and 15th FC raised the share of States in gross taxes **to over 40%**, the actual share never reached this mandated level.
- **For example**, during the pandemic, as the gross tax revenues took a hit, the States' share of the Union government's taxes recorded a steep fall of 15% and 9% in FY20 and FY21, respectively.
 - However, the Union government's share increased due to the Centre increasing its revenue by imposing **cesses and levies that are not shared with the states**.

Why is levying cesses a cause of worry?

- The Union government has the **authority to collect revenue through a variety of levies**, such as taxes direct and indirect, surcharges, fees, and cess.
- Unlike traditional taxes and duties, a **Cess is a tax on tax**, that is levied as an additional tax on top of the existing tax, to raise revenue for a specified purpose. **It is added to tax** basic tax liability.
- **Article 270** of the Indian Constitution **exempts cess from the divisible pool of revenues** that the Union government must distribute to the states.
- This means, while the cess/surcharge boosts the Union government's revenues, it **reduces the divisible pool of resources and thus the states' share of the revenue**.



Way out suggested by states: They requested the Union Government **to merge the cesses and surcharges** into the basic rates of tax so that the States receive their legitimate share in devolution.



Insta Links: [The poor state of India's fiscal federalism](#)

Mains Links:

Q. While fiscal federalism in India has a long history, its practice has grown increasingly opaque over the years. Serious attention is required to improve its principles and practices. Analyse. (250 words)

Agriculture

India's push for millets

Source: [Indian Express](#)

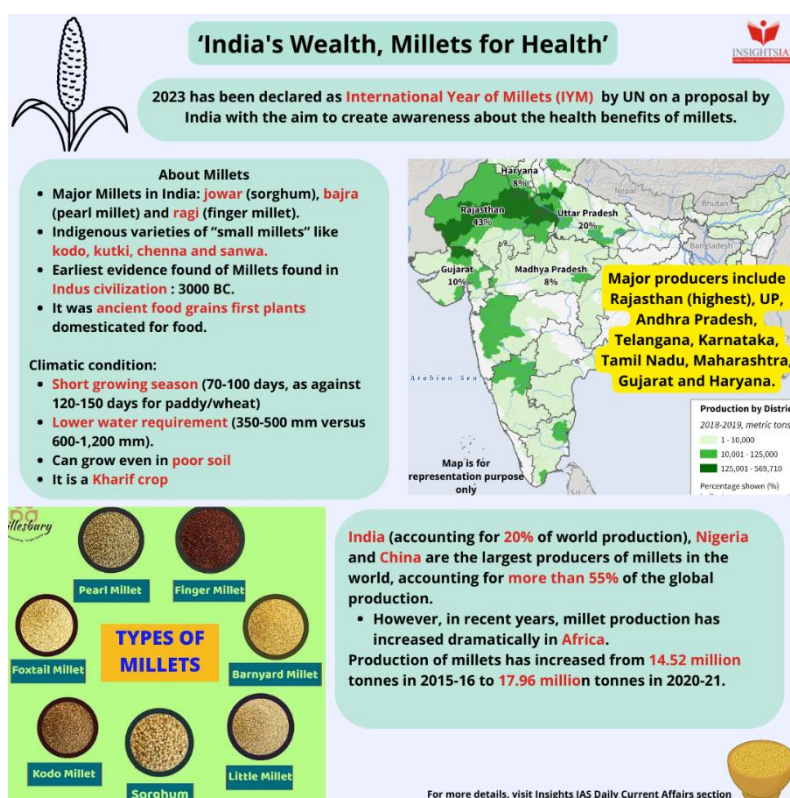
Direction: Millet and its promotion is an important part of the government's agenda and therefore becomes important for UPSC exams

Context: At India's led initiative for the UN's International Year of Millets 2023, India has called "**Covid, conflict, and climate**" the world's main food security challenges, and placed the **cultivation and popularisation of millets** in the context of the wider imperative of "**de-risking the global economy**".

Millets are a group of **highly variable small-seeded grasses**, widely grown around the world as cereal crops or grains for fodder and human food.

Historical background:

Millets were among the **first crops to be domesticated**. There is evidence for the consumption of millets by the **Indus valley people** (3,000 BC), and several varieties that are now grown around the world were first cultivated in **India**

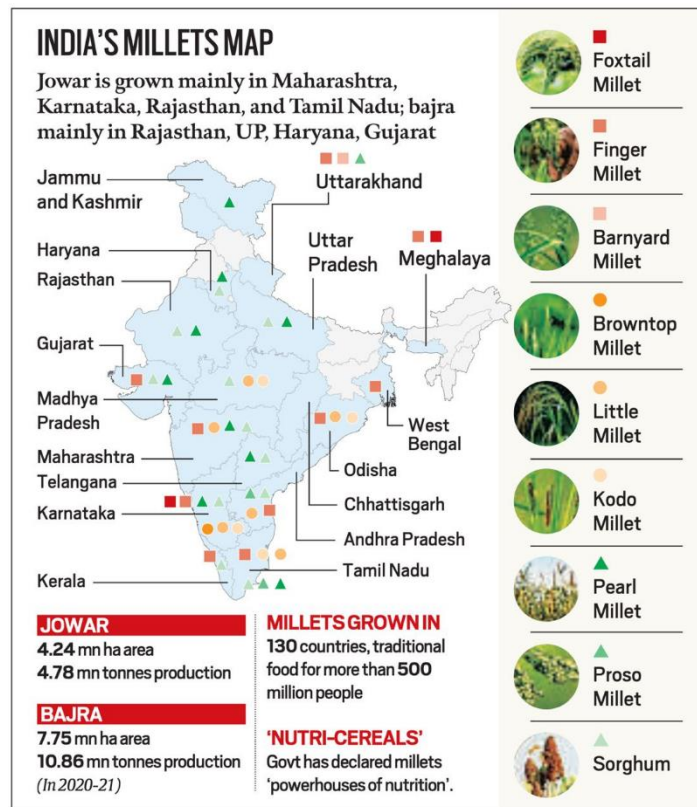


Global distribution:

Millets are now grown in more than 130 countries and are the traditional food for more than half a billion people in Asia and Africa. Globally, **sorghum** (jowar) is the **biggest** millet crop. The major producers of jowar are the **United States, China, Australia, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Sudan**. **Bajra** is another major millet crop; India and some African countries are major producers.

Benefits of Millets:

- Nutritional Security:** cheap and more nutritious. For E.g. Ragi has the highest calcium content and high iron content and can fight the high prevalence of anaemia.
- Climate Resilient:** they are known as hardy and drought-resistant crops. They require much less water than rice and wheat and are mainly grown in rainfed areas.
- Economic Security:** low investment for inputs
- Against Health Issues:** Millets are **gluten-free** and have a **low glycaemic index** (glucose level) and therefore can help in tackling lifestyle problems and health challenges such as obesity and diabetes.
- Millets have **antiaging and antioxidant**
- Millets are considered to be "**powerhouses of nutrition**". In 2018, the Agriculture Ministry declared millets as "**Nutri Cereals**"



Challenges:

- **Preference for Wheat and rice as staple food**
Government policies: Eg. National Food Security Act promotes wheat and rice
- Lack of awareness about the benefit of Millet: negligible distribution in PDS
- **MSP challenges:** The government declares a MSP for jawar, bajra, and ragi only.
- **Low Consumption:** In the latest available NSSO household consumption expenditure survey (which is more than a decade old), **less than 10 per cent of rural and urban households** reported consumption of millets.
- **Other challenges:** lack of input subsidies and price incentives, and changing consumer preferences.

Initiatives in India:

- **Government declared (in 2018)** millets as “Nutri-Cereals”, considering their “high nutritive value” and also “anti-diabetic properties”.
- **The 2018 year: ‘National Year of Millets’.**
- Increase in **MSP** for millets
- The government has included **millets in the public distribution system (PDS) and POSHAN Abhiyan.**
- Millet Mission (under the National Food Security Mission): It will help develop farm-gate processing and empower farmers using FPOs.
- Kerala State Agriculture Department: **Millet Village scheme**
- Millet Startup Innovation Challenge



- A contest for designing a comic story, with the theme 'India's Wealth, Millets for Health'

Other Initiatives for millets:

- **SCO:** India proposed to organize the "Millet Food Festival"

Conclusion:

In view of the impact of climate change and the government's aim for climate-smart agriculture, Millets deserves encouragement. It can also help in providing nourishment to people across all income categories and supporting climate adaptation of **rainfed sustainable farming systems**.

Mains Links

Q. Millets have enormous potential to form a core component in climate-smart agriculture whilst offering nutritional and food security benefits. Elaborate. (15M)

Prelims Link

Consider the following crops of India: (UPSC 2012)

1. Groundnut
2. Sesamum
3. Pearl millet

Which of the above is/are predominantly rainfed crops/crops?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D

Among the following, which one is the least water-efficient crop? (UPSC 2021)

- (a) Sugarcane
- (b) Sunflower
- (c) Pearl Millet
- (d) Red gram

Answer: A

Science and Technology



New Electric Vehicle Batteries

Source: [DTE](#)

Direction: Know a few key initiatives related to EV batteries. Understand how these batteries work. However, no need to get into the technicalities of the working of batteries.

Context: Non-profit Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has collaborated with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to create a platform for supporting the development of new electric vehicle (EV) batteries to suit Indian requirements.

Outline of the collaboration:

- **An expert-Industry platform** for the development of new electric vehicle (EV) battery technologies
- **Assessing India's need and climate stress** for batteries
- **Application-specific batteries** e.g., Lithium-titanate for public transport; Sodium-ion for e-rickshaws
- **Recycling of batteries**
- **Developing regulations for the in-use performance** and durability of EVs and databases on performance and safety parameters

Initiative for EV safety:

- **New Safety tests** for EVs
- **Infrastructure for testing and certification** by the Automotive Research Association of India
- BIS issues **performance norms for Li-Ion batteries**

Government steps for new batteries:

- **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of** (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (**FAME India**) 1 and 2 Scheme to promote the manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicles
- Department of Heavy Industry for implementation of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme '**National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage**
- NITI Aayog released the draft **battery swapping policy for Electric Vehicles (EVs)**

The current deployment of **Lithium-Ion Batteries (LIBs)** in India is dominated by consumer electronics, which comprises smartphones, laptops, notebooks, and tablets.

