

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE for



**C.D.S.**

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**Topic 1. CITING DEEP FAKES GOVT LOOK AT IT RULES TO MAKE WHATSAPP DISCLOSE SOURCE I'D**

*Important for the subject :Science and Technology*

Citing deep fakes govt look at It rules to make WhatsApp disclose source I'd.

The Indian government is considering invoking a **law to make WhatsApp reveal information about the originator of messages** due to **increasing AI-driven misinformation on the platform**. The move follows the **circulation of deepfake videos of politicians**, which pose a **threat to electoral integrity**.

- This would be the **first time the Central government directly sends an order to an Internet platform under the IT Rules, 2021**, but it may spark controversy, as WhatsApp and Facebook had previously challenged this provision in court.
- The government asserts the need for **traceability to combat fake content** during elections.

**What is deep fakes:**

- A **deepfake is an artificially created image or video** that convincingly portrays one person as another.
- It represents an **advanced form of producing deceptive content**, harnessing the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) .
- AI **involves programming machines to emulate human intelligence**, enabling them to think and act like humans.
- With AI, it **becomes possible to generate entirely fictitious individuals and manipulate genuine individuals**, causing them to appear as if they said or did things they never actually did.
- The **term deepfake originated in 2017**, when an **anonymous Reddit** user called himself “Deepfakes.”
- This user **manipulated Google’s open-source, deep-learning technology to create and post pornographic videos**.

**What are the Global Efforts to regulate Deepfake technology:**

**European Union**

- The EU has an **updated Code of Practice** to stop the spread of disinformation through deepfakes.
- The **revised Code requires tech companies** including Google, Meta, and Twitter to take **measures in countering deepfakes** and fake accounts on their platforms.
- They have **six months to implement their measures** once they have signed up to the Code.

- If found non-compliant, these companies can face fines as much as 6% of their annual global turnover.

### United States

- In July 2021, the US introduced the bipartisan Deepfake Task Force Act to assist the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to counter deepfake technology.
- The measure directs the DHS to conduct an annual study of deepfakes assess the technology used, track its uses by foreign and domestic entities, and come up with available countermeasures to tackle the same.

### China:

- In China, it is mandatory for deep synthesis service providers and users to ensure that any doctored content using the technology is explicitly labelled and can be traced back to its source.
- The regulation also mandates people using the technology to edit someone's image or voice, to notify and take the consent of the person in question.
- When reposting news made by the technology, the source can only be from the government-approved list of news outlets.

### What is Information Technology Rules, 2021

- IT Rules 2021 were released under section 87 of the IT Act, 2000 for Social-Media, Digital Media, and OTT platforms.  
It covers digitized content that can be transmitted over the internet or computer networks and includes intermediaries such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube.  
It also includes publishers of news and current affairs content and also curators of such content over online papers, news portals, news agencies and news aggregators.
- However, e-papers are not covered because print media comes under the purview of the Press Council of India. Newspapers and TV news channels are governed under the Press Council of India Act, 1978 and Cable Television Networks Regulation Act, 1995 respectively.
- Through the act the digital media is brought under the ambit of Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 which gives takedown powers to the government.
- The section allows the Centre to block public access to an intermediary in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence relating to above".
- It also deprives the intermediaries of their "safe harbour protections under Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000.
- Safe Harbour provisions protect the intermediaries from liability for the acts of third parties who use their infrastructure for their own purposes.
- The act provides for three Tier Check Structure part III of the rules imposes three-

tier complaints and adjudication structure on publishers.

Level I: Self-regulation.

- **Level II: Industry regulatory body** headed by a **former judge of the Supreme Court and High Court** with **additional members from a panel approved by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.
- **Level III: Oversight mechanism** that includes an **inter ministerial committee** with the **authority to block access to content**, which can also take **suo moto cognisance of an issue** and any grievance **flagged by the Ministry**.
- Social media companies are needed to appoint **Content Moderation Officers** who will be **responsible for complying** with content moderation orders.
- The New rules make it **mandatory for platforms such as WhatsApp to aid in identifying the originator of unlawfull messages**.
- The rules mandate the **creation of a grievance redressal portal** as the **central repository** for receiving and processing all grievances.
- **Intermediaries are required to act on certain kinds of violations within 24 hours**, and on all **concerns of a complainant within 15 days**.
- The rules also hold that Information Disclosure to Competent Authorities may demand **pertinent information for the purposes of prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of crimes**.
- However, **it excludes the intermediary from having to disclose the content of the personal message**.

## Topic 2. STUDY ESTIMATES COUNT OF UAVS REQUIRED FOR THE THREE SERVICES

*Important for the subject : Science and Technology*

The Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan, has ordered two studies on significant military platforms used by the three Services in India. These platforms are unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and armoured helicopters. These studies aim to optimise the number of platforms, resources, and avoid duplication.

**What is Drone or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle?**

- An unmanned aerial vehicle, commonly known as a **drone, is an aircraft without any human pilot**, crew or passengers on board.
- UAVs are a component of an unmanned aircraft system, which include additionally a ground-based controller and a system of communications with the UAV.
- Drones have been divided into five categories based on their weight (existing rules)-  
**Nano** : Less than or equal to 250 grams, **Micro** : From 250 grams to 2kg, **Small** : From 2 kg to 25kg, **Medium** : From 25kg to 150kg, **Large** : Greater than 150kg.

### Drone regulation in India

- These rules are built on the premise of trust, self-certification, and non-intrusive monitoring. The policy is designed to usher in an era of super-normal growth while balancing safety and security considerations

### Drone (Amendment) Rules 202

- The requirement of a drone pilot licence has been abolished
- No remote pilot certificate will be required for operating a drone up to two-kilogram for non-commercial purposes
- The Remote Pilot Certificate issued by a Directorate General of Civil Aviation approved drone school through the single window Digital Sky platform will be sufficient for operating drones in the country.
- An individual owning any unmanned aircraft system manufactured in India or imported into India on or before 30th of November, 2021 must make an application to register and obtain a unique identification number and state the required details in form D-2 and the stipulated fee under Rule 46.
- To promote Made in India drones, the import of foreign drones has been prohibited in the country

### Studies on UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles)

- The study on UAVs has been completed, recommending the acquisition of 31 MQ-9B high-altitude long-endurance (**HALE**) UAVs and 155 medium-altitude long-endurance (**MALE**) UAVs.
- The Indian Services currently operate Israeli Heron MALE UAVs, and there's a pending upgrade to weaponize and incorporate satellite communication on these UAVs.
- Officials believe this upgrade may get cleared following the study's recommendation

### Procurement of MQ-9B UAV

- In June, the Defence Ministry approved the procurement of 31 MQ-9B UAVs from General Atomics through the U.S. foreign military sales route.
- The Letter of Request (LoR) was issued to the U.S. government, and further details and terms of the procurement will be negotiated and finalised in the Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA)

### Apache Helicopte

- The Army Aviation Corps inducted the first batch of light combat helicopters (LCH) and is awaiting government approval for a bigger deal to procure 156 LC
- The Cabinet Committee on Security approved the procurement of 39 AH-64 Apache attack helicopters from the U.S.
- The Air Force has already inducted 22 AH-64E Apaches, and further Apache procurements will go to the Army
- The Army signed a deal for six more Apaches in February 2020, with deliveries expected



to start in February 202

- The Army is discussing the procurement of 11 more Apaches with Boeing, and progress will be based on the outcome of the study on armoured helicopters.

### **Topic 3. RAILWAYS DEVELOPS ANTI-FREEZE FLUSHES AND FUEL TANKS FOR JOURNEYS IN J&K**

*Important for the subject: Science and Technology*

The Indian Railways is facing unique challenges in maintaining water and fuel in liquid form in subzero temperatures during the harsh winters in regions like Jammu and Kashmir.

Engineers at the Rail Coach Factory (RCF) in Kapurthala have designed and implemented indigenous innovations to overcome these challenges.

#### **Challenges**

- In the Jammu and Kashmir region, winter temperatures can drop to minus eight to minus 12 degrees Celsius.
- Freezing water in toilets and fuel tanks poses challenges, including toilets not functioning, supply taps not working, and the risk of tank cracks and bursts due to ice expansion.

#### **Innovations**

- The RCF has created **double-walled composite insulated water tanks**, available in capacities from 450 to 685 litres, which effectively keep water in its liquid state for a duration of 16 to 20 hours even in subzero conditions.
- The tanks mimic thermoplastic bottles with **two walls and an insulation layer of foam in the middle**, preventing freezing.
- The RCF is using heated pipes **with a distributed heating system** and insulation to prevent water in supply pipelines from freezing.
- **Geysers will be deployed** at the point of use in toilets, heating only the required amount of water, reducing energy loss.
- Similar technology is being used in the fuel tanks for locomotives to keep fuel in liquid form.

### **Topic 4. NEW 'QUANTUM ENGINE' DOES WORK BY FLIPPING THE IDENTITY OF ATOMS**

*Important for the subject : Science and Technology*

Physicists in Germany have come up with a way to convert the energy difference between two quantum states of a group of atoms into work. The device adapts the principles of the familiar classical engine to the subatomic realm, giving physicists a way to study the nascent

field of quantum thermodynamics in more detail as well as, possibly, build better quantum computers.

**About:**

- All subatomic particles can be classified as either **fermions or bosons**.
- Fermions are the building blocks of matter and bosons are particles that carry the forces acting between them.
- All particles in a system are distinguished by **four quantum numbers**.
- The values of the four numbers together tell us something about **how much energy a particle has**.
- The exclusion principle states that, in a given system, **no two particles can have the same four quantum numbers**– that is, they can't occupy the same energy level.

**Working:**

- **Classical engines convert heat into work.** For example, the internal combustion engine in a car uses the heat released by the combustion of petrol or diesel to push a piston.
- Overall the **engine has four steps**: the fuel is compressed, ignition causes the fuel air mix to expand and push the piston out, the mix cools and stops expanding, and the piston is brought back to the first step.
- The quantum engine, or what the researchers are calling a **'Pauli engine'**, has a **similar set of four steps**. First, the atoms collected in the trap are compressed and kept in a bosonic state.
- Second, the strength of a magnetic field applied on the atoms is increased by a small amount. Interactions between the atoms and the field cause the former to slip into a fermionic state: they are forced to move out of the lowest energy level and progressively occupy higher levels.
- Third, the compression applied in the first step is eased. Fourth: the magnetic field strength is reduced to its original value.
- The energy of the atoms increases during the third step and this can be converted to work. The efficiency of the quantum engine is based on how much more energy is released in the third step relative to the energy added to the system in the first step.
- Currently, according to the researchers' paper, published in Nature on September 27, their **quantum engine is 25% efficient**. The researchers expect to be able to increase this to 50% or more in future.
- The **quantum engine is still a proof of concept**. Researchers have demonstrated that their design can be used to force a bunch of atoms to cyclically release energy as they are switched between bosonic and fermionic states. The researchers need to figure out how this energy can be moved from inside the trap to a system on the outside.