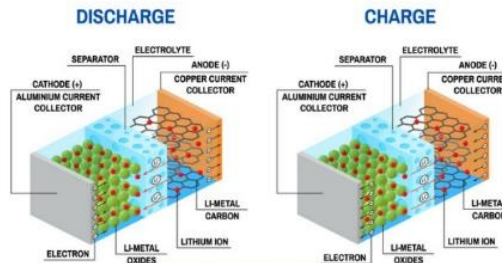


Lithium-ion battery



Researchers from **IIT Gandhinagar** and **Japan** discovered a **new anode material** which could be helpful in ensuring the life and **ultra-fast charging** of lithium-ion batteries (LIBs).

LITHIUM-ION BATTERY



A Lithium-ion or Li-ion battery is a type of rechargeable battery which uses the **reversible reduction of lithium ions** to store energy.

Charging and Discharge Cycle

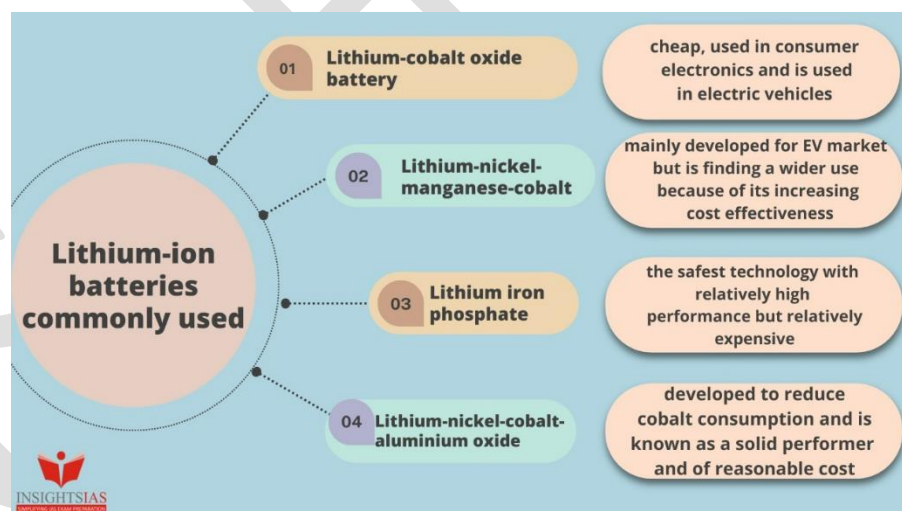


Emerging Potential of Lithium Ion Battery



Lithium Ion Battery Applications

Visit [insightsias.com](https://www.insightsias.com) for detailed News



Insta Curious

Did you know, by 2030, the demand for batteries is expected to **grow four folds** to reach an annual rate of 3,100 GWh?

Insta Links

[National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell Battery Storage](https://www.insightsias.com/national-programme-on-advanced-chemistry-cell-battery-storage)



Mains Links

Q. Lithium-ion batteries are the edifice of the wireless technology revolution. In this context discuss the significance and challenges facing these rechargeable Lithium Batteries. (250 words)

Prelims Links

Q. With reference to 'fuel cells' in which hydrogen-rich fuel and oxygen are used to generate electricity, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2015)

1. If pure hydrogen is used as a fuel, the fuel cell emits heat and water as by-products.
2. Fuel cells can be used for powering buildings and not for small devices like laptop computers.
3. Fuel cells produce electricity in the form of Alternating Current (AC).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Environmental Conservation

Think local climate action, think Meenangadi

Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/Think-local-climate-action-think-Meenangadi/article17444444.html)

Direction: The editorial article highlights the role of local bodies in the climate actions. Following examples can be used in Governance or Environment conservation as Example/Case study for Community engagement in conservation.

Context: If India has to achieve the set of goals enunciated in the '**Panchamrit**' resolution of the **COP26 climate summit in Glasgow 2021**, it is necessary that Panchayati raj institutions play a pivotal role in **tackling many of the causes and effects** of climate change.

Case study 1



Meenangadi Gram Panchayat in Kerala's Wayanad district

In 2016, the Meenangadi panchayat envisaged a project called '**Carbon neutral Meenangadi**', the aim being to transform Meenangadi into a state of **carbon neutrality**.

Actions taken:

- **An action plan** was prepared by organising gram sabha meetings. The entire community was involved in the process, with school students, youth, and technical and academic institutions given different assignments.
- **Socio-economic surveys and energy-use** mapping were also carried out.
- **Awareness programme:** Through campaigns, classes and studies.
- **A greenhouse gases emission inventory** was prepared.
- '**Tree banking**' was one of landmark schemes introduced to **aid carbon neutral activities** which encouraged the planting of more trees by extending **interest-free loans**
- **Over 1.5 lakh trees** were planted which have also been **geo-tagged** to monitor their growth.
- **Local economic development** was another thrust area where LED bulb manufacturing and related micro-enterprises were initiated.

The panchayat was found to be carbon positive.

Case Study 2

Palli gram panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir: It followed the same people-centric model, with specific local activities.

- The panchayat has prepared a **climate-resilient plan** where villagers have been made aware of climate change Mitigation factors
- Bio-gas plants and solar panels were also introduced.
- A solar plant (500KW) has been installed to power 340 households.
- A Gram Panchayat Development Plan for 2022-23 is being prepared by integrating a climate-resilient plan.

Case study 3

'Clean and Green Village' theme: Ministry of Panchayati Raj has focused its attention on **localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** on a thematic basis. 'Clean and Green Village' is one of the themes under it.

Under this theme panchayats can take up activities on **natural resource management, biodiversity protection, waste management and afforestation activities**

Over 1 lakh gram panchayats have prioritised 'Clean & Green Village' as one of their focus areas for 2022-23.

COP27 ends; loss and damage fund, other agendas adopted



Source: [DTE](#)

Direction: The article highlights the agenda, and outcomes of COP27. We have [previously done a few](#) articles on this, but this article shows the final outcome of COP27.

Context: All agendas, including the **loss and damage fund and the Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan**, were adopted during the UNFCCC COP27 closing ceremony in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

Background:

- Delegates from **197 countries** (all are of the Paris Climate Accord) gathered at the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27).
- They came together **to find a solution to prevent global temperatures** from reaching 2 degrees Celsius above the long-term average temperature between 1951 and 1980.

What was on the agenda of COP27?

- **Mitigation:**
 - The goal of mitigation is to keep global temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius.
 - However, progress since COP26 has been **severely inadequate** (Emissions Gap Report 2022).
- **Adaptation:** According to the Global Climate Risk Index, developing and poor countries (Mozambique, South Sudan, India, etc.) were the countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2019.
 - Over \$350 million and \$600 million were pledged to the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund, at COP26.
- **Finance:** At the 2009 COP15 meeting, developed countries agreed to pledge \$100 billion per year by 2020 (extended until 2025 during COP21) to assist developing countries in dealing with climate change.
- **Collaboration:** There is the need to call upon governments, public society and the private sector to collaborate to change the way humans interact with the world.

Outcomes of the COP27 on these agendas:

- **The Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan:** It emphasised that a global transition to a low-carbon economy will require at least \$4-6 trillion in annual spending.
- **Mitigation work programme:** This would begin this year and last until 2030. Governments were requested -
 - To revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their national climate plans by the end of 2023.
 - To accelerate efforts to **phase down** unabated coal power and **phase out** inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.
 - **To reduce greenhouse gases** (GHGs) in applicable sectors through increased renewable and low-emission energy.



- **Loss and damage (L&D):** COP27 adopted the basic demand of a fund to acknowledge assistance needed for particularly vulnerable developing countries. However, there is **no agreement yet** on how finance should be provided and where it should come from.
- **Fossil fuels:** India wanted to include a commitment to phase down all fossil fuels (and not just coal). But the resolution failed.
- **Other outcomes:**
 - The **New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate finance** and the Global Goal on **Adaptation**, which is equivalent to the global goal on mitigation of limiting global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
 - The CMA (countries who have signed and ratified the Paris Agreement) also adopted **Article 6 of the Paris Agreement**, which allows countries to voluntarily cooperate with each other to achieve emission reduction targets set out in their NDCs.
 - **World Bank Reforms:** recapitalisation of the development banks to allow them to provide far more assistance to the developing world
 -

Challenges ahead:

- **No contributions have been pledged to the L&D fund.**
- **Extra burden on the developing countries.** They have been asked to revise their climate action plans (NDCs), with progressively stronger actions every year.
- **Developed countries have failed to meet their commitment.** For example, mobilising a relatively small sum of USD 100 billion per year.

Way ahead: To provide funding for mitigation and adaptation, the financial system and its structures and processes will need to be transformed, involving governments, central banks, commercial banks, institutional investors and other financial actors.

Insta Links: [Loss and damage funding officially included in the COP27 agenda](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Describe the major outcomes of the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). What are the commitments made by the India conference? (UPSC 2021)

Prelims Links:

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Green Climate Fund (GCF).

1. It is a fund established within the framework of the UNFCCC.
2. The Fund's investments can be in the form of grants only.
3. GCF has established a direct access modality so that national and sub-national organisations can receive funding directly, rather than only via international intermediaries.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1, 2 only



- c) 1, 3 only
d) All of the above

Solution: c)

Internal security.

Development of Great Nicobar: Strategic imperative and ecological concerns

Source: [IE](#)

Direction: The article is an example of the development vs environment debate. It also contains key points about Great Nicobar Island and its strategic and environmental significance for India.

Context: The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change gave environmental clearance for the ambitious Rs 72,000 crore development project on the strategically important Great Nicobar Island.

Background:

- The idea of developing Great Nicobar was first proposed in the 1970s, and its significance for **national security and the consolidation of the Indian Ocean Region** has been emphasised time and again.
- In recent years, increasing **Chinese assertiveness** in the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific has added urgency to this requirement.