## Topic 5. FRENCH AI FIRM MISTRAL'S LARGE LANGUAGE MODEL

### *Important for the subject : Science and Technology*

A week ago, Mistral released a 7.3 billion parameter language model positioned to compete against Meta's Llama 2, a 13 billion parameters large language model (LLM). The French firm has claimed first place for the most powerful LLM.

### **What is generative AI?**

Like other forms of artificial intelligence, generative AI learns how to take actions based on past data.

It creates brand new content—a text, an image, even computer code—based on that training instead of simply categorizing or identifying data like other AI.

- The most famous generative AI application is ChatGPT, a chatbot that Microsoft-backed OpenAI released late last year.
- The AI powering it is known as a large language model because it takes in a text prompt and, from that, writes a human-like response.

### **What are large language models (LLMs)?**

- Large Language Models (LLMs) are advanced AI systems designed to understand and generate human-like language.
- They use vast amounts of data to learn patterns and relationships in language, enabling them to answer questions, create text, translate languages, and perform various language tasks.

### **Potential of large language models**

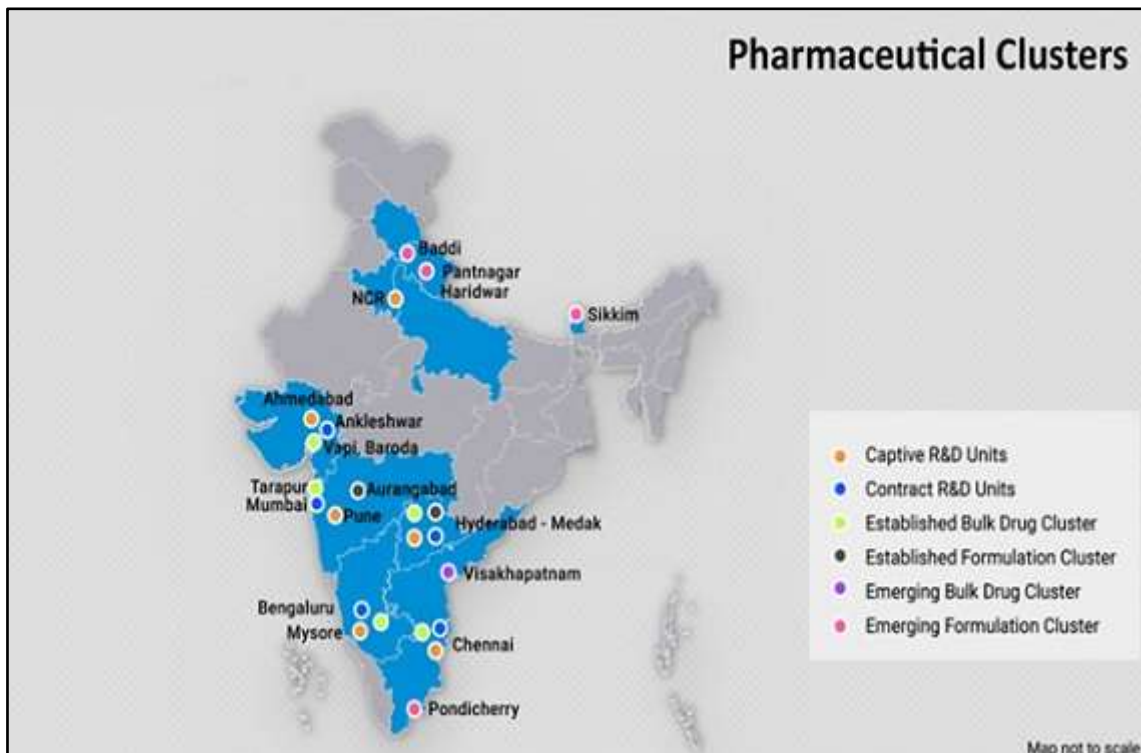
- **Economic Transformation:** LLMs are predicted to contribute \$2.6 trillion to \$4.4 trillion annually to the global economy.
- **Enhanced Communication:** LLMs redefine human-machine interaction, allowing for more natural and nuanced communication.
- **Information Democratization:** Initiatives like the Jugalbandi Chatbot exemplify LLMs' power by making information accessible across language barriers.
- **Industry Disruption:** LLMs can transform various industries. For example, content creation, customer service, translation, and data analysis can benefit from their capabilities.
- **Efficiency Gains:** Automation of language tasks leads to efficiency improvements. This enables businesses to allocate resources to higher-value activities.
- **Educational Support:** LLMs hold educational potential. They can provide personalized tutoring, answer queries, and create engaging learning materials.
- **Medical Advances:** LLMs assist medical professionals in tasks such as data analysis,

research, and even diagnosing conditions. This could significantly impact healthcare delivery.

- **Entertainment and Creativity:** LLMs contribute to generating creative content, enhancing sectors like entertainment and creative industries.
- **Positive Societal Impact:** LLMs have the potential to improve accessibility, foster innovation, and address various societal challenges.

### Topic 6. TWO LABS IN INDIA TAKE ON THE BULK OF TESTING FOR COUGH SYRUP SAMPLES FOR EXPORT

*Important for the subject :Science and Technology*



The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade** under the **Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry** issued a notification early this year for amendment in the **export policy for cough syrups**, making it **compulsory** from June 1 for **cough syrup manufacturers** to secure a **certificate of analysis from a government-approved laboratory** before exporting their products.

- The order came following a **World Health Organization (WHO) product alert** in cases of **syrup products being exported from India**.
- The country has **15 Central and State-run laboratories** engaged in **cough syrup sample testing**, including the **Regional Drugs Testing Laboratory, Kerala**.
- One Central and one State testing laboratory in India are currently bearing the bulk of **cough syrup sample analyses** brought in for **testing before their export**.

- These two centers are: **CDTL, Mumbai**; and the **Food and Drug Laboratory, Gujarat**.
- **CDSO** and the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945**, have brought in various measures to maintain the standard of drugs being exported from India.
- **The amendments include mandating** that before the grant of a manufacturing license, the manufacturing establishment is to be inspected jointly by the drugs inspectors of the Central government and State government.
- The number of sanctioned posts in the **CDSO** has been significantly **increased** in the last 10 years, and an amendment has also been brought in, **making it mandatory for applicants to submit evidence of stability, safety, etc.** to the **State licensing authority** before the grant of manufacturing license by the authority.

### Drug manufacturing in India:

- The **pharmaceutical industry in India** was valued at an estimated **US\$42 billion** in **2021** and is estimated to reach **\$130 billion** by **2030**
- India is the **world's largest provider of generic medicines by volume**, with a **20% share of total global pharmaceutical exports**. It is also the **largest vaccine supplier in the world by volume**, accounting for **more than 60% of all vaccines manufactured in the world**.
- **Indian pharmaceutical products** are **exported** to various regulated markets including the **US, UK, European Union** and **Canada**.
- According to **Economic Survey 2023**, the turnover in the **domestic pharmaceutical market** was estimated to be **\$41 billion**.
- **India's pharmaceutical exports revenue** was **\$25.3 billion** in **fiscal year 2022–23**, according to the data released by **Pharmexcil**.
- **India ranked third globally** in terms of dollar value of drugs and medicines exports.
- **Major pharmaceutical hubs in India** are: **Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Ankleshwar, Vapi, Baddi, Sikkim, Kolkata, Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Margao, Navi Mumbai, Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Pithampur, and Paonta Sahib**.

### Topic 7. MODI 'DIRECTS' ISRO TO LAND MAN ON MOON BY 2040, WORK TOWARDS INTERPLANETARY MISSIONS

*Important for the subject : Science and technology*



**Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**'s space projects include:

**Gaganyaan mission**, India's first manned mission to space, is scheduled for **2025**.

To set up an **Indian-crafted, indigenous space station (Bharatiya Antariksha Station)** by **2035** and

**Land an Indian on the moon by 2040.**

- **Interplanetary missions**, including a **space vehicle** to orbit **Venus** and one that will **land on Mars**.
- The **Department of Space**, under which the **ISRO functions**, presented the state of preparedness and technologies developed for Gaganyaan.
- **Crew Escape System Test vehicle**— a component of **Gaganyaan**, is scheduled for the test. **V-D1 test flight: Test Vehicle Abort Mission-1 (TV-D1)** will be a **high altitude abort test** as part of the **Gaganyaan program**.
- It would be a **short-duration mission**, and visibility from the launch view gallery of the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota** would be limited.
- The **DoS** will make a **road map for moon exploration**, which will consist of a series of **Chandrayaan missions**, developing a **new generation launch vehicle**, **constructing a new launch pad**, setting up **human-centric laboratories** and associated technologies.
- The **International Space Station**, developed and maintained by the **U.S., Russia, Canada, Japan**, and **European agencies**, is the **largest space station** but is expected to be **decommissioned by 2030**.

**About the Gaganyaan mission:**

- **Gaganyaan project** envisages **demonstration of human spaceflight capability** by launching a **crew of 3 members** to an orbit of **400 km** for a **3 days mission** and **bring them back safely to earth**, by **landing in Indian sea waters**.
- The project is accomplished through an **optimal strategy** by considering inhouse expertise, experience of Indian industry, intellectual capabilities of Indian academia & research institutions along with cutting edge technologies available with international agencies.
- The **prerequisites for Gaganyaan mission** include development of many critical technologies including **human rated launch vehicle** for carrying crew safely to space, **Life Support System** to provide an earth like environment to crew in space, **crew emergency escape provision** and evolving **crew management aspects for training, recovery and rehabilitation of crew**.
- Various precursor missions are planned for demonstrating the **Technology Preparedness Levels** before carrying out the actual Human Space Flight mission. These demonstrator missions include **Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT)**, **Pad Abort Test (PAT)** and **Test Vehicle (TV) flights**. Safety and reliability of all systems will be proven in unmanned missions preceding manned mission.

## **Topic 8. LAO PDR BECOMES SECOND COUNTRY IN 2023 AFTER BANGLADESH TO ELIMINATE LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS**

*Important for the subject: Science and technology*

Lao People's Democratic Republic has **eliminated lymphatic filariasis (LF)**, a disease that **cripples and has significant social and economic impact on the affected communities** according to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.