About the Great Nicobar Island:





- **The Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands** are a cluster of about 836 islands in the eastern Bay of Bengal, the two groups of which are separated by the 150-km wide **Ten Degree Channel** - Andaman Islands in the north and the Nicobar Islands to the south.
- Great Nicobar, **the southernmost** of the A&N Islands, has an area of 910 sq. km. **Indira Point**, the southern tip of Great Nicobar Island is India's southernmost point and is less than 150 km from the northernmost island of the Indonesian archipelago.
- The Great Nicobar Island has **tropical wet evergreen forests**, mountain ranges reaching almost 650 m above sea level and coastal plains.
 - It is rich in biodiversity with some endangered species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. The **leatherback sea turtle** is the island's flagship species.
- Great Nicobar is home to **two national parks (Campbell Bay and Galathea), a biosphere reserve and the Shompen and Nicobarese tribal peoples.**
- The approximately 8,000 settlers (ex-servicemen from Punjab, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh who were settled on the island in the 1970s) who live on the island are engaged in **agriculture, horticulture, and fishing.**

Strategic location of the Island: Great Nicobar is equidistant from Colombo to the southwest and Port Klang and Singapore to the southeast, and is near the **East-West international shipping corridor**, which handles a significant portion of the world's shipping trade.

The proposed projects:

- A greenfield city
- An International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT)
- A greenfield international airport
- A power plant
- A township for the personnel who will implement the project

Significance of the projects:

Economic	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By becoming a major player in cargo transshipment, the Island can participate in the regional and global maritime economy. ● It will promote tourism to the Island. ● Employment opportunities, as over 2.5 lakh direct and indirect jobs are likely to be created on the island. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increasing the presence of the Indian Armed Forces, as the port will be controlled by the Indian Navy, while the airport will have dual military-civilian control. ● The government's greater goal is to leverage the locational advantage of the island for <u>economic and strategic reasons</u>.

Concerns:



- **An ecologically important and fragile region:** The loss of tree cover will not only affect the flora and fauna on the island, but it will also lead to increased runoff and sediment deposits in the ocean, impacting the **coral reefs, and mangroves**.

According to the government

- Expediting the project is of paramount national security and strategic importance.
- The development area is only **a small percentage** of the area of the island and its forest cover, and 15% of the development area itself will be green cover and open spaces.
- A conservation plan for the leatherback turtle is also being put in place.

Way ahead:

- India has **successfully translocated a coral reef** from the Gulf of Mannar to the Gulf of Kutch earlier.
- The Zoological Survey of India is currently in the process of assessing how much of the reef will have to be relocated for the project.

Insta Links: [Developing the sister islands of the Indian Ocean](#)

Mains links:

Q. In recent years, India has adopted a proactive policy aimed at transforming the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Examine the strategic and economic importance of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands for India. (250 words)

Prelims Links:

Q. Andaman and Nicobar Islands are separated from each other by

- A. Ten-degree channel
- B. Nine-degree channel
- C. Eight-degree channel
- D. Twelve-degree channel

Answer – A

GS4

Application of Ethics



T N Seshan – the man who changed the face of Indian Elections

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Direction: Examples from already serving bureaucrats or the ones who have worked towards bringing reforms in society add value to your answer. This can be used as a **way forward in GS -2 Electoral reforms/ Ethics – upright public servant.**

Context: The Supreme Court, mooted the idea of including the Chief Justice of India in the selection process for the Chief Election Commissioner, has said a **person like former CEC, the late T N Seshan, "happens once in a while"**.

T N Seshan's contributions:

Electoral Reforms:

- His strict commandments were - **no bribing or intimidating voters**, no distribution of liquor during the elections, **no use of official machinery for campaigning**, no appealing to voters' caste or communal feelings, **no use of religious places for campaigns**, and **no use of loudspeakers without prior written permission**.
- He also **enforced the Model Code of Conduct**, strictly **monitored limits on poll expenses**, and cracked down on several malpractices like wall graffiti.
- **The issuance of Voter IDs for all eligible voters** came into being under his strict watch.


Ethical Values:

- **Integrity:** He was instrumental in **rooting out many of the corrupt and unfair practices** followed by political parties during elections in India.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** his ideas and philosophies **were inclined towards transparent and accountable governance**.
- **Leadership Qualities:** He did not bow in front of corrupt politicians and worked towards the **betterment of society**.

He was awarded the **Ramon Magsaysay award in 1996** for his **resolute actions to bring order, fairness, and integrity to elections in India, the world's largest democracy**.



THE MAN WHO CLEANED UP INDIAN ELECTIONS



“

Politicians are afraid of only two things, one God and the second TN Seshan

LEGENDARY CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER TN SESHAN WAS BORN ON THIS DAY IN 1932


A retired 1955 batch IAS officer of Tamil Nadu cadre, also served as 18th Cabinet Secretary of India in 1989

During 1990-96, pioneered election reforms – the introduction of electors' photo ID cards was a measure towards this direction

Ruthlessly ensured the model code of conduct, then considered a document of academic interest, was taken seriously by parties & candidates

Despite facing criticism over exceeding his brief, demonstrated that his post was no pushover

Won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for his services to the government in 1996



Mains Link:

Q. Discuss the significant role played by T N Seshan in establishing progressive and autonomous election commission machinery in the country. (250 words)

Facts for Prelims

GS1

Indian Heritage and Culture

Nicobari Hodi

Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Direction: Go through it once

Context: Nicobari Hodi craft is the 1st application for Andaman and Nicobar's GI tag

Nicobari Hodi is a traditional craft canoe made using locally available trees for transporting people and goods and for racing purposes.



Arittapatti Biodiversity Heritage site

Source: [TH](#)

Context: The Tamil Nadu Government issued a notification declaring Arittapatti and Meenakshipuram villages in **Madurai** district the **first biodiversity heritage site** in the State.

Background:

- **To prevent the loss of biodiversity and to preserve the cultural** and architectural heritage of past times, the State government declared Arittapatti a biodiversity heritage site on the recommendation of the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board.
- The declaration of the site has been made under the (Section 37) the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.

About the site:

- The site comprising Arittapatti village (Melur block) and Meenakshipuram village (Madurai East taluk) will be known as the **Arittapatti Biodiversity Heritage site**.
- **Arittapatti village** is known for its ecological and historical significance, housing around 250 species of birds including three important raptors - the Laggar Falcon, the Shaheen Falcon and Bonelli's Eagle.
 - It is also home to wildlife such as the Indian Pangolin, Slender Loris and pythons.
 - Several megalithic structures, rock-cut temples, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions and **Jain sculptures** add to the historical significance of the region.
 - **The Anaikondan tank**, built during the reign of Pandiyan kings in the 16th century, is also located in the region.

Lachit Borhukan

Source: [Indian Express](#)



Direction: Since the person is not well known outside of Assam, you may go through it once. No need to remember.

Context: 400th birth anniversary celebration

About:

Lachit Borphukan was a general in the **Ahom dynasty** (Assam, 17th CE) and is best known for the **Battle of Saraighat** (on the banks of Brahmaputra), where he defeated the **Mughals** in 1671.

The **Ahom dynasty (1228–1826)** was established by **Sukaphaa**, a **Shan prince** of Mong Mao (present-day Yunnan, China). The rule of this dynasty ended with the **Burmese invasion of Assam** and the subsequent annexation by the British East India Company following the **Treaty of Yandabo** in 1826

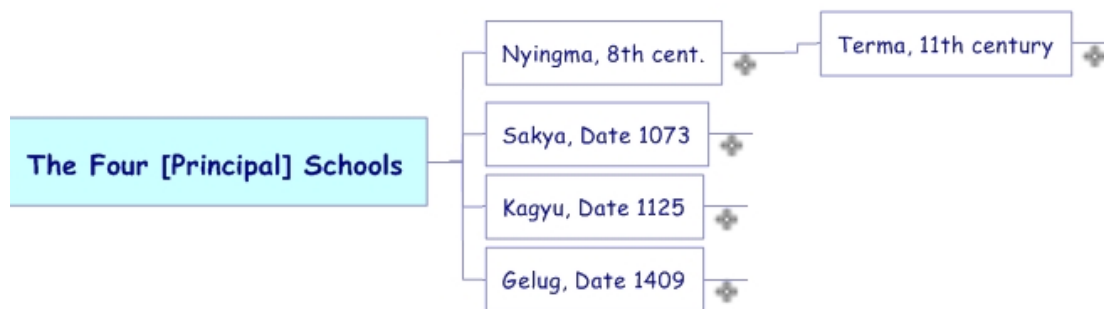


Taklung Setrunga Rinpoche

Source: TH

Context: In a significant development in the Tibetan Buddhist circles, the Nyingma sect has identified a boy from Spiti in Himachal Pradesh as the reincarnation of the late Taklung Setrunga Rinpoche.

Taklung Setrunga Rinpoche (1926 - 2015): He was a Tibetan lama and the Supreme Head of the Nyingma School (oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism) of Tibetan Buddhism, known for his knowledge of Tibetan Tantric school.



Kathakar

Source: [PIB](#)

Context: The 15th edition of Kathakar will partner with the Union Ministry of Culture under Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Background:

- The art of storytelling in India has many forms and utilises many mediums. Different sections of India's culture have their own distinct approach to storytelling.
- Hence, Kathakar, **the sole celebration of India's rich oral storytelling tradition**, which was started under the umbrella of Ghummakkad Narain Travelling Literature Festival was launched in **2010**.

SPINNING A STORY

KEY EVENTS LINED UP AT FESTIVAL

Date	Venue	Event	Time
Nov 26	Sunder Nursery	Greek myths by Niall Moorjani (UK)	9 am
		Mongolian folktales by Baatarjav Erdenetsogt (Mongolia)	10:30 am
		Donkey and Camel by Lillian Rodrigues-Pang (Australia)	11 am
		Korean tales by Seung Ah Kim (South Korea)	7:30 pm
		Sufi music by Satpal Wadali and group (India)	9 pm
Nov 27	Sunder Nursery	Ramayan Tholpavakoothu Shadow puppet play of Kerala by Ramachandra Pulavar and team (India)	7 pm
		Kabir Vani by Prahlad Singh Tipania and group (India)	8 pm
Nov 28	Sunder Nursery	Roman Myths by Niall Moorjani (UK)	10:30 am
		Shy the Platypus by Lillian Rodrigues-Pang (Australia)	11 am
		Ramayan stories through puppets by Rajeev Pulavar (India)	11:30 am



Prize

Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: 2021 award has been given to NGO Pratham, working in the field of education

The award carries a monetary award of **Rs 25 lakh along** with a citation and is awarded annually by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust to individuals and organizations

The annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is biennially published by the NGO Pratham, since 2005.

Gandhi Mandela Award

Source: [IE](#)

Context: The Tibetan spiritual leader - **Dalai Lama** (14th), was recently conferred the Gandhi Mandela Award 2022.