This is the **country's second neglected tropical disease (NTD) to be eliminated in six years**, following the **elimination of trachoma** as a public health hazard in **2017**.

**Countries that have eliminated the LF:**

- **Lao PDR** is now the **second country** after **Bangladesh** to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF) in **2023**.

**Nineteen countries have been able to eliminate LF.**

- **11** belong to the **WHO Western Pacific Region (WPR)**. **Lao PDR** is the **11th country** in the **WPR region** to successfully eliminate LF.
- **Four countries** viz. **Bangladesh, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand** in the **WHO South-East Asia region** have **eliminated LF**.
- In the **WHO Africa region**, **two countries** — **Malawi and Togo** – have eliminated the disease.
- In the **WHO Eastern Mediterranean's Yemen** have eliminated the LF.

**About LF:**

- **LF**, also known as **elephantiasis**, is a **preventable mosquito-borne infectious disease** targeted for **global elimination** as a public health problem. It occurs when one of the **filarial parasites** — **Wuchereriabancrofti, Brugiamalayi and B. timori** — are **transmitted to humans** through **mosquito bites**.
- The parasites nest in the **lymph vessels**, damaging them. This leads to **hydrocele, lymphedema, and elephantiasis**.

**Tackling LF:**

- The **most cost-effective method** for treating all affected residents of **LF-endemic areas** and stopping future transmission is **mass drug administration (MDA)**.
- **WHO** recommends the **triple therapy combination of ivermectin (I), diethylcarbamazine (D) and albendazole (A)**, for **MDA** against **LF**. Multiple rounds of **MDA, covering over 65 per cent of the population**, are required.
- **10 countries stopped MDA nationally**, which means these are on the right track to eliminating **LF**. These include — **Benin, Cameroon, Eritrea, Mali, Sao Tome and**

Principe, Uganda, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Timor-Leste and Brunei Darussalam.

**Global efforts to eliminate LF:**

**Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis:**

- Launched in **2000** by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.
- Over the last 15 years, the **global population** requiring **LF** interventions has **decreased by 53 per cent**.
- **China** participated in the program and became **LF free in 2007**.
- The **Road Map for NTDs 2021-2030** had a target to **eliminate LF from 23 countries by 2023**.
- The **elimination of NTDs by 2030** is one of the **primary objectives** of the **United Nations-mandated global sustainable development goal of “health for all” (SDG 3)**.

**Topic 9. NEW EVOLUTIONARY LAW EXPLAINS HOW LIVING BEINGS, MINERALS & SPECIES EVOLVE**

*Important for the subject :Science and technology*

Scientists have proposed a **new evolutionary law** that can explain the **evolution of living and non-living entities, from minerals to stars**. The findings were published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

**Natural systems, living and non-living entities**, evolve to states of greater patterning, diversity and complexity, the study noted.

**About the new evolutionary law:**

- As life evolved from **single-celled to multi-celled organisms**, Earth’s minerals, for example, became more **complex, creating diversity**. This, in turn, **drove biological evolution**.
- Biodiversity leads to **mineral diversity** and vice-versa. The two systems, **biological and mineral**, interacted to **create life** as we know it today.
- Evolution occurs when a new configuration or a new arrangement of atoms and molecules works well and functions improve.

**Selection of function is key to evolution:**

- **Darwin** defined function as primarily with survival but the new study highlights at least **three kinds of functions** that occur in nature.
- The **first function** is **stability**, which means systems made up of stable arrangements of atoms or molecules will continue to survive. The **second** one includes **dynamic systems with energy supply**
- The **third** is **“novelty”**- the tendency of evolving systems to explore new configurations or arrangements that can give rise to new behaviors or characteristics.



- An example of **novelty** is when single-celled organisms evolved to use light **to make food**. Other examples include new behaviors among multicellular species such as swimming, walking, flying and thinking
- **Early minerals on Earth** possessed a **stable arrangement of atoms**, which acted as **foundations for the evolution of the next generations of minerals**.
- These minerals were then **incorporated into life**. For example, minerals are present in living organisms' shells, teeth and bones
- In the early years of the **Solar System, Earth** was home to **20 minerals**, which **evolved to almost 6,000 known minerals**.

#### Star formation and evolution:

- The **first ones** that formed after the **Big Bang** had **two main ingredients: Hydrogen and helium**.
- Those **earliest stars** used these ingredients to make about **20 heavier chemical elements**. The **next generation of stars** consequently produced almost **100 more elements**.
- The **universe generates novel combinations of atoms, molecules, cells, etc.** Those combinations that are **stable** and can go on to engender even more novelty will continue to evolve.

### Topic 10. HOW DO SOME CANCER CELLS SURVIVE CHEMOTHERAPY?

#### *Important for the subject : Science and Technology*

Researchers at the Netherlands Cancer Institute have conducted a recent study to investigate **drug resistance in cancer cells, focusing on resistance to a drug known as Taxol**.

- It studied Chemotherapy and cancer relapse, particularly **when a small number of cancer cells resist treatment and remain dormant**, potentially leading to a resurgence of the disease.

#### Chemotherapy and its limitations

- Cancer cells are **characterized by uncontrolled and rapid division**.
- Chemotherapeutic drugs aim to halt this proliferation, often triggering **programmed cell death**, known as apoptosis, in response to halted cell division.
- However, this approach also damages healthy dividing cells, leading to adverse side effects.

#### Fine-Tuning Cancer Treatment

- Oncologists face the challenge of finding an effective drug dose that eliminates cancer cells while minimizing unbearable side effects for patients.
- One approach has been the development of **antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs)** that

target specific proteins found mainly on cancer cells, sparing non-cancerous cells.

### Unraveling Drug Resistance

- P-gp Protein: Some cancer cells escape drug treatments by overexpressing a protein called **P-gp (permeability glycoprotein), which acts as a pump, expelling toxic compounds, including chemotherapeutic agents.**
- ABCB1 Gene: The production of P-gp is controlled by the ABCB1 gene, and **cells that produce excessive P-gp can flush out chemotherapy drugs**, preventing them from accumulating at levels needed to trigger apoptosis

### Role of Cellular Location

- Recent Findings: The study examined the sensitivity of cells to Taxol and identified that the location of the ABCB1 gene within the cell's nucleus plays a crucial role.
- Nuclear Envelope: In sensitive cells, the ABCB1 gene is located close to the nuclear envelope. In resistant cells, the gene has detached from the envelope and moved further inside the nucleus, resulting in a 100-fold increase in ABCB1 gene-related RNA.

### Key Protein: Lamin B Receptor (LBR)

- LBR's Influence: Researchers discovered that the presence or absence of a protein called **Lamin B Receptor (LBR) affects the location of the ABCB1 gene.**
- Depletion of LBR: When LBR is depleted, cells can activate the ABCB1 gene when exposed to Taxol. However, the absence of the LBR gene itself does not immediately increase ABCB1 expression, indicating the involvement of additional factors.
- Diverse Responses: **Different cancer types exhibit varying responses to LBR depletion**, highlighting the complex mechanisms governing gene expression and silencing.
- A simple analogy illustrates the diversity: Different bathrooms offer various options for drying clothes, and cancer cell types rely on different mechanisms to tether genes to the nuclear envelope.

### Significance

- These findings emphasize the need for further research into the diverse ways cancer cells express or suppress genes.
- Understanding drug resistance mechanisms opens avenues for developing strategies to maintain the potency of anti-cancer drugs while minimizing side effects, ultimately benefiting patients on their path to recovery.

## Topic 11. AVIAN INFLUENZA VIRUSES UNDERGO MAJOR EVOLUTIONARY CHANGES

### *Important for the subject: Science and Technology*

A recent study published in **Nature** reveals major **changes in the ecology and evolution** of

highly pathogenic avian H5 influenza viruses, including a shift in global distribution.

### About Avian Influenza:

- Avian influenza or bird flu refers to the **disease caused by infection with avian influenza Type A viruses**.
- Infrequently, the virus can infect mammals from birds, a phenomenon called **spillover**, and rarely can spread between mammals.
- **H5N1, a subtype of avian influenza**, has the potential to infect other mammals such as minks, ferrets, seals, domestic cats, and others through contact with infected birds, their faeces, or infected bird carcasses.

### Avian Influenza in India:

- **In 2019, India has been declared free from Avian Influenza (H5N1)**, which has also been notified to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).
- However, in December 2020 and early 2021, outbreaks of avian influenza H5N1 and H5N8 were reported in poultry in 15 states in India.

### Treatment:

- Evidence suggests that some **antiviral drugs** can reduce the duration of viral replication and improve prospects of survival, however ongoing clinical studies are needed.

### Evolution of avian influenza viruses

- Although influenza viruses can infect a wide variety of birds and mammals, the **natural host of the virus is wild waterfowl, shorebirds, and gulls**.
- When other species of animals, including chickens, turkeys, swine, horses, and humans, are infected with influenza viruses, they are considered aberrant hosts.
- The distinction between the normal and aberrant host is important when describing virus evolution in the different host groups.
- The **evolutionary rate of influenza virus in the natural host reservoirs is believed to be slow**, while in mammals the rate is much higher.
- The higher rate of evolution in mammals is thought to be a result of selective pressure on the virus to adapt to an aberrant host species.
- Chickens and turkey influenza virus isolates have previously and incorrectly been lumped together with wild waterfowl, gull, and shorebird influenza viruses when determining rates of evolutionary change.
- To **determine mutational and evolutionary rates of a virus** in any host species, two primary assumptions must be met: first, all isolates included in the analysis must have descended from a single introduction of the virus, and second, the outbreak must continue long enough to determine a trend.
- For poultry, three recent outbreaks of avian influenza meet these criteria, and the sequences of the hemagglutinin and nonstructural genes were compared.

- Sequences from all three outbreaks were compared to an avian influenza virus consensus sequence, which at the amino acid level is highly conserved for all the internal viral proteins. The consensus sequence also provides a common point of origin to compare all influenza viruses.
- The evolutionary rates determined for all three outbreaks were similar to what is observed in mammals, providing strong evidence of adaptation of influenza to the new host species, chickens and turkeys.

## **Topic 12. SCIENTISTS SPOT MOST DISTANT ‘FAST RADIO BURST’ RECORDED IN HISTORY**

*Important for the subject : Science and Technology*

Scientists spot most distant ‘fast radio burst’ recorded in history

### **More about the news:**

- Researchers have identified a remote “fast radio burst” (FRB), the most distant ever detected, originating in a galaxy eight billion years away.
- This highly energetic burst, lasting less than a millisecond, can help measure the “missing” matter between galaxies and potentially revolutionize our understanding of the Universe’s mass.
- FRBs can detect ionized material between galaxies, providing insights into this elusive matter.
- While the cause of FRBs remains uncertain, their frequency suggests they can enhance our comprehension of the Universe’s structure.

### **What is Fast Radio Burst (FRB):**

- FRBs are bright flashes (radio Pulses) of light and are super intense, millisecond-long bursts of radio waves produced by unidentified sources in the distant cosmos.
- Their origins are unknown, and their appearance is unpredictable. They were first discovered in 2007 when scientists combed through archival pulsar data.
- Pulsars refer to spherical, compact objects in the universe, which are about the size of a large city but contain more mass than the sun.
- They often look like flickering stars but are not stars.

## **Topic 13. OVERSEAS INDIAN START-UPS SEEKING LISTING IN INDIA**

*Important for the subject: Economy*

### **Why in News?**

**Overseas Indian Start-ups Seeking Listing in India:** A group of start-ups set up overseas, are lobbying the Finance Ministry and SEBI to allow them to list in India.

- **Regulatory Changes Required:** The current regulations do not permit such companies to list in India. Any framework enabling this would necessitate changes in SEBI and FEMA norms as well as the Companies Act, 2013.
- **Rationale for Listing in India:** With the development of the Indian market, start-ups prefer listing in India for better brand recall, valuation premium, retail participation, and higher tax contributions to the government through Securities Transaction Tax (STT) and capital gains tax.
- **Challenges of Reverse Flipping:** Some start-ups are exploring reverse flipping of their holding companies, which involves a merger and potential tax implications. Compliance with various regulatory and sectoral approvals is also required.
- **Government Response and SEBI's Role:** SEBI is reportedly waiting for instructions from the government. Earlier proposals to allow Indian companies to list abroad and foreign companies to list in India were rejected due to concerns about the flight of capital triggered by foreign listings.
- **Industry Demands:** Industry officials suggest that companies with substantial Indian connections should be allowed to list in India with the condition that the primary capital raised is spent in India and cannot be repatriated.
- **Current Government Focus:** The government's focus on promoting GIFT City and other priorities in the election year has pushed this matter down its priority list.

### About Securities Transaction Tax (STT)

- STT is a turnover tax that applies to transactions conducted through an exchange for securities such as shares, debentures, bonds, mutual funds, government equity securities, and derivatives.
- The investor is obligated to pay this tax on the total sum received or paid during the transaction. STT does not apply to commodities and currency transactions or transactions conducted outside of the exchange.
- The rates of STT differ for delivery-based equity transactions and intra-day transactions, as well as for buying and selling securities. It was introduced in 2004 by the then finance minister P Chidambaram to reduce the evasion of capital gains tax.

### About Capital Gain Tax

- Capital Gain Tax is a form of tax levied on the profits arising from the sale of a 'capital asset'. This gain is considered as income and is important for the subject to taxation in the year in which the transfer of the capital asset occurs. Capital gains tax can be categorized as long-term or short-term, depending on the duration of the asset's holding period.

**Two types of capital gains tax:**

- **Long-term Capital Gains Tax:** This tax is applicable to the **profits earned from the sale of assets held for more than a year. The tax rates can vary between 0%, 15%, or 20%, depending on the individual's tax bracket.**
- **Short-term Capital Gains Tax:** This tax is applicable to assets **held for a year or less** and is taxed as ordinary income.
- It's worth noting that **capital gains can be reduced by deducting any capital losses** that may occur when a taxable asset is sold for less than its original purchase price. The resulting amount after deducting the capital losses from the capital gains is referred to as the **"net capital gains"**.
- Tax on capital gains is only triggered **when an asset is sold or "realized"**. **Appreciating stock shares, for instance, will not incur capital gains tax until they are sold.**
- **Capital assets** can include a wide range of possessions such as **land, buildings, house property, vehicles, patents, trademarks, leasehold rights, machinery, and jewelry.**
- The term also **encompasses rights in or in relation to an Indian company, along with management or control rights and other legal entitlements.**

### **Flipping:**

- Flipping is the **process of transferring complete ownership of an Indian company to an overseas entity.**
- It involves the **transfer of all intellectual property and data owned by the Indian company.**
- It is usually **carried out at the early stages of startups, driven by commercial, taxation, and personal preferences of founders** and investors.
- Some companies opt for flipping **due to the predominant offshore market** for their product
- Investor preferences, **such as access to specific incubators, can also drive companies to flip.**

### **Reverse Flipping:**

- Reverse flipping is the **process of relocating the domicile of companies back to India,**

which had previously flipped

- Companies often **reverse flip to benefit from easy access to capital from private equity and venture capital, changes in rules regarding round-tripping, and the growing maturity of India’s capital market.**
- **Listing on Stock Exchange:** Listing on a stock exchange **makes a company’s shares or securities available for public trading, enabling investors to buy and sell the stock,** thus providing the company access to capital and visibility in the financial markets.
- **Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF):** Recently launched by SEBI to provide stability to the corporate bond market during periods of stress. **Supported by a guarantee from the National Credit Guarantee Trust Company and substantial funding from the mutual fund industry**

**About International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA).**

- **Establishment:** IFSCA is a **statutory body established in 2020** under the International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019.

**Headquarters: Located at GIFT City, Gandhinagar in Gujarat.**

- **Role:** It ensures inter-regulatory coordination within the financial sector and **serves as a unified authority for the development and regulation of financial products, services, and institutions in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in India.**
- **Prior Status:** Before its establishment, the **business in IFSC was regulated by domestic financial regulators such as RBI, SEBI, PFRDA, and IRDAI.**
- **Objective:** IFSCA aims to **establish a strong global connect, cater to the needs of the Indian economy,** and serve as an international financial platform for the region and the global economy.

## **Topic 14. EU OPEN TO ALLOWING INDIA COLLECT CARBON TAX**

***Important for the subject: Economy***

**In News:** EU ready to consider India’s proposal of domestic collection of the carbon tax to be levied by the EU.

The EU is ready to consider India’s proposal of domestic collection of the carbon tax that the

bloc plans to levy on **Indian steel, aluminium and cement shipments** under the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** from January 1, 2026.

### What has India proposed?

- India has proposed that it will collect the carbon tax that the EU is implementing under the CABM.

### What is the EU response to the proposal?

- EU has not rejected India's proposal on collecting the carbon tax levied by it under the CBAM **as it is not a revenue generating mechanism for EU.**
- According to EU the collection of carbon tax by India also achieves the objective of adding to the cost of the exporters of carbon intensive products, which ultimately is what they want.
- While the items covered under CBAM include cement, iron & steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen, the hardest hit sectors in India could be **iron & steel and aluminium**, followed by **cement**.

### Government plan:

- The government wants to ensure that the carbon tax levied on Indian products is as low as possible.
- It wants to have a fully functional Carbon Credit Trading System in place by January 1 2026, and get it recognised by the EU, so that compliance can be established for most exporters.
- India wants to use the **clause of equivalence** existing in CBAM to get the carbon taxes already embedded in the country's taxation system recognised.
- The EU's equivalence clause could mean that if a country is already charging its industry some amount of carbon tax, such as India's taxes on petroleum and coal, then that can be recognised while calculating the carbon tax on an exporter from that country.
- Additionally, with the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency** under the Ministry of Power coming up with its **carbon credit trading system**, a proposed system equivalence can be reached with the EU's Emissions Trading System (ETS).
- India will also insist that the principles of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR), which is also part of the Paris Agreement on climate change, be followed while calculating taxes under CBAM

### Implementation of CABM:

- With the CBAM being in the transitional phase that started from 01st Oct 2023, exporters need to specify the quantity of CBAM goods shipped and the embedded emissions.
- This has already started, further the shippers will have time till January 2024 to submit the first quarterly report.

### Exporter's concern:



- Under CBAM, a lot of information on products and processes will need to be shared.
- These would include sensitive information about business practices that can't be revealed to third parties as it could hurt a company's competitive advantage. India would need clarity on what be the integrity of data protection around CBAM

## **Topic 15. INFLATION IN INDIA**

*Important for the subject: Economy*

**Inflation:** Inflation refers to the general increase in prices and the fall in the purchasing power of money. It occurs when the demand for goods and services surpasses their supply, leading to an increase in their prices. High inflation can erode the value of savings and income, leading to reduced consumer spending and economic instability.

**Types of inflation include:**

- **Demand-pull inflation:** Caused by increased consumer demand that outpaces supply.
- **Cost-push inflation:** Caused by an increase in production costs, such as wages or raw materials, leading to higher prices.
- **Deflation:** Deflation is the opposite of inflation and refers to a sustained decrease in the general price level of goods and services. It occurs when the supply of goods exceeds demand, leading to reduced prices. Deflation can discourage spending, as consumers may delay purchases in anticipation of lower prices, which can further slow down economic growth and potentially lead to recession.
- **Hyperinflation:** Hyperinflation is an extremely high and typically accelerating inflation. It occurs when the price levels rise rapidly, eroding the value of the currency. This phenomenon often results from a collapse in the currency and is detrimental to the economy, leading to a loss of confidence in the currency and undermining economic stability.
- **Stagflation:** Stagflation is a situation characterized by a combination of stagnant economic growth, high unemployment, and high inflation. It presents a challenge for policymakers, as traditional measures to stimulate economic growth, such as increasing the money supply, may exacerbate inflation.
- **Reflation:** Reflation is an attempt to stimulate an economy that is experiencing deflation. It involves the implementation of monetary or fiscal policies to increase the money supply and boost aggregate demand, with the aim of reversing deflation and stabilizing prices.
- **Disinflation** refers to a slowdown in the rate of inflation. While prices may still be rising, they are doing so at a slower pace compared to the previous period. Disinflation does not imply a decrease in prices, as is the case with deflation, but rather a reduction in the rate of increase of the general price level in an economy. Disinflation can occur for various reasons, such as increased productivity, reduced consumer demand, or a drop in the prices of commodities.