Background:

- The leader is the recipient of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize.
- The Dalai Lama has developed his philosophy of peace based on the concept of **universal responsibility embracing all mankind as well as nature.**

About the Gandhi Mandela Award:

- The **Gandhi Mandela Foundation** - a government of India registered Trust, NGO, has constituted an **international** prize - the Gandhi Mandela Award, on the 150th birth anniversary (**2019**) of the Father of the Nation, MK Gandhi.
- The award is given to personalities who have **carried forward the legacies of Gandhi and Mandela** by making significant contributions in the fields of Peace, Social Welfare, Culture, Environment, Education, Healthcare, Sports and Innovation.

Modern History/Personality

Tipu Sultan



Source: [IE](#)

Context: Tipu Sultan's birth anniversary was recently observed, bringing his controversial legacy to the forefront of political conversation once more.

Background: While leaders from some political parties (Left) celebrated Tipu Sultan, calling him India's "first freedom fighter" and "one of our greatest heroes", some parties (Right) have long called the 17th-century ruler of Mysore a "religious bigot", who was "anti-Hindu and anti-Kannada".

Tipu Sultan:

- Tipu Sultan was born as Sultan Fateh Ali Sahab Tipu in 1750 in Devanahalli, present-day Bangalore.
- He was born to Hyder Ali, who rose through the ranks of the army of the Wodeyars, the then Hindu rulers of Mysore.
- Hyder Ali seized power in 1761 with Tipu succeeding his father in 1782.

Reforms Tipu Sultan introduced:

- Tipu's fascination with **European culture** was evident in many of the innovations.
- Tipu wanted Mysore to be a modern rival of the European powers and made investments in technology accordingly. For example, Tipu is credited for the introduction of **iron-cased rockets** in warfare.
- Tipu Sultan also pioneered **administrative and economic reforms**. He introduced new coins, started a new land revenue system in Mysore, as well as introduced sericulture, which continues to employ many Kannadigas to date.

Tipu Sultan died defending his fortress of Srirangapatna against British forces in the Fourth Anglo Mysore War in 1799. His final act of valour and defiance has been glorified by many who see him as a nationalist, anti-colonial icon.



Geography



Marie Tharp

Source: [Economic Times](#)

Direction: The concept on Continental drift for prelims.

Context: Marie Tharp was a geologist and cartographer whose ground breaking maps of the Atlantic Ocean floor (including the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and rift valley). This was further evidence for continental drift theory. Her research paved the way for plate tectonics.

Continental drift is the hypothesis that the Earth's continents have moved over geologic time relative to each other, thus appearing to have "drifted" across the ocean bed. **By Alfred Wegner**

Plate tectonics is the generally accepted scientific theory that considers the Earth's lithosphere to comprise a number of large tectonic plates which have been slowly moving since about **3.4 billion years ago**

Tonga volcanic eruption reshaped Pacific seafloor

Source: [BBC](#)

Direction: Tonga Volcano based question has been asked in UPSC. Be aware of the basics of the volcano (including underwater ones).

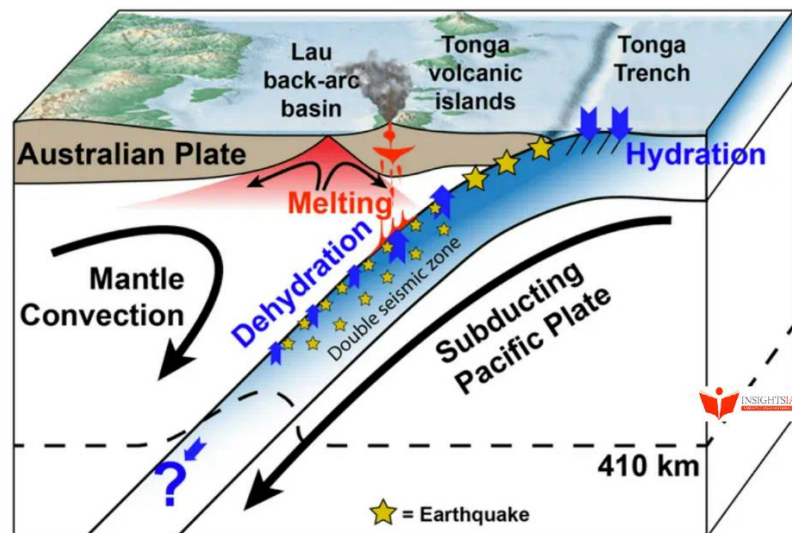
Context: Tonga Eruption Seabed Mapping Project (**TESMaP**) has said that the **eruption** of the **Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai volcano on 15 January 2022** was the largest recorded since the **eruption** of Krakatoa in 1883 (Indonesia).

Impact:

- **Atmosphere:** It sent ash and water vapour **halfway to space**, and generated tsunami waves across the globe.
- **On the seafloor:** It is scoured and sculpted by violent debris flows out to a distance of over 80km.
- **Pyroclastic density currents:** Hot lava when comes in contact with cold water of the ocean creates water vapour at very high temperatures. This creates **a frictionless steam cushion** on which lava could flow at very high speed and to a very far distance.

Four ways water is displaced due to underwater volcano (thus causing tsunami):

- By the **density flows** pushing the water out of the way
- **Through the explosive force** of the eruption also pushes on the water
- As a result of **the dramatic collapse of the caldera floor** (it dropped by 700m in the case of Tonga Volcano)
- By **pressure waves** from the atmospheric blast acting on the sea surface.



Basic Informations:

TESMaP was funded by the Nippon Foundation of Japan and organised with the help of Seabed2030, which is an international effort to properly chart Earth's ocean floor

Submarine volcanoes are underwater vents or fissures in the Earth's surface from which magma can erupt.

A seamount is an underwater mountain formed by volcanic activity

Tonga is a Polynesian kingdom of more than 170 South Pacific islands, located on what is termed as ring of fire.

Economic Geography

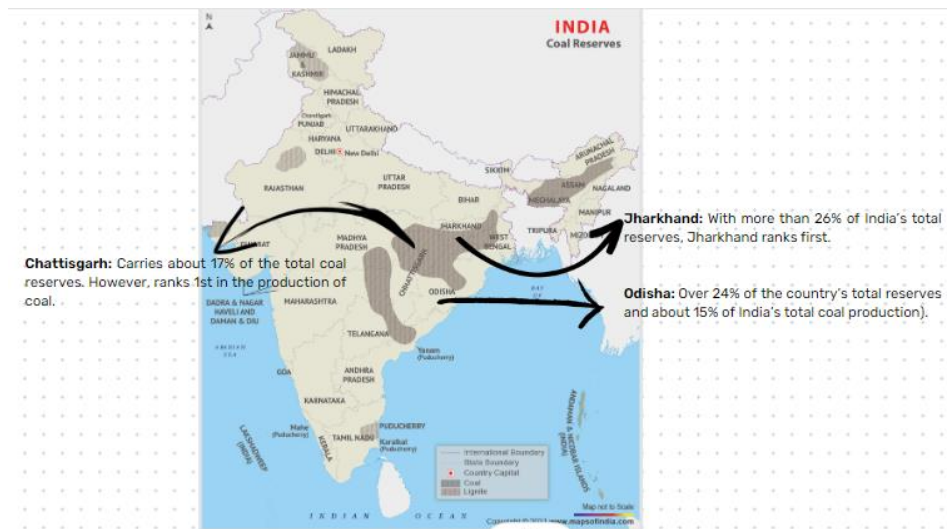
Coal production in India

Source: [PIB](https://pib.gov.in)

Context: The total coal production in the country stands at **448 million tonnes (MT)** as of October, 2022 which is 18 % higher than the production of the corresponding period of last year.

Coal in India was **first mined in 1774 by East India Company in Raniganj Coalfield** along the Western bank of Damodar River. Today, India has the **fifth largest coal reserves** in the world. India is the **second largest** producer of coal in the world, after China.

However, India is the second largest coal importer in the world and it imports mainly from Indonesia, Australia, South Africa and the United States. India lacks coking coal.



Places in News

Mapping:





Maps (in News)



Pakistan: New army chief

Lt Gen Syed Asim Munir Shah is the new chief of the Pakistan Army. It is also rare for someone who has served as **ISI chief** to become the Army chief.



The new chief was heading the ISI when the **Pulwama bombing** took place in February 2019. Despite his closeness to Bajwa, it is not known if **Munir shares his predecessor's views on "geo-economics"** and normalising relations with India.

Tamil Nadu: Kundankulam Nuclear power plant

The **Russian state-owned nuclear energy corporation Rosatom** has offered a more advanced fuel option to **India's largest nuclear power station** at Kudankulam, which will allow its reactors to run for an **extended two-year cycle** without stopping to load fresh fuel.

Currently, the **two VVER 1,000 MWe** reactors generating power in the plant has an **18-month fuel cycle**, meaning that the reactor has to be stopped for fresh fuel loading every one-and-a-half years.

Having longer cycle will ensure **more efficiency, additional power generation, and sizable savings** of the foreign exchange need to buy fresh fuel assemblies from Russia.



Malaysia: New Prime Minister appointed

Malaysia's veteran secular leader **Anwar Ibrahim** was appointed the 10th Prime Minister by **King Sultan Abdullah** and sworn in. In recent years, Malaysia has faced **financial corruption** (in form of 1MDB Scandal) and rise of Islamist aligned parties.



Anwar Ibrahim

Malaysia is a **multi-ethnic, multi-religious country** where most people are **ethnic Malay Muslim**, but there are significant numbers of people of Chinese and Indian origin as well as Indigenous communities.

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Bahrain

Bahrain has elected a record **eight women** to its 40-seat parliament in its **3rd parliamentary election**, held without opposition candidates. Two major opposition groups, the Shiite Al-Wefaq and the secular Waad, were prevented from presenting candidates.

Bahrain is an **island country in the Persian Gulf**, and follows **constitutional monarchy** where the government is appointed by the King of Bahrain. The parliament is a **bi-cameral legislature**.

Although 75% of Bahrain's population consists of Shia Muslims (more closer to Iran), the Sunni royal family, Al Khalifa, governs the country (more closer to Saudi Arabia).

Maps (in News)



FIFA World Cup, Qatar

The World Cup is a **quadrennial tournament** comprising **32 teams** fighting for the title. Qatar qualified automatically as the host, and after years of matches, the other 31 teams earned the right to come and play.