### Types of Inflation:

- **Demand-pull inflation occurs when aggregate demand surpasses aggregate supply, while cost-push inflation results from reduced aggregate supply due to factors like labor, land, and capital shortages or hoarding**

### Factors Causing Inflation:

- Demand-side inflation arises from **increased consumption, high exports leading to a devalued currency, and excessive money circulation** that reduces the purchasing power of money.
- **Cost-push inflation is influenced by shortages in factors of production and artificial scarcity due to hoarding.**
- **Measurement of Inflation:** In India, inflation is primarily measured through two indices: the **Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which track changes in wholesale and retail-level prices,**

### WPI and CPI: Understanding the Difference

#### Wholesale Price Index (WPI):

- **WPI measures the average change in prices of goods at the wholesale level before they reach the retail level.**
- It includes goods such as **raw materials, manufactured products, and commodities traded in bulk.**
- WPI primarily **reflects the price movements experienced by producers** and businesses in the wholesale markets.
- It is **considered a leading indicator of price changes that might occur at the consumer**

#### Consumer Price Index (CPI):

- CPI calculates the **average price change paid by consumers for a basket of goods and services commonly consumed.**
- It reflects the **cost of living for the general population**, encompassing various sectors like food, housing, healthcare, and education.
- It is widely used to **determine adjustments in salaries, pensions, and various government benefits to ensure they keep pace with the cost of living.**

### Core Inflation:

- Core inflation represents the **long-term trend in the price level and factors out short-term volatility caused by external factors such as energy and food prices.** It **excludes**

**highly volatile commodities like food and energy**, which can undergo rapid price fluctuations due to seasonal and market conditions. By eliminating these volatile elements, **core inflation provides a more accurate reflection of the underlying inflationary trends in the economy.**

- **Central banks often use core inflation as a key indicator** when formulating monetary policies and making adjustments to interest rates. It allows policymakers to focus on the persistent inflationary pressures in the economy, **enabling them to make informed decisions that can maintain price stability and promote sustainable economic growth.**

### **Headline Inflation,**

- Headline Inflation refers to the **complete inflation figure including all goods and services within the consumer price index basket.** It encompasses all items, including those that are highly volatile, such as food and energy. **Headline inflation is the most commonly reported measure of inflation and is what is typically referenced in the news and by the general public.** While headline inflation provides a comprehensive view of the overall price levels, **it can be influenced by temporary factors that do not reflect the underlying inflationary pressures.**

### **Impact of Inflation on the Indian Economy:**

- Inflation leads to a **decrease in the purchasing power of currency, increased cost of living, and a slowdown in economic growth.** However, a moderate level of inflation can encourage spending and discourage excessive saving.

### **Inflation Targeting in India:**

- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in India measures inflation.**
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), through its Monetary Policy Committee,** uses various tools to regulate money supply and control inflation.
- The government has set a 4% Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation target, **with an upper tolerance limit of 6% and a lower tolerance limit of 2%, valid from August 5, 2016, to March 31, 2021.**

## Topic 16. ROLE OF WTO IN E-COMMERCE

*Important for the subject: Economy*

**India's Pitch at WTO:** New Delhi's emphasis on collaborative efforts among member countries to counter the dominance of a few large MNCs in the global e-commerce industry.

**Uneven Division of Benefits:** India's communication stressed that the current benefits of e-commerce are disproportionately skewed in favor of a select group of major multinational corporations (MNCs).

- **Opposition to Plurilateral Talks:** Developing nations, including India and South Africa, have been resisting the plurilateral talks, citing violations of the WTO's foundational principles.
- **Promotion of Competition:** India proposed the sharing of experiences among member countries to enhance competition in digital markets and recommended improved cooperation between regulatory authorities to achieve this objective.
- **Local Investigations:** In India, companies like Amazon and Flipkart have faced inquiries by the Competition Commission for alleged instances of anti-competitive practices.
- **Collaboration Between Regulators:** The paper underscored the necessity of close collaboration among regulators from different jurisdictions, particularly considering the global nature of internet and digital businesses.
- **Capacity Building for Developing Countries:** India urged developing countries, including LDCs, to identify their constraints in adopting policies for ensuring fair competition in the e-commerce space. It sought suggestions for capacity-building initiatives.

### Geneva package

- Under 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO agreed to a series of deals relating to the temporary waivers on Covid-19 vaccines, a moratorium on e-commerce trade, food security, and setting limits on harmful fishing subsidies.
- Together these agreements are referred to as the "Geneva Package".

### Ministerial Conference (MC)

- The Ministerial Conference is the WTO's top decision-making body and usually meets every two years. All members of the WTO are involved in the MC and they can make decisions on all matters covered under any multilateral trade agreements. The WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference was held in Geneva.

## Key takeaways

### Curtailing harmful fishing subsidies

- A multilateral agreement was **passed to curb ‘harmful’ subsidies on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing for the next four years, to better protect global fish stocks.**

### Global Food Security

- Members agreed to a binding decision to **exempt food purchased by the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) for humanitarian purposes, from any export restrictions.** However, countries would be allowed to restrict food supplies to ensure domestic food security needs.

### Covid-19 vaccine production

- Members agreed to **temporarily waive intellectual property patents on Covid-19 vaccines without the consent of the patent holder for 5 years,** so that they can more easily manufacture them domestically. The waiver did not cover all medical tools like diagnostics and treatments.

### E-commerce transactions

- All members agreed to **continue the long-standing moratorium on custom duties on e-commerce transmissions until the subsequent Ministerial Conference.**

### India’s interest secured

- India and other developing countries were able to win some concessions on fishing subsidies. They successfully lobbied to **remove a section of the proposal that would threaten some subsidies which would assist small-scale artisanal fishing.** The agreements hold that there would be no limitation on subsidies granted or maintained **by developing or least-developed countries for fishing within their exclusive economic zones (EEZ).**

### Current moratoriums on electronic transmissions been extended

- Member countries agreed to **extend the current moratorium on not imposing customs duties on electronic transmission (ET) until MC13.**
- **ETs consist of online deliveries such as music, e-books, films, software, and video**

**games.** They differ from other cross-border e-commerce since they are ordered online but not delivered physically.

- Proponents had put forth that the **moratorium would help maintain certainty and predictability for businesses and consumers, particularly in the context of the pandemic.**
- India and South Africa, citing data from the UN Conference on Trade and Development submitted that **extending duty-free market access due to the moratorium resulted in a loss of \$10 billion per annum globally — 95% of which was borne by developing countries.**

### World Trade Organization (WTO)

- The **WTO is the primary global international organization responsible for trade regulations among nations.**

### History

- General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) originated from the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference.
- The **Havana Charter, intended to establish the International Trade Organization (ITO), never came into force.**
- GATT, signed by 23 countries in 1947, **was the only multilateral instrument governing trade until the establishment of the WTO in 1995.**
- The Uruguay Round from 1987 to 1994 led to the **Marrakesh Agreement, establishing the WTO.**

### Governance

- **Ministerial Conference:** The WTO's top decision-making body, convening every two years.
- **General Council:** Represents all member governments and acts on behalf of the Ministerial Conference.
- **Dispute Settlement Body (DSU):** Deals with **disputes between WTO members** according to the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes.
- **Appellate Body:** Established in 1995, **it is a standing body of seven members hearing appeals from reports issued by panels in WTO member disputes.**

## **Topic 17. SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURAL GAS IN INDIA'S ENERGY LANDSCAPE**

*Important for the subject: Economy*

**OPEC's Projections:** OPEC's latest World Oil Outlook predicts that **the share of natural gas in India's energy mix will rise to 10.6% by 2045,** whereas the Indian government aims for it to reach 15% by 2030.

**Current Gas Share:** According to the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), India's current share of gas in the energy mix is at 5.78%.

- **BP's Projections:** The OPEC projections align closely with those made by bp in its recent Energy Outlook, which anticipates a natural gas share of 7-11% in the global primary energy mix by 2050.
- **Impact on Coal Usage:** Increasing the share of gas in the energy mix can lead to a reduction in coal usage, contribute to the mitigation of CO2 emissions, and facilitate the integration of intermittent renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.
- **City Gas Distribution:** The government is actively promoting the expansion of city gas distribution (CGD) systems, aiming to reduce the reliance on traditional cooking fuels in the residential sector. This expansion is expected to significantly increase gas consumption in the residential and commercial sectors.
- **LNG-Powered Vehicles:** Initiatives to promote natural gas vehicles, such as those offered by companies like Essar Group-led GreenLine, could provide further impetus to the use of natural gas in the transportation sector, particularly for long-range heavy-haul logistics.
- **Gas-Fired Power Plants:** Despite the suboptimal utilization of gas-powered plants in India due to a lack of domestic gas supplies and high LNG prices, there is potential for increased utilization in the future. OPEC's report suggests that India's gas demand could more than triple by 2045, reaching levels of 4.1 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (mboe/d) in the outlook period.

**About OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries):**

- **Founded in Baghdad, Iraq,** in September 1960 by five countries: Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- It is a **permanent, intergovernmental organization** with a primary objective to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries.
- Aims to **secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers, ensure an efficient and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations,** and provide a fair return on capital to industry investors.

**OPEC is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.**

- Membership in OPEC is open to any country that is a **significant oil exporter and shares the organization's ideals.**
- **13 Member Countries:** – Algeria, Angola, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Venezuela.

**About OPEC+:**

- **OPEC and a coalition of non-OPEC oil-producing nations,** which includes Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Oman, Russia, South Sudan, and Sudan, have formed an informal alliance known **as 'OPEC+' or the 'Vienna Group'.** **This collaboration was established in 2016 to collectively reduce oil production with**

**the aim of stabilizing global oil prices.**

- OPEC+ is an alliance of crude producers that **has been implementing supply adjustments in the oil markets since 2017.**

**Primary goals of OPEC and OPEC+**

- Collaborative efforts to **stabilize the global oil market and ensure fair prices for petroleum products.**
- **Implementation of production restrictions and adjustments to balance supply and demand dynamics.**
- Coordination of policies to **secure a steady and efficient supply of petroleum** to consumer nations.
- Support for the **stability and sustainability of the oil industry and related investments.**

**OPEC+ holds more influence than OPEC: –**

- **Expanded control:** OPEC's 14 members control 35 percent of global oil supplies and 82 percent of proven reserves.
- **With the inclusion of 10 non-OPEC nations such as Russia, Mexico, and Kazakhstan, those shares increase to 55 percent and 90 percent respectively. This affords OPEC+ a level of influence over the world economy never seen before.**
- **Greater market share:** OPEC+ collectively commands a significant share of the global oil market, **giving the coalition more leverage in decision-making and a heightened ability to impact global oil prices.**
- **Enhanced decision-making power:** With a **broader coalition and increased representation,** OPEC+ has an **amplified ability to shape and influence global economic conditions,** making it a more formidable force in the oil industry.