The World Cup usually takes place in **July**, however, since the **summer temperature in Qatar is extreme**, matches are being scheduled in Winter. This is the **1st time** the world cup is being held in **Arabian peninsula**. The **women FIFA World Cup** will be held in 2023 in **Australia and New Zealand**.



Qatar is a **peninsular country** and has one of the world's **largest reserves of petroleum and natural gas** and employs large numbers of **foreign workers** in its production process. However, Amnesty international has casted doubts on its human rights records involving **migrant workers**.



Visit Insights IAS Daily CA for detailed News

Society and Social Justice

“16 Days of Activism” against gender-based violence

Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Context: The 16 Days of Activism run annually **from November 25, which is International Day of Violence against Women**, to December 10, which is **International Human Rights Day**.

The global theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is **“UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls”**.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action or BPfA is a landmark document for advancing the rights of women and gender equality worldwide agreed upon during the **4th World Conference on women** in 1995.

India's role to fight gender-based violence:



- Indian women received **universal suffrage during India's independence in 1947**.
- India has also ratified key international conventions to **end discrimination against women** that include the **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**.
- Women have **overcome "the glass ceiling"** in the armed forces and can also serve as commanders since 2020.
- The **'Nari Shakti for New India'** campaign represents the aspirations of **millions of women in India, who not only participate but lead development initiatives**.

NESTS

Source: [Live Mint](#)

Context: National Education Society for Tribal Students (**NESTS**) and (1 million for 1 billion) **1M1B** Foundation have signed **MoU to train teachers and students of Eklavya Model Residential Schools**

- The programme will skill teachers and students with **Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) using the AR-VR skills curriculum** launched by CBSE.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools: EMRS is a scheme for making model residential schools for Indian tribals (ST- Scheduled Tribes) across India. It started in the year 1997-98 and comes under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

1M1B is a social innovation and future skills initiative aimed at redefining education in a conventional sense and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Established in the USA in October 2014**, 1M1B is a United Nations accredited to the UN Economic and Social Council (**ECOSOC**).

- It aims to activate **1 million leaders who will impact 1 billion people** to become instrumental in taking ownership of their futures and advocating for justice in an innovative way





GS2

Polity

Minority Status

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Direction: Know the constitutional interpretation of minorities and Article 29 and 30.

Context: SC has asked the Centre to consult states/UTs on the petition to grant minority status to Hindus.

Although the constitution doesn't define 'Minority'; under **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992**, the centre has declared **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians** as 'minorities'. The status of minorities is state-wise and not district-wise (SC in TMA Pai Case, 2002)

Of the 28 states in India, Hindus form the majority in 22 states except for Punjab (Sikh majority), Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Mizoram (Christian majority).

Process of Inclusion in the ST List

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: Despite recommendations by a task force, the central government will continue to include communities in the ST list using the existing procedure.

Background of the Issue:

A task force constituted in 2014, headed by then-Tribal Affairs Secretary Hrusikesh Panda, had called the existing procedure "**cumbersome**" and "**time-consuming**", adding that it "**defeats the** Constitutional agenda for affirmative action and inclusion". It noted that as many as **40 communities** had been excluded from the ST list or were facing delays in inclusion due to the **current procedure and criteria**, and recommended their **immediate inclusion**.

The task force highlighted that the present system gives **too much weight to the opinion of the Office of the RGI**



Inclusion of Communities into ST List



Despite recommendation by a task force, central government will continue to include communities into ST list using existing procedure.

Practical Issues faced in the inclusion of communities in ST list (by H Panda Task force)

- Several tribes pronounced or spelt their community's name in different ways
- Some communities were split when new States were created, leaving them as ST in one State and not in the other
- Some tribespeople were forcefully taken as indentured labour to other States where they were left out of the ST list.



What is the Process of Inclusion in the ST List?

The process to include tribes in the ST list begins with the recommendation from the respective State governments, which are then sent to the Tribal Affairs Ministry, which reviews and sends them to the Registrar General of India for approval. This is followed by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes' approval before the list is sent to the Cabinet for a final decision.

Right to choose the life partner of his/her choice

Source: [IE](#)

Context: The Madhya Pradesh HC **restrained the state government from prosecuting** (under the MPFRA) adult citizens who solemnise marriage on their own will, in a decision that provided relief to interfaith couples seeking to marry.

Background:

- In 2020, the state government announced its intention to curb **religious conversions** carried out solely for the purpose of marriage.
- The new law **prohibits unlawful conversion from one religion to another** by use of any fraudulent means, allurements or **promise of marriage**.
- Cases under the Act are **cognisable** (which means an arrest can be made without a warrant) and **non-bailable** and violators face between 1-5 years of imprisonment.

Verdicts of different HCs:

- **MP:** Section 10 of the MPFRA, which requires those planning to convert and the priest who will perform the conversion to notify the district magistrate 60 days in advance, appears to be **unconstitutional**
- **Gujarat:** Such regulations interfere with the intricacies of marriage, including an individual's right to choose, and thereby violate **Article 21** of the Indian Constitution



Article 25 says "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health."

Government Initiative and Policies

Project Unnati

Source: [TH](#)

Context: Faced with a lukewarm response to Project Unnati, the Union Rural Development Ministry wants to link the performances of the States under the project to its budget for the coming fiscal year.

Background:

- Since its inception in **2020**, just a little over 25,000 persons have been trained under the project, falling far short of its target of 2 lakh.
- The project was slated to end in March 2022 but has now been extended by two years.

Project UNNATI:

- It is a **skilling project** designed to improve the livelihoods of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA beneficiaries by allowing them to transition from part-time to full-time employment.
- It is intended to **provide training for one adult member of a household** (aged 18-45) who has completed 100 days of employment under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in the preceding fiscal year.
- Candidates receiving training are paid a stipend, whose expenditures are entirely borne by the Central Government.

Toilets 2.0 campaign

Source: PIB

Direction: The campaign can be used as an example in the Governance as well as for ethics syllabus (Persuasion, Attitude Change).

Context: Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched Toilets 2.0 campaign at Bengaluru on the occasion of World Toilet Day 2022, with the aim to change the face **of public and community toilets** in urban India through collective action involving citizens and Urban Local Bodies.



The campaign has five thematic areas —

- **‘People for Toilets’** that will focus on cleaning and maintaining community and public toilets,
- **‘Partners for Toilets’** aimed at the adoption of public toilets,
- **‘Design Toilets’** - to design convenient and low-cost toilets
- **‘Rate your Toilet’** for the promotion of user feedback to improve public toilets
- **‘My thoughts - Our Toilets’** that will seek to gather public opinion for toilets

Online RTI portal: Making judiciary more transparent

Source: [IE](#)

Context: The Supreme Court launched an online portal that will help citizens file and access applications under the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005 in matters related to the court.

Background: So far, RTI applications at the SC had to be filed only via post.

When can one expect a reply? By law, RTIs must be replied to within 30 days. In fact, RTIs must be answered within 48 hours in life-and-death situations.

Significance: Various public interest litigation (PILs) had been filed before the SC seeking an online portal for the Court, the new portal will provide the same when it comes to the filing of RTI applications, thus **making the higher judiciary more approachable.**

World Children’s Day (20th November)

Source: [PIB](#)

Direction: Go through it once.

Context: National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) launched the **“Training Modules for the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Protocols for Restoration and Repatriation of Children”** along with the **GHAR - GO Home and Re-Unite (Portal for Restoration and Repatriation of Child)** on the occasion of World Children’s Day (20th November).

- Theme for the World Child Rights Day is **“Inclusion of Children”**

Other initiatives for Children

- MASI Portal of NCPCR
- Baal Swaraj Portals of NCPCR
- Amendments brought in the Juvenile Justice Act to make it more child friendly
- **PM CARES for Children Scheme** around **4345 children** were identified who had lost
- both of their parents(s) during the COVID pandemic.

Children constitute **40 per cent of our population** but they are **100 per cent** in terms of making the future of our nation.



PM Kisan Scheme

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Direction: PM KISAN is the flagship scheme of the present government. Do know the structure and provisions of this scheme.

Context: The number of beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme has fallen by **67%** (from nearly 11.8 cr to about 3.8 crs) in the last three years.

Reasons:

- **Union Agriculture Minister** said it is the states that are in charge of maintaining the list of beneficiaries.
- **Several layers of verification:** The data of farmers uploaded by states go through portals of UIDAI, PFMS, Income Tax portal and NPCI.

PM KISAN

Context: 67% drop in PM-Kisan payout in 3 years: RTI reply

About PM-Kisan scheme

- It is a **central sector scheme** (100% centrally funded) and was launched in **Feb 2019**, to provide income support to the farmers and their families.
- **Support amount:** Under the scheme, income support of **₹6,000 per year** in three equal installments of ₹2000 is provided to **all landholding farmers** (initially limited to small and marginal farmers but later extended to all)
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's welfare
- **Physical Verification Module:** A mandatory physical verification of **5%** beneficiary every year is being done as per the provisions laid down in the scheme.
- **Mode of Transfer:** Via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)
- **Exclusions:** All institutional landholders; or if one of the family members hold government job (excluding MTS/Class IV/ Group D employee); or has paid income tax in last assessment year.



Similar programmes by states:

1. Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana- MP.
2. The Rythu Bandhu scheme- Telangana.
3. Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income augmentation (KALIA)- Odisha

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International News and Organization

Code of Conduct for the South China Sea

Source: [TH](#)

Context: There is ongoing negotiations on the **Code of Conduct for the South China Sea** at the **ASEAN** (Association of South East Asian Nations) Defence Ministers Plus meeting in Cambodia.

India stands for the **freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, peaceful settlement of maritime disputes** and adherence to international law, particularly, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (**UNCLOS**) 1982.

Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (SCS):

- The SCS is a semi-enclosed region surrounded by **China and four members of the ASEAN**, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei.
- Since the 1970s, these countries have been in **constant competition for geographical features** such as islands, reefs and rocks, to extend their territorial sovereignty.
- **To prevent these tensions from erupting in open conflict** and to assure freedom of navigation, ASEAN and China have been jointly working on a code of conduct for the SCS for almost 30 years.



GS3



Economy

CDSL or Central Depositories Services India Ltd

Source: [IE](#)

Context: According to media reports, certain services at CDSL were disrupted due to a suspected cyber-attack.

Background:

- **Share depositories** hold shares in an electronic or dematerialised form and are an enabler for securities transactions, playing a **somewhat similar role to what banks play** in handling cash and fixed deposits.
- While banks help customers keep their cash in electronic form, share depositories help consumers store shares in a dematerialised form.

What is CDSL?

- Founded in 1999, CDSL is a **government-registered share depository**, alongside its other state-owned counterpart National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL).
- It is a **Market Infrastructure Institution (MII)** that is deemed a crucial part of the capital market structure, providing services to all market participants, including exchanges, clearing corporations, depository participants, issuers and investors.

Ronnagrams and Quettametres

Source: [TOI](#)

Direction: It becomes important since, it marks the **first time in more than three decades** that new prefixes have been added to the International System of Units (SI).

Context: International scientists gathered in France voted for new metric prefixes to express the world's largest and smallest measurements, prompted by an ever-growing amount of data.

- **Prefixes for Largest numbers: Ronna** (10 to the power 27 zeros) and **Quetta** (10 to the power 30 zeros)
- **Prefixes for smallest numbers: Ronto** (10 to the negative 27th power) and **Qecto** (10 to the negative 30th power)

International System of Units (SI) is the agreed global standard for the **metric system**.

Related news: Prof. Venu Gopal Achanta, Director CSIR has been elected as a member of International Committee for Weights and measures (CIPM). **CIPM** is responsible for development and implementation of SI. It functions under **General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM)**. **CGPM** governs the SI and meets roughly **every four years** at Versailles Palace, Paris.



Insider trading

Source: [IE](#)

Context: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has finally brought fund managers, directors of fund houses, trustees and other connected entities under the ambit of insider trading rules.

Insider trading:

- It is the malpractice of selling or buying securities (equity/bonds) by the insiders of a company using unpublished price-sensitive information (UPSI) that can **affect the stock price that has not been disclosed yet.**
- The SEBI defines an **'insider'** as someone who has access to price-sensitive information about a particular company's shares or securities and who has been associated with the company during the 6 months preceding the insider trade.



Mega Write-Offs - Data

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Context: As per the RBI, banks have been able to recover only 13% of NPA in the last five years and over **Rs 10 lakh crore was written off.**

Loan Write-Off: A loan write-off means that the lender can try to recover the loan amount with the help of a legal entity.



Loan Waiver-off: When a loan is waived-off, the bank will not attempt to take any legal action against the borrower to recover the loan. E.g., farm loan waiver.

Once a loan is written off by a bank, it **goes out from the asset book of the bank**. The bank writes off a loan after the borrower has defaulted on the loan repayment and **there is a very low chance of recovery**. The lender then moves the defaulted loan, or NPA, out of the assets side and reports the amount as a loss.

Non-Performing Assets – NPA: A loan becomes an NPA when the principal or interest payment remains overdue for 90 days. **Description:** Banks are required to classify NPAs further into Substandard, Doubtful and Loss assets.



Agriculture

FSSAI floats draft norms for GM Foods

Source: [Business Standard](#)

Direction: GM foods and issues related to it is important for prelims as well as mains.

Context: FSSAI has come out with **draft regulations for genetically modified food**, proposing mandatory prior approval from the regulator to **manufacture, sell and import food** or ingredients produced from genetically-modified organisms.

Proposed Food Safety and Standards (Genetically Modified Foods) Regulations, 2022

- ❖ **Applicability:** It will be **applicable to food ingredients** produced from GMOs that contain **modified DNA** as well as **to food ingredients produced from GMOs** that do not contain modified DNA but includes **ingredients/additives/processing aids** derived from GMOs.
- ❖ **Permission required:** No person shall manufacture, pack, store, sell, market or otherwise distribute or import any food or food ingredient produced from GMOs, except with the prior approval of the food authority.
- ❖ **Mandatory Labelling:** All food products (GMOs intended for **food use and food ingredients** produced from GMOs that contain modified DNA) must be labelled with the words '**contains genetically modified organisms**' on the front



GMO means any **living organism** that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.

National Milk Day

Source: [PIB](#), [WION](#)

Context: The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying is celebrating “**National Milk Day**” on **26th November** to commemorate the **101st birth anniversary** of the “**Father of the White Revolution in India**”, Dr Verghese Kurien.

Significance of the day

- According to the **Economic Survey of India 2021-2022**, India is ranked first in milk production and contributes about **23 per cent of global milk production**.
- Dairy is the **single largest agricultural commodity** that contributes **5 per cent to the national economy**, employing more than **8 crore farmers directly**.

Dr Verghese Kurien

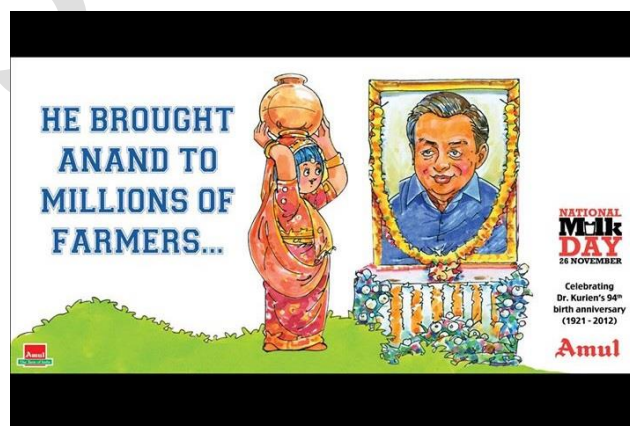
- He is credited with **industrialising dairy production and founding the Amul brand**. Due to Dr Kurien's work, India surpassed the US to become the **world's largest milk producer in 1998**.
- Dr Kurien has received **numerous awards**, including the Krishi Ratna, the Ramon Magsaysay Award, and the World Food Prize. He has earned the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Vibhushan, India's three highest civilian honours.

Operation Flood

Operation Flood **started in 1970**, has assisted **dairy farmers in managing their own development and taking ownership of the resources they produce**.

The goals of Operation Flood included:

1. Increase milk production ('a flood of milk')
2. Augment rural incomes
3. Reasonable prices for consumers





Reports And Indexes

Network Readiness Index 2022

Source: [Live Mint](#)

Direction: There will be 100s of reports. Don't need to know every one of them. For prelims just go through it once. For mains, know one major report in each theme of the syllabus wherever applicable.

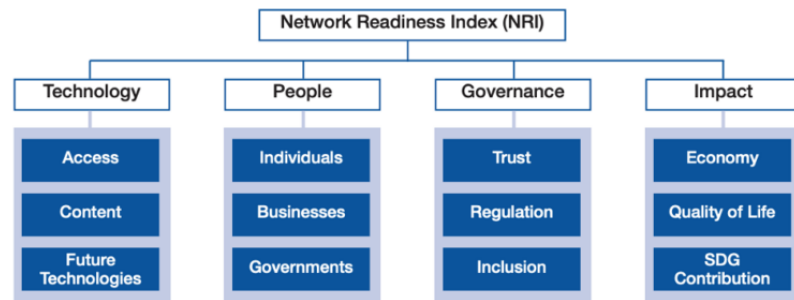
Context: India is now placed at **61st rank** (out of 134 countries) as per the **Network Readiness Index 2022** (NRI 2022). It improved its position by **6 ranks**

- **Network readiness** is a key indicator of how **countries are doing** in the digital world
- The report has been prepared by the **Portulans Institute**, an independent non-profit, nonpartisan research and educational institute based in Washington DC

India leads in several indicators such as **1st rank** in "AI talent concentration", **2nd rank** in "Mobile broadband internet traffic within the country" etc.

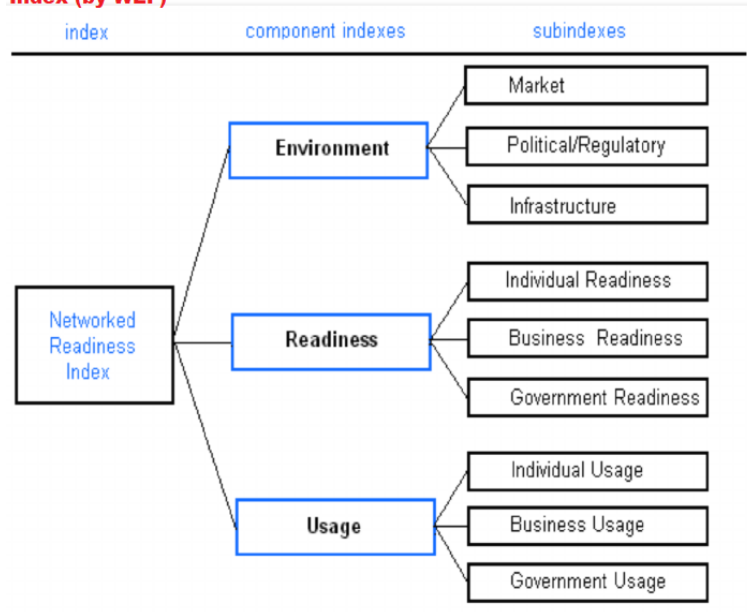
United States takes the **1st spot** from the Netherlands (4th) as the most network-ready society

Note: It is different from Networked Readiness Index by WEF.



Note: SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.

Components of Network Readiness Index (above) and Networked Readiness Index (by WEF)



Science and Technology

Global Partnership on AI (GPAI)

Source: [Live Mint](https://www.live-mint.com)

Direction: Since India is to chair it. It becomes important for UPSC.

Context: India assumed the Chair of the Global Partnership on **Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)** from France

GPAI is an international initiative (launched in 2020) for responsible development of **AI consistent** with values such as – Human Rights, Fundamental freedom and Shared democratic values.



India is founding member of this 25 member group, whose membership is open to all. Its secretariat is hosted by OECD

India's Programmes for AI:

- National programme on AI
- **National data governance framework policy (NDGFP)**- to ensure equitable access to non-personal data
- Envisaged **Indian Data Management Office IDMO** for data collection and management

Health

Ethnoveterinary Medicine (EVM)

Source: [DTE](#)

Direction: Since AMR is coming in focus time and again. Keep a watch on the issues and solutions related to AMR

Context: Delhi-based think-tank, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) report focuses on major ethnoveterinary medicine programme as an alternative to antibiotics for the dairy sector

Ethnoveterinary medicine (EVM) involves the use of traditional / herbal preparations in treating diseases of cattle.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has been recognised as a '**silent pandemic**' and is a global public health threat today. It is a **One Health issue**. It accelerates due to the **misuse and overuse of antimicrobials** in human health, animal health, food-animal production, aquaculture and crop production

Environment

The Plastic Life-Cycle report

Source: [DTE](#)

Context: According to a new report by Delhi-based think-tank, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), India's petrochemical industry is adding to the burgeoning problem of plastic pollution in the country.