**About Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB):**

- The **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)** was established under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2005. Its primary purpose is to **regulate downstream activities in the petroleum and natural gas sector.**
- The PNGRB is responsible **for overseeing the laying and expansion of transmission pipelines for both gas and petroleum, as well as city/local gas distribution networks.**
- **Entities operating in the petroleum and natural gas sector are required to register with the PNGRB.** This includes entities involved in marketing petroleum products and natural gas, operating LNG terminals, and establishing storage facilities beyond a specified capacity.
- The **PNGRB has the authority to monitor prices related to piped natural gas (PNG)** and can implement corrective measures to prevent entities from engaging in restrictive trade practices.
- In the event of disputes, the **PNGRB possesses the same powers as a civil court to settle such matters.**
- The **Appellate Tribunal established under the Electricity Act serves as the**



**designated Appellate Tribunal for matters falling under the jurisdiction of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2005.**

**Objectives of the National Gas Grid:**

- To **address regional imbalance within the country by ensuring equitable access to natural gas** and facilitating the availability of clean and environmentally friendly fuel across the nation.
- To **establish a robust network that connects gas sources to major demand centers**, ensuring the smooth and consistent supply of gas to consumers across various sectors.
- Facilitate the **development of City Gas Distribution Networks in multiple cities, enabling the efficient supply of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Piped Natural Gas (PNG)** to households and industries.

**Topic 18. BOND ISSUANCE BY INDIA INC RISES**

*Important for the subject: Economy*

India Inc raised 54% more resources via bonds in H1 of FY24

Several corporates are preferring corporate bonds over bank loans to meet their financing needs. The principal reason for the surge is bond yields that are comparable to interest rates apart from the greater liquidity that bonds offer over bank loans.

- India Inc. raised **54 per cent more resources via bonds** in the first half (H1) of FY24, moving away from bank finance.
- The amount raised through corporate bonds in H1FY24 at **₹4,93,191 crore** was on the higher side compared to H1FY23 at ₹3,21,070 crore.
- The momentum could turn sluggish for a couple of months due to tight liquidity in the system and a rise in bond yields

**Who were the main issuers:**

- The main borrower during the first quarter of FY24 was HDFC Ltd., which extensively tapped the bond market before merging with HDFC Bank.
- Public sector undertakings and large NBFCs, called **flow-issuers**, are very regular in tapping the bond market.
- Many first-time issuers, corporates, **InvITs, REITs, and banks — Infra, Tier-2, and Tier-1 bonds** — and **lower credit-rated issuers** through structured finance tapped the bond market during H1FY24.

**Why are bonds being preferred currently?**

- Corporate issuers and banks may prefer to tap funds through money market instruments due to the **expectation of a reversal in the interest rate cycle** starting in the second quarter of the next fiscal.

- The **yield difference** between **Indian Government Bond** and **AAA-rated large/PSU Corporate bonds**, too, are compressed in the range of 10 basis points (bps) to 30 bps only.
- Lower credit-rated issuers, too, have been successful in raising funds through bond markets, either through the private placement route or the public issuance route.
- NBFCs too are looking for fresh funds over and above bank funding and are also trying to refinance the erstwhile **TLTRO** (Targeted Long-Term Repo Operations) loans availed from banks during the Covid period.
- Lastly the market is finding increased investment appetite from **HNI (high net worth individuals)** clients in **high-yield instruments** due to a change in income tax rules, which has affected **MLD (market-linked debentures)** issuances and debt MFs.

### What are the general differences between bond vs bank finance?

- Corporate bonds provide more liquidity to issuers compared to bank loans. Mostly, the **interest is payable annually** and the principal is paid at the end of the redemption period for corporate bonds, compared to **bank loans**, where interest is generally **payable monthly and the principal is payable quarterly**.
- Further, corporate bonds are mostly carrying fixed-rate coupons compared to bank's floating-rate loans.
- Banks **don't lend funds for acquisition deals**, unlike bonds. Entities borrowing funds through the bond market to fund acquisitions are on the rise this fiscal.

## Topic 19. MONETARY POLICY TRANSMISSION IN INDIA

### *Important for the subject :Economy*

The RBI's rate hikes since 2022 have highlighted a **disparity in the transmission of policy rate changes, with lending rates increasing at a slower pace compared to deposit rates**. This phenomenon has been particularly noticeable in the current economic cycle, **presenting various implications for different stakeholders in the financial system**.

- **Deposit Rate Increase:** The Weighted Average Domestic Term Deposit Rates (WADTDR) for fresh deposits have witnessed a significant rise, **partly driven by banks' requirements for funds to support rapid credit growth. Larger depositors have received relatively higher rewards compared to smaller ones.**
- **Limited Transmission in Lending Rates:** Despite the policy rate hikes, **lending rates have not increased at a proportionate rate**. The overall increase in lending rates has been notably lower than that of deposit rates, with existing loan rates exhibiting a slower rise.
- **Impact of CASA Deposits:** Banks have managed to **maintain lower lending rates by leveraging their current account and savings account (CASA) deposits**, which constitute a significant portion of their total deposits. **These accounts have not experienced any changes in interest rates during this cycle, allowing banks to**

sustain comparatively lower lending rates.

- **Effect of MCLR and EBLR Loans:** While a **significant proportion of loans (around 44.8%) remain linked to the Marginal Cost of Funds Based Lending Rate (MCLR), the transmission of rate changes is relatively slower** due to various operational factors influencing the MCLR calculation. Conversely, **loans (around 50.2%) linked to the External Benchmark Linked Loan Rate (EBLR) have the advantage of immediate resetting when policy rates change**, ensuring a more rapid transmission of rate changes.
- **Competition for Deposits and Incremental Credit:** Tight liquidity conditions have **intensified competition among banks for deposits, potentially leading to increased rates for depositors**. Simultaneously, **competition for incremental credit might have restrained some banks from sharply increasing lending rates, especially in specific segments like housing, vehicle, and education loans**.

**About Internal Benchmark Lending Rate (IBLR):**

- **Lenders establish an internal benchmark rate for determining interest rates on loans.**
- Several benchmark rates were introduced over the years, **including BPLR, Base Rate, and MCLR.**
- These **rates aimed to ensure transparent and efficient pricing** in the lending market.

**Issues with IBLR Regime**

- **Banks often did not pass on the full benefits of RBI's repo rate cuts to borrowers.**
- **Complex internal variables within the IBLR-linked loans hindered the seamless transmission of policy changes.**

**BPLR (Benchmark Prime Lending Rate):**

- Used as a benchmark rate by banks for lending until June 2010.
- Loans were priced based on the actual cost of funds.
- The rate varied across banks and depended on the cost of funds, among other factors.

**Base Rate:**

- Replaced BPLR and was used for loans taken between June 2010 and April 2016. Considered the minimum interest rate at which commercial banks could lend to customers.
- Calculated based on the cost of funds, unallocated cost of resources, and return on net worth.

**MCLR (Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate):**

- Introduced in April 2016 as a benchmark lending rate for floating-rate loans.
- Considers the marginal cost of funds, negative carry on account of the cash reserve ratio, operating costs, and tenor premium.

- Linked to actual deposit rates, ensuring that when deposit rates rise, MCLR increases and lending rates go up accordingly.

#### **External Benchmark Lending Rate (EBLR):**

- RBI mandated the **adoption of a uniform external benchmark by banks from October 1, 2019**, it was intended to plug the deficiencies in MCLR.
- Four external benchmarking mechanisms were introduced, RBI repo rate, 91-day T-bill yield, 182-day T-bill yield, any other benchmark market interest rate as developed by the Financial Benchmarks India Pvt. Ltd.
- Banks have the flexibility to set the spread over the external benchmark, with interest rate resets required at least once every three months.

#### **Significance of EBLR:**

- Aims to facilitate faster and effective transmission of monetary policy changes.
- Enhances transparency in interest rate setting and standardizes the process of fixing interest rates for different loan categories.
- Introduces a more dynamic and responsive lending environment in line with the objectives of the RBI's monetary policy framework.

#### **Monetary Policy Normalization in India:**

- Involves adjustments made by the **Reserve Bank of India to control the amount of money in the economy.**
- Entails a **shift from a loose monetary policy, involving increased liquidity and reduced interest rates, to a tight monetary policy that raises interest rates and reduces liquidity.**

#### **Reverse Repo Normalization:**

- Refers to an **increase in the reverse repo rates** by the Reserve Bank of India.
- Part of the broader strategy of monetary policy normalization **to counter rising inflation and bring the rates back to their usual positions.**
- Aims to **reduce excess liquidity, elevate interest rates across the economy, and discourage excessive borrowing by consumers** and businesses.

#### **Repo Rate:**

- The rate at which the RBI lends short-term money to banks against securities.
- One of the key tools used by the central bank to control the money supply in the economy.

#### **Reverse Repo Rate:**

- The rate at which banks park their short-term excess liquidity with the RBI.
- Used by banks when they have surplus funds that they are not able to invest for reasonable returns.

**SLR (Statutory Liquidity Ratio):**

- Mandates that every bank maintain a minimum proportion of their Net Demand and Time Liabilities as liquid assets in the form of cash, gold, and un-encumbered approved securities.
- A tool used by the RBI to restrict the bank's leverage position to pump more money into the economy.

**CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio):**

- Mandates that banks hold a certain proportion of their deposits in the form of cash with the RBI or currency chests.
- Used by the RBI to control liquidity in the banking system and ensure that banks have enough cash to meet their payment obligations.

**Marginal Standing Facility (MSF):**

- A window for banks to borrow from the Reserve Bank of India during emergency situations when inter-bank liquidity dries up completely.
- Banks pledge government securities at a rate higher than the repo rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).

**Topic 20. PENALTIES IMPOSED BY RBI ON BANKS*****Important for the subject: Economy***

ICICI Bank: Fined ₹12.19 crore for various violations, including sanctioning loans to companies where two directors were board members, marketing non-financial products, and failing to report frauds to the RBI within the prescribed timeline.

Kotak Mahindra Bank: Penalized ₹3.95 crore for failing to conduct the annual review and due diligence of service providers, breaching customer contact time restrictions, and incorrectly levying interest and foreclosure charges.

**Reasons for Penalty:**

- ICICI Bank: Violations of certain sections of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and non-compliance with RBI's directions on loans, advances, financial services, and fraud classification and reporting by commercial banks.
- Kotak Mahindra Bank: Non-compliance with RBI's directions on managing risks, code of conduct in outsourcing financial services, recovery agents engaged by banks, customer service, and loans and advances statutory restrictions.

**Background:**

- ICICI Bank previously faced penalties in March 2018 for non-compliance with directions on the direct sale of securities from its HTM portfolio and specified

disclosures.