Background: CSE's report comes at a time when the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) meeting is soon convening at Punta del Este, Uruguay, to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

Highlights of the report:

- India's total petrochemical production capacity is 29.10 million metric tonnes per annum.
- **Plastics accounted for more than 67%** of the total petrochemicals produced in India in 2020-21.
- While the UN and several governments worldwide are attempting to limit the use of petrochemicals in the production of plastics, **India is going in the opposite direction.**

Steps taken by the government to promote plastic production:

- **'Cluster approach'** for developing plastic parks across the country.
- The government had also revised the Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemical Investment Region (**PCPIR**) in 2020 for the period of 2020-35.

Ivory Trade

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Context: At the ongoing COP19 of CITES, India abstained from voting against a proposal to allow a regular form of controlled trade in ivory from **Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe**. The proposal was defeated.

Ivory: Ivory is a hard, white material from the tusks and teeth of animals. Over **70%** of illegal ivory ends up in **China** where it is used for luxury products.

Why the abstention was surprising?

The elephant remains one of India's most powerful **cultural and religious symbols**. India has been a pioneer in banning the domestic trade in ivory in 1986. And so, India was expected to vote against the proposal.

Related News

CITES at CoP 19 has eased rules for the export of **Shisham** (*Dalbergia sissoo*) on the initiative of India. Currently, **Shisham is in Appendix II** (thus regulated), but now Shisham up to a certain weight can now be traded. This will allow **Shisham handicrafts** to be exported from India.

Shisham is a **deciduous tree** native to the **Indian subcontinent** and Iran.



Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Agreement

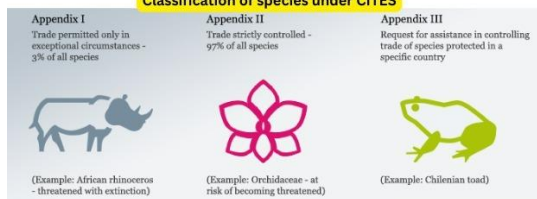


The **19th meeting of the Conference of Parties** to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (**CITES**) is being held in the city of **Panama** from 14th to 25th of November 2022

CITES is a **multilateral treaty** to protect endangered plants and animals from the threats of international trade. It was drafted as a result of a **resolution adopted in 1963** (but came into effect in 1975) at a meeting of members of the **International Union for Conservation of Nature**. **India** became its **25th member** when it joined it in 1976. Currently it has 184 members.



Classification of species under CITES



Although CITES is **legally binding** on the Parties - in other words they have to implement the Convention - it does not take the place of **national laws**.



Permit System: All import, export and re-export of species covered under CITES must be authorised through a permit system.

Every two years, the Conference of the Parties (CoP), the **supreme decision-making body** of CITES, applies a set of biological and trade criteria to evaluate proposals from parties to decide if a species should be in Appendix I or II.

Dr Purnima Devi Barman

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Direction:

Context: Indian wildlife biologist Dr Purnima Devi Barman was recently awarded the Champions of the Earth award in the **Entrepreneurial Vision category**, the UN's highest environmental honour.

She is the founder of the **Hargila Army** (female-led conservation volunteers to protect Greater Adjutant Stork) and senior project manager of the **Avifauna Research and Conservation Division**, Aaranyak.

Champions of the Earth award is awarded (since 2005) annually to outstanding leaders/organizations from government, Civil society and the Private sector



Greater Adjutant Stork

Indian wildlife biologist **Dr Purnima Devi Barman** was recently awarded with Champions of the Earth award

About

The greater adjutant is a member of the stork family, **Ciconiidae**. They are long-necked large birds. They are considered the mount of **Vishnu**, one of Hinduism's prime deities. Some worship the bird and call it "Garuda Maharaj" (Lord Garuda) or "Guru Garuda".

Threat: The widespread destruction and degradation of the wetlands

IUCN Red List: **Endangered**
Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972: **Schedule IV**

Habitat: There are only three known breeding grounds – one in Cambodia and two in India (Assam and Bihar)

Purnima D Barman assembled a group of village women to help her and named the group as the '**Hargila Army**' after the stork, known as 'hargila' in Assamese (meaning 'bone swallower').

Greater Adjutant Distribution

- Year-round
- Breeding
- Nonbreeding

Illegal wildlife trade has implications for ecosystem function and resilience

Source: [DTE](#)

Direction: Know the basics of a few important species like elephants, and rhinos. They are more likely to be asked.

Context: As per the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "**Illegal Wildlife Trade and Climate Change: Joining the dots**" Illegal wildlife trade (IWT), poses a grave risk to **several plants, animals and fungi** species globally, thus impacting the ecosystem functions and processes.

Examples given by UNODC:

- **Sheesham (Timber, least concern)** have some of the **highest wood densities in all commercial trees**, which is why they are trafficked globally, but they are important to long-term carbon sequestration and storage.

Ecosystem Engineers: E.g.

- **African forest elephants (Critically Endangered)** reduce above-ground carbon through grazing and disturbance.
- **Rhinoceros (Near Threatened)** affect the carbon cycle through soil compaction and disturbance (bioturbation). In grassland ecosystems, these factors are likely key controls on fires.
- **Pangolins' (Critically Endangered) diet** consists of **social insects such as termites and ants**, the populations of which they regulate. Notably, termites are vital decomposers, but that process also results in an estimated **1-3% of natural global annual emissions**



Related news

CITES have urged countries to remove references to parts and derivatives of pangolins from the official pharmacopoeia (**Drug-making**) to help save the species.

Birds with the most distinctive or unique characteristics on the planet are also the most threatened ones. The threat can have severe consequences on the functioning of ecosystems (called functional diversity). The **primary roles of bird species** are seed dispersal, predation and pollination.

Appendix I of the CITES

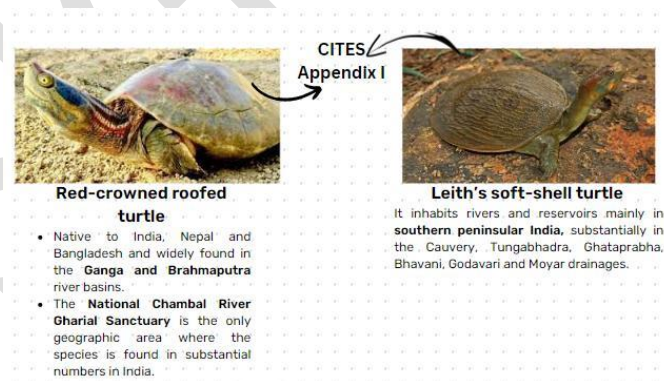
Source: [DTE](#)

Context: In a step forward towards conservation, two Indian turtle species - the red-crowned roofed turtles (*Batagur kachuga*) and Leith's soft-shell turtle (*Nilssonina leithii*), have made it to Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Background:

- The decision was made at the ongoing **19th Conference of Parties (COP19)** in Panama City.
- The species were moved from Appendix II to Appendix I which means the species is **threatened with extinction**.
- **Major threats** for these turtles and other species are increasing loss of habitat due to pollution, unchecked urbanisation, water extraction and irrigation, etc.

About the species:



Climate Change

Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI, 2023)



Source: [PIB](#)

Context: India has been ranked **amongst top 5 countries** in the world, and the best among the G20 countries, based on its Climate Change performance.

Key findings:

- **India jumps 2 spots** higher, and is now ranked **8th** as per **Climate Change Performance Index** (CCPI, 2023). India's rank is the **best amongst all large economies**
- **The first, second and third ranks** were not awarded to any country. **Denmark, Sweden, Chile and Morocco** as the only four small countries that were ranked above India as 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th respectively.
- As per the CCPI report, **India is on track to meet its 2030 emissions targets** (compatible with a well-below-2°C scenario).

CCPI aims to **enhance transparency** in international climate politics and **enables comparison** of climate protection efforts and progress made by individual countries. Published annually since **2005**, the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) is an **independent monitoring tool** for tracking the climate protection performance of **59 countries** and the **EU**.

Published by **German Watch, New Climate Institute and Climate Action Network International** based in Germany.

Ambition on Melting Ice on Sea-level Rise and Mountain Water Resources' (AMI) group

Source: [DTE](#)

Direction: Go through it once

Context: At the COP27, a broad coalition of 18 governments - led by the two polar and mountain nations of Chile and Iceland joined together to create a new high-level group "AMI".

Background:

- The melting of the cryosphere - **areas on the planet with frozen water**, due to climate change, is a global threat whose impact will not be restricted to mountain and polar countries.
- Melting cryosphere and thermal expansion of sea-water due to global warming were always seen as the **major contributors to sea-level rise**.

Objective of AMI: The "AMI" group aims to ensure impacts of cryosphere loss are understood by political leaders and the public, and not only within mountain and polar regions, but throughout the planet.



Global Methane Assessment

Source: [DTE](#)

Direction: Global methane pledge is important

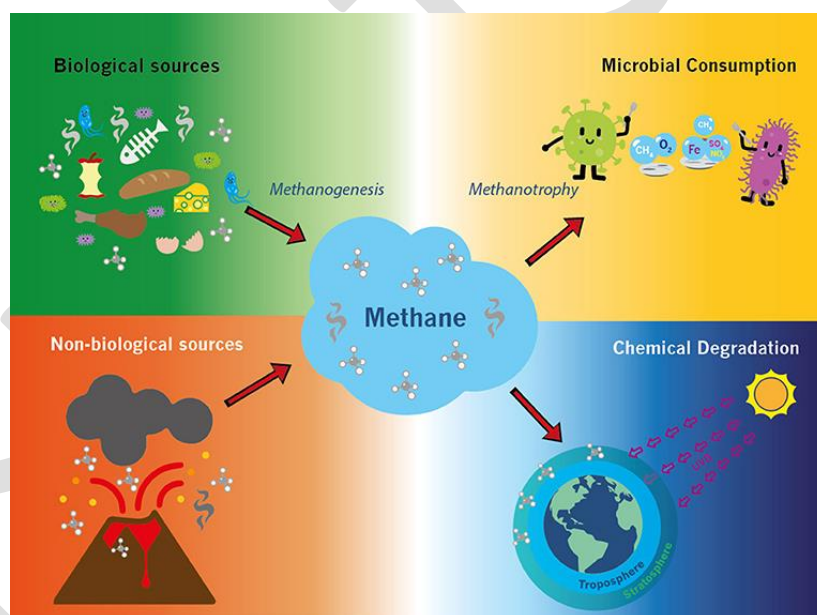
Context: Methane emissions to rise **5-13%** by 2030 from 2020 levels under a business-as-usual scenario

- Anthropogenic-caused Methane is **responsible for nearly 45 per cent** of current net warming
- The amount of methane in the atmosphere is **260%** of pre-industrial levels.

The Global Methane Assessment: 2030 Baseline Report was launched at **COP27** and is produced by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and UNEP.

Methane (CH_4) is a **hydrocarbon that is a primary component of natural gas**. Methane is also a greenhouse gas (GHG), having **80 times** more warming potential than CO_2 but a short life of 12 years. India is the **fourth-largest** emitter of greenhouse gas methane.

The Global Methane Pledge was announced **last year at Cop26**. The goal is to slash global methane emissions by at **least 30 per cent** from **2020 levels** by 2030. India is **not** part of the pledge.



Species in News

Black-Naped Pheasant-Pigeon

Source: [BBC](#)



Direction: Just know the name. No need to remember.

Context: Some 140 years after the black-naped pheasant-pigeon was last sighted by scientists, researchers have "**rediscovered**" the rare bird deep in the forest of a tiny island off **Papua New Guinea**

Black-Naped Pheasant-Pigeon is a large bird which usually lives around hilly areas and lower mountain areas.

IUCN Status: **Critically Endangered**

European Eels and Sea Cucumber

Source: [DTE](#)

Context: COP19 of CITES has asked for improvement in traceability and enforcement measures for trade in species like European eels and accepted the proposal to include 'Sea Cucumber' under Appendix II of the convention (as 'threatened').

- **European eel** is snake-like fish found in freshwaters and estuarine habitats. It is **Critically endangered** and under **Appendix II** of CITES.
- **Sea cucumbers** perform the same role on the seabed that **earthworms** perform on land.
- An analysis published by the **Wildlife Conservation Society-India (WCS-India)** this September showed that sea cucumbers were the **most frequently trafficked marine species in India** from 2015-2021.
- Sea cucumber in India is treated as an **endangered species listed under schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.**

CITES COP19 downgrades the status of southern white rhino

Source: [DTE](#)

Context: In a major setback to rhino conservation in Africa, the proposal to downgrade the status of southern white **rhinos from Appendix I to Appendix II was accepted** at the 19th Conference of Parties (COP19).

The animals named under **Appendix II may not necessarily be threatened with extinction**, but the trade of such species should be controlled to ensure it does not threaten their existence.



Mycobacterium leprae

Source: [DTE](#)

Context: A group of researchers have found that armadillo livers grew substantially when infected with *Mycobacterium leprae*. Bacteria of the chronic infectious disease reprogrammed certain cells into 'stem-like cells'

Significance: Leprosy has long been associated with a life of ostracism. However, the bacteria causing this debilitating disease may offer some hope on the **regenerative medicine horizon**.

Leprosy:

- Also known as **Hansen's disease (HD)**, it is a long-term infection by the **bacteria** *Mycobacterium leprae* or *Mycobacterium lipomatosus*.
- Infection can lead to damage to the nerves, respiratory tract, skin and eyes.
- Though not very contagious, leprosy is spread by extensive contact between people and is cured with multidrug therapy.

Armadillos are **mammals with their back, head, legs and tail covered in bony plates**. They got the name from their unique look, which translated from Spanish means 'little armoured one'.

Regulation of hunting for Shark fins

Source: [DTE](#)



Context: COP19 for CITES voted to limit or regulate trade in nearly 100 species of sharks and rays by putting it in CITES Appendix II.

- Under Appendix II, a **permit or certificate** authorising international trade in specimens of species listed in it can be granted by relevant authorities.

About the CITES:

- CITES (Secretariat - Geneva), also known as the Washington Convention, is an **international legally binding agreement** between governments to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants does not endanger the survival of the species.
- With 184 Parties currently (India since 1976), CITES is one of the **conservation treaties** with the **most members** (which are legally obligatory on the Parties) that came into force in **1975**
- Plant and animal specimens are categorised into **three Appendices** under CITES based on their **extinction risk**
- The Convention requires governments to **restrict the trade of all listed specimens and the possession** of live animal specimens through **permits**



Defence

GARUDA SHAKTI

Source: [PIB](#)

Direction: Go through once.

Context: The Exercise is the **eighth edition** of the series of bilateral exercises between India and Indonesia and is part of the **military-to-military** exchange programs.

The exercise which commenced on 21st November 2022 aims to enhance understanding, cooperation and interoperability between the Special Forces of both armies.



Other exercises with Indonesia: India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT); Samudra Shakti: A bilateral maritime exercise.

Internal Security

Kuki-Chins

Source: [TH](#)

Context: More than 270 members of the Kuki-Chin community from Bangladesh who entered Mizoram are being referred to as “**officially displaced persons**” in State government records, as India does not have a law on refugees.

Background:

- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), foreign nationals who enter the country without valid travel documents are treated as **illegal immigrants**.
- The MHA had said that State Governments have no powers to grant “‘refugee’ status to any foreigner” and added that India is **not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol**.

Kuki-Chins:

The Kuki people are an ethnic group native to the Mizo Hills (formerly Lushai) in India. They constitute one of several hill tribes within India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. **The Chin people of Myanmar and the Mizo people of Mizoram** are related tribes of the Kukis. **The Kuki-Chin** is a Christian community from Bangladesh’s Chittagong Hill Tracts, which shares close ethnic ties with people in Mizoram.



The Mizoram Cabinet has approved the setting up of temporary shelters and other amenities for Bangladeshi Kuki-Chin refugees, who have sought refuge in the northeastern state amid an alleged military operation against an ethnic insurgent group in Bangladesh’s Chittagong Hills Tracts .



Content for Mains Enrichment (Ethics/Essay):

Polity

India's first suicide prevention policy

Source: [TH](#)

Context: In line with the WHO's South East-Asia Region Strategy for suicide prevention, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced a **National Suicide Prevention Strategy**, the first of its kind in the country.

Data on suicides in India:

- In India, more than 1 lakh lives are lost every year to suicide, and it is the **top killer in the 15-29 years category**.
- In the past three years, the **suicide rate has increased** from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000 population.
- The most common reasons for suicide include **family problems and illnesses**, which account for 34% and 18% of all suicide-related deaths.

Highlights of the policy:

- Time-bound action plans and multi-sectoral collaborations to achieve a reduction in suicide mortality by 10% by 2030.
- **Establish effective surveillance mechanisms** for suicide within the next 3 years.
- **Establish psychiatric outpatient departments** that will provide suicide prevention services through the District Mental Health Programme within the next 5 years.
- **Integrate a mental well-being curriculum** in all educational institutions within the next 8 years.
- Develop guidelines for responsible media reporting of suicides and restricting access to means of suicide.
- Develop **community resilience and societal support** for suicide prevention.

'REDS' strategy to suicide prevention

R= Reinforce leadership

E= Enhance capacity of health services/institutions

D= Develop community/societal support

S= Strengthen Surveillance



Governance

Framework to curb fake reviews on e-commerce sites

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Direction: Fake reviews are a growing menace esp. when the number of India's e-commerce is booming

Need for new standards:

Reviews play a **critical role in shopping in e-commerce**. They are more important in three sectors — tour and travel; restaurant and eateries; and consumer durables. But **fake reviews** mislead consumers to spend money with a business or on a product they may not have otherwise chosen. This could mean **other businesses are losing out on revenue** they may have earned, had it not been for the fake or misleading reviews.

Standards:

- **Verification:** Methods for verification of review author through email address, identification by telephone call or SMS, confirming registration by clicking on a link, using a captcha system etc. to check traceability and genuineness of the review author
- **Moderation:** the standard provides for both **automated and manual moderation** and provides checks for analyzing the review content
- **Publication:** The standard includes considerations for the review administrator at the time of publication process and after the publication process
- The reviews should be **legitimate** and the process of **collecting, moderating and publishing** consumer reviews should be accurate.
- **The protection of review authors'** personal information should be ensured

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS):



- **Background:** The Indian Standards Institution (ISI) was founded in 1946 by a Department of Industries and Supplies resolution and was constituted under the Societies Registration Act of 1860.
- **About BIS:**
 - ❖ The Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016, established the BIS as a **statutory** body with its headquarters in New Delhi.
 - ❖ It is the **National Standards Body of India** under the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India.

International Relations

Data Point: India's loan to Neighbours

India's Soft loans (at zero or minimum interest rates) to neighbours have increased from **\$3 billion to almost \$15 billion** in the last 8 years. The largest **concessional credit** given by India to a country has been to **Bangladesh**

India's Lines of Credit (LOC) to its neighbours have **increased fourfold** since 2014.

A **line of credit** is a **flexible loan** from a financial institution that consists of a defined amount of money that you **can access as needed and repay either** immediately or over time. Interest is charged on a line of credit as soon as money is borrowed.

LOC FOR NEIGHBOURS	
Bangladesh	\$8 bn
Nepal	\$1.65 bn
Sri Lanka	\$1.4 bn
Maldives	\$1.3 bn
Myanmar	\$476 mn

Sports

Lessons from Japanese Fans – FIFA 2022

Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

Direction: This can be mentioned as an example – of **behavioural change/ building attitude/way forward in GS answers.**

Context: Social media is flooded with images because of which Japan's football fans are earning respect for their **tradition of staying behind to help clean stadiums after World Cup games.**



As soon as the stadium started to empty, **Japanese supporters could be seen taking out light blue disposable rubbish bags and getting to work.**

Lessons to be learnt:

- **Cleanliness and tidiness are like religion** in Japan and they treasure them. It's a part of their education system, everyday learning.
- It is **part of their custom**: When they use the toilet, they clean it themselves. When they leave a room, they make sure it is tidy.

The Japanese fans showed a similar gesture after Japan's match against Colombia in 2018. People around the globe were impressed by their readiness to clean up the stadium after the match.