- Both banks were cautioned that the RBI's action does not determine the validity of any transaction or agreement with their customers.

### About Banking Regulation Act, 1949

- **The Banking Regulation Act, 1949** is a legislation in India that **regulates all banking firms** in the country. It was enacted as per the **recommendations of the Committee on Indian Financial System (CIFR), also known as the Gadgil Committee report**. The primary objective of the act is to consolidate and amend the law related to banking in order to **secure monetary stability and ensure a healthy banking system in India**.
- The Banking Regulation Act, 1949 empowers the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to regulate the functioning of banks in India**. It provides detailed guidelines for the **licensing of banks, management of banking companies, regulation of the paid-up capital and reserves of banks, and more**. The act also outlines the provisions for the **nationalization of private banks in India**.

### Some key features of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 include:

- **Licensing of Banks:** The act lays down the conditions for obtaining a banking license in India.
- **Reserve Bank's Powers:** The act provides the Reserve Bank of India with the **authority to inspect, regulate, and supervise the functioning of banks** in India.
- **Shareholding Regulations:** The act **sets the maximum limit for the shareholding of any individual or entity in a banking company**.
- **Branch Expansion:** It regulates the opening of new bank branches and imposes certain restrictions on their operations.
- **Control Over Management:** The act enables the **RBI to control the appointment and functioning of the management of banks**.
- **Regulation of Operations:** It provides **guidelines for various aspects of banking operations, such as loans and advances, investments, and reserves**.

### About Held-to-Maturity (HTM) securities

- **Held-to-Maturity (HTM) securities** refer to **debt securities that a company or financial institution intends to hold until they mature**.
- These securities are accounted for at amortized cost, and any unrealized gains or losses are not recognized in the financial statements.
- They are classified as **non-trading assets, and any changes in their market value do not affect the income statement**.
- HTM securities **provide a stable income stream as they offer fixed interest payments until their maturity date**.

## **Topic 21. ISSUES WITH AIFS IN INDIA**

*Important for the subject: Economy*

### **AIF Investigations by SEBI:**

SEBI and RBI are investigating **around a dozen cases of alternate investment funds (AIFs) allegedly being used to circumvent regulations.**

AIFs are under scrutiny for potential misuse, **including the practice of “evergreening” stressed loans.**

### **Misuse Cases and Evergreening Loans:**

- SEBI has identified cases amounting to ₹15,000-20,000 crore where **AIFs were misused to circumvent rules of financial regulators, including the RBI.**
- **Instances of non-bank lenders using AIFs to repurchase stressed loans to prevent them from turning bad have been reported, which is seen as “classic evergreening.”**

### **Other Investigated Cases:**

- AIFs have been reportedly **used to bypass foreign investment caps in certain sectors.**
- Some cases **involving the evasion of insolvency regulations through AIFs** are also under investigation

### **SEBI’s Measures and Circulars:**

- SEBI has asked **AIFs to report both assets and liabilities through India’s depositories.**
- The regulatory authority has proposed **measures to stop priority payouts to investors in credit funds, which have been put on hold following industry resistance.**

### **About AIFs:**

- As per Securities and Exchange Board of India (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012, **AIFs refer to privately pooled investment funds, either from Indian or foreign sources, in the form of a trust, company, body corporate, or Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).**
- **AIFs do not include funds covered under SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996, SEBI (Collective Investment Schemes) Regulations, 1999, or any other regulations of the Board regulating fund management activities.**

### **Categories of AIFs**

- AIFs are **classified into three categories** based on their investment focus and activities.

### **Category I:**

- Category I AIFs primarily invest in **start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), or sectors deemed economically and socially viable** by the government.

#### **Category II:**

- Category II AIFs include **private equity funds or debt funds that do not receive any specific incentives or concessions from the government** or any other regulator.

#### **Category III:**

- Category III AIFs encompass **hedge funds or funds aimed at making short-term returns, along with open-ended funds that do not receive any specific incentives or concessions from the government** or any other regulator

#### **About Evergreening of Loans:**

- Evergreening of loans refers to the practice **where banks or lenders provide additional funds or take other measures to artificially sustain a loan that is not being repaid as scheduled.**
- The primary objective is to **avoid classifying the loan as a non-performing asset (NPA)** which could necessitate setting aside more provisions for potential losses.

#### **Purpose of Evergreening:**

- Evergreening is a **temporary measure employed by banks to maintain the appearance of a performing asset, thereby safeguarding their profitability and financial stability.**

#### **Risk Associated:**

- While **evergreening loans may temporarily alleviate the stress on a bank's balance sheet, it can conceal the true extent of non-performing assets** and potentially lead to a more significant financial crisis if not addressed effectively.

#### **Classic Evergreening**

- Instances of **non-bank lenders selling stressed loans to AIFs partially set up by the lender itself, with the fresh funds being used to repay the original debt to prevent the loans from turning bad,** is “classic evergreening”.



**Definition of Non-Performing Asset (NPA):**

- NPA refers to a classification for loans or advances that are in default or are in arrears on scheduled payments of principal or interest.

**Categories of Non-Performing Assets:****Sub-standard Assets:**

- Sub-standard assets are those classified as NPAs for a period less than or equal to 12 months.

**Doubtful Assets:**

- Doubtful assets are those that have been non-performing for a period exceeding 12 months.

**Loss Assets:**

- Loss assets are considered uncollectible, with little or no hope of recovery, and require complete write-off from the bank's books.

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**Topic 22. WHAT ARE “PROXY ADVISORY FIRMS”?*****Important for the subject: Economy***

Proxy advisory firms oppose Anant's appointment on RIL board. A proposal to appoint Anant Ambani (28), the youngest son of Mukesh Ambani, on the board of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) is facing opposition from two proxy advisory firms.

- The firms – **Institutional Investor Advisory Services India Ltd (IiAS)** and **Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS)** – have advised RIL shareholders to vote against the proposal. However, they are backing the appointments of Anant's elder siblings – Isha and Akash – both 31 years of age, on RIL's board.

**Why the decision to oppose?**

- IiAS and ISS have cited Anant's age as the reason for not supporting the proposal for his appointment on the RIL board.
- At 28 years of age, his (Anant's) appointment as a Non-Executive Non-Independent Director does not align with voting guidelines of the advisory firms.

### What are proxy advisory firms?

- Proxy advisory firms position themselves as **independent firms that provide advice** to individual shareholders, minority shareholders or institutional investors relating to the exercise of their rights in a company, including recommendations on public offers or voting recommendations on agenda items.

### How many proxy advisory firms are there in India?

- Some of the major proxy advisory firms in the country include IiAS, Stakeholders Empowerment Services (SES) and InGovern.
- Proxy advisors are regulated by the markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

### Why are proxy advisory firms important?

- Proxy advisory firms closely look at listed companies, their performance and resolutions, and advise shareholders about their rights.
- They **work in the interest of shareholders** who might not always be able to analyse the impact of any resolution adopted by a company
- These firms suggest investors vote for or against any corporate decisions. Proxy advisory firms also work with companies to improve their corporate governance practices.

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### Topic 23. ANOTHER YEAR OF FUTURES BAN IN SEVEN AGRI-COMMODITIES LIKELY?

#### *Important for the subject: Economy*

Finance Ministry through SEBI continues ban on 7 agri commodity futures for another year. Futures trading in seven agriculture commodities on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) is likely to remain suspended until December next year.

The move is seen as linked to the political inconvenience of rising food prices ahead of state and general elections. The proposed extension for a year beyond 20 December comes in the face of **opposition from the NCDEX and the cabinet secretariat**.

### Why is the NCDEX and cabinet secretariat opposing the ban?

- NCDEX and the cabinet secretariat sought a review of the ban to enable partial revocation of suspension in derivatives trading in **edible oils and mustard seed**.
- The continuation of the suspension will shut down the exchange and the ecosystem created over 20 years will collapse.
- Government also received many representations from edible oil associations urging the removal of the ban amid deflation in edible oil.

### What are the benefits of future trade in agri commodities:

- Futures trading in agricultural commodities helps in price discovery, risk management, and market liquidity.
- For agricultural producers, these markets provide an essential tool for **locking in prices, mitigating price volatility, and ensuring a stable income.**
- They also facilitate hedging to **safeguard against adverse price movements** and support better management of storage and transportation considerations.
- Investors benefit from the **opportunity to diversify their portfolios** while taking part in global agricultural markets.

### **When were agri futures first banned?**

- Finance ministry through the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) first imposed the ban in **2021**, halting futures trading in seven commodities non-basmati paddy, wheat, chana, mustard seeds and its derivatives, soybean and its derivatives, crude palm oil and moong (green gram)—for a year to combat rising inflation.

### **Why were they banned?**

- The issue goes into the heart of a delicate matter of political economy— whether or not widely consumed agricultural commodities such as pulses and rice should be allowed to be traded on the exchange, given their likely impact on food security.
- Futures trading in agricultural commodities can contribute to **price swings and speculation.**

### **Who administers agri commodity futures**

- The Forward Markets Commission (FMC) was the primary regulator until it was merged with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in 2015, which now oversees the commodity derivatives market.

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## **Topic 24. DESTINATION TEST: FPI FUND TRANSFERS UNDER TAXMAN'S LENS?**

### ***Important for the subject: Economy***

Several Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) receive tax notices. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have received a slew of notices on foreign remittances made outside India under Section 133 (6) of the Income Tax Act.

Tax authorities are seeking KYC details, names of ultimate beneficial owners, holdings and nature of remittances.

### **What is the reason for notices?**

- The main reason is the suspicion of using investment treaty provisions to avoid tax by

- non treaty nations.
- For a fund investing from Singapore into India, capital gains will be taxable. But the dividend or interest income will be Important for the subject to tax at the concessional rate of 10 per cent.
  - To be eligible for the concessional rate, the fund needs to demonstrate that it is the beneficial owner of the income and a tax resident of Singapore.
  - The Singapore fund, however, may be repatriating the gains made from investing in India to a country like Mauritius or the US. This is being looked upon with suspicion.
  - The tax office may wants to curb such practices and disallow treaty benefits to these funds.
  - If the money has gone to a country other than where the fund is based, it could imply that the fund has been **treaty shopping**.
  - If even the bank account is being operated from another country, the “**substance**” of the fund could be called into question and lead to denial of treaty benefits. Taxes where exemption was claimed could become payable, along with **interest and penalties**.
  - A substance test typically requires a fund to prove its presence in a particular jurisdiction, by way of its registered office, staff, cash flows, etc.

### Topic 25. KAZIRANGA SANCTUARY REOPENS WITH TRIBUTE TO BRITISH ERA OFFICER

#### *Important for the subject: Environment*

Named after **Patrick D. Stracey**, the library was inaugurated on Sunday.

Stracey, who was born in Andhra Pradesh’s Kakinada, served as an Indian

Forest Service officer in Assam. He played a key role in renaming the **Kaziranga**

**Game Sanctuary** as a **wildlife sanctuary in 1950**. He also established the Assam

Forest School, a training institute catering to the northeastern region.**About Kaziranga**

#### **Wildlife Sanctuary**

- **Location:** It is located in the State of Assam and covers 42,996 Hectare (ha). It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain.

#### **Legal Status:**

- It was declared as a **National Park** in 1974.
- It has been declared a **tiger reserve** since 2007. It has a total **tiger reserve** area of 1,030 sq km with a core area of 430 sq. km

#### **International Status:**

- It was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1985.

- It is recognized as an **Important Bird Area** by **BirdLife International**.

### Important Species Found:

- It is the home of the world's most **one-horned rhinos**. Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary has the highest density of one-horned rhinos in the world and second highest number of Rhinos in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.
- Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the 'big four' species— **Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo**. The 2018 census had yielded 2,413 rhinos and approximately 1,100 elephants.
- As per the figures of tiger census conducted in 2014, Kaziranga had an estimated **103 tigers**, the third highest population in India after Jim Corbett National Park (215) in Uttarakhand and Bandipur National Park (120) in Karnataka.
- Kaziranga is also home to 9 of the 14 species of primates found in the Indian subcontinent.

### Rivers and Highways:

- The **National Highway 37** passes through the park area. The park also has more than 250 seasonal water bodies, besides the **Diphlu River** running through it.
- **About the One -horned Rhino:** The greater one-horned rhino (or "Indian rhino") is the **largest of the rhino species**.
- It is found in Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan and India. It is **Vulnerable** in the IUCN Red List and lies in Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- It is in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (**CITES**).
- India is home to over **85 % population**. It is found in UP, West Bengal and Assam. According to WWF data from 2012, Assam has 91 % of the total Rhino in India which is mainly concentrated in **Kaziranga National Park, and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- **Others include Manas Tiger Reserve, Orang Tiger Reserve and Laokhowa Reserved Forests.**

### There are five rhino species:

- Great One horned rhino- **Vulnerable** in the IUCN Red List.
- White rhinos – **near threatened** in the IUCN Red List.
- Black rhinos in Africa – **critically endangered** in the IUCN Red List.
- Javan rhino- **Critically endangered** in IUCN Red List.

### Sumatran rhinos- extinct.

- There are three species of rhino in Asia—Greater one-horned (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), Javan and Sumatran.
- **Only the Great One-Horned Rhino is found in India.** Also known as Indian rhino, it is the largest of the rhino species.

Other national parks in Assam are:

- Dibru-Saikhowa National Park
- Manas National Park
- Nameri National Park
- Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park
- DehingPatkai National Park
- Raimona National Park

**Topic 26. PLEA SEEKS STAY ON JEWAR AIRPORT UNTIL WETLAND PROTECTED, UP GOVT TO INFORM ABOUT STATUS IN 4 WEEKS**

*Important for the subject :Environment*



A petition has been filed to stay the construction of **Jewar Airport** until **Dhanauri Wetland** is granted protection. Now, **NGT** has granted 4 week's time to **U.P. state government** to inform about the status of notifying the **Dhanauri wetland** of **Greater Noida** as **Ramsar wetland site**.

The proposal for the same is pending before the **Uttar Pradesh Wetland authority**.

**Dhanauri wetland:**

- **Dhanauri wetland** is also known as **Balmiki Ramsar Wetland** and **Sarus Sanctuary/Conservation Reserve**.
- Mapped in the **National Inventory of Wetlands** and spread across around **98 hectares**, the **Dhanauri Wetlands** is located among the villages of **Dhanauri, Thasrana, and Aminpur Bangar** in **Dankaur Tehsil, Greater Noida, Gautam Budha**

Nagar.

- **Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA)**, the land-owning agency, gave a no-objection certificate on June 9, 2022 to declare it as a **Ramsar Site and Sanctuary**.
- The conservation report on the impact of the airport project on **Dhanauri Wetlands** had been prepared by the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**.
- Dhanauri Wetland is home to over **217 species of birds** and has been recognised as an **important birding area by Bird Life International**.
- Dhanauri Wetlands is home to over **150 Sarus Crane**, which is **UP's state bird**.

**Ramsar site:**

- The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation of wetlands and their resources.
- The convention was adopted in the **Iranian city of Ramsar** in **1971** and came into force in **1975**.
- Every **three years**, representatives of the contracting parties meet as the **Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP)**, the policy-making organ of the convention which adopts decisions (site designations, resolutions and recommendations) to administer the work of the convention and improve the way in which the parties are able to implement its objectives.
- In **2022**, **COP14** was co-held in **Wuhan, China**, and **Geneva, Switzerland**.

**Topic 27. BIODIVERSITY TECHNICAL BODY MEETS IN NAIROBI TO GAUGE PROGRESS ON KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**

*Important for the subject :Environment*

The **Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-25)** is taking place between October 15-October 19, 2023 at **Nairobi, Kenya** to guide the implementation of the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** Some 670 participants from 135 countries are in Nairobi for the meeting.

**SBSTTA-25:**

- Since its inception in **1995 in Paris, France**, **SBSTTA** has produced a total of **250 recommendations** to the Conference of the Parties.
- The recommendations made by **SBSTTA-25** at this **Nairobi** meeting will be sent for agreement at **COP16**, scheduled to be held in 2024.
- The **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** was adopted at **CoP15 of CBD** in 2022.

- Discussions at **SBSTTA-25** are on the monitoring framework needed to support implementation of the framework.
- **Goal A** is to increase the abundance of native wild species to healthy and resilient levels by 2050.
- Experts will also discuss the recently released **assessment report** by the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** on **invasive alien species**.

**About Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF):**

- The framework has **4 long-term goals** to be achieved by **2050** and **23 targets** that the world needs to achieve by **2030**.
- In **2020**, the world failed to meet the last set of targets, the **Aichi Targets**. The countries will monitor and report every five years or less on a large set of indicators related to progress.
- The **CBD** will combine national information submitted by late February 2026 and late June **2029** into global trends and progress reports.

**4 Long-term goals are:**

<p><b>Goal A</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050;</li> <li>• Human-induced extinction of known threatened species is halted, and, by 2050, extinction rate and risk of all species are reduced tenfold and the abundance of native wild species is increased to healthy and resilient levels;</li> <li>• The genetic diversity within populations of wild and domesticated species, is maintained, safeguarding their adaptive potential</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal B</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity is sustainably used and managed and nature’s contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced, with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations by 2050.</li> </ul>



<b>Goal C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and digital sequence information on genetic resources, and of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, as applicable, are shared fairly and equitably, including, as appropriate with indigenous peoples and local communities, and substantially increased by 2050, while ensuring traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources is appropriately protected, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in accordance with internationally agreed access and benefit-sharing instruments.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology to fully implement the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework are secured and equitably accessible to all Parties, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, progressively closing the biodiversity finance gap of 700 billion dollars per year, and aligning financial flows with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.</li> </ul>

**The 23 targets are:**

Targets	Details
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that all areas are under participatory integrated biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land and sea use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.</li> </ul>
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration.</li> </ul>
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed.</li> </ul>

4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure urgent management actions to halt human induced extinction of known threatened species.</li> </ul>
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the use, harvesting and trade of wild species is sustainable, safe and legal, preventing overexploitation, minimizing impacts on non-target species and ecosystems, and reducing the risk of pathogen spill-over, applying the ecosystem approach, while respecting and protecting customary sustainable use by indigenous peoples and local communities.</li> </ul>
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate, minimize, reduce and or mitigate the impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity and ecosystem services by at least 50 per cent, by 2030.</li> </ul>
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources, by 2030.</li> </ul>
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimize the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity and increase its resilience through mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, including through nature-based solution and/or ecosystem-based approaches</li> </ul>
9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the management and use of wild species are sustainable, thereby providing social, economic and environmental benefits for people</li> </ul>
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity</li> </ul>
11.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore, maintain and enhance nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, such as regulation of air, water, and climate, soil health, pollination and reduction of disease risk, as well as protection from natural hazards and disasters, through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.</li> </ul>
12.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significantly increase the area and quality and connectivity of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban and densely populated areas sustainably.</li> </ul>

13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take effective legal, policy, administrative and capacity-building measures at all levels, as appropriate, to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the utilization of genetic resources and from digital sequence information on genetic resources, as well as traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, and facilitating appropriate access to genetic resources, and by 2030 facilitating a significant increase of the benefits shared, in accordance with applicable international access and benefit-sharing instruments.</li> </ul>
14.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the full integration of biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes, poverty eradication strategies, strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments and, as appropriate, national accounting, within and across all levels of government and across all sectors,</li> </ul>
15.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take legal, administrative or policy measures to encourage and enable business, and in particular to ensure that large and transnational companies and financial institutions:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly monitor, assess, and transparently disclose their risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, including with requirements for all large as well as transnational companies and financial institutions along their operations, supply and value chains and portfolios;</li> <li>Provide information needed to consumers to promote sustainable consumption patterns;</li> <li>Report on compliance with access and benefit-sharing regulations and measures, as applicable</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that people are encouraged and enabled to make sustainable consumption choices and by 2030, reduce the global footprint of consumption in an equitable manner</li> </ul>
17.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish, strengthen capacity for, and implement in all countries in biosafety measures as set out in Article 8(g) of the Convention on Biological Diversity and measures for the handling of biotechnology and distribution of its benefits as set out in Article 19 of the Convention</li> </ul>
18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify by 2025, and eliminate, phase out or reform incentives, including subsidies, harmful for biodiversity, in a proportionate, just, fair, effective and equitable way, while substantially and progressively reducing them by at least 500 billion United States dollars per year by 2030</li> </ul>

19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substantially and progressively increase the level of financial resources from all sources, in an effective, timely and easily accessible manner.</li> <li>by 2030 mobilizing at least 200 billion United States dollars per year</li> </ul>
20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen capacity-building and development, access to and transfer of technology, and promote development of and access to innovation and technical and scientific cooperation</li> </ul>
21.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the best available data, information and knowledge, are accessible to decision makers, practitioners and the public to guide effective and equitable governance, integrated and participatory management of biodiversity,</li> </ul>
22.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities.</li> </ul>
23.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure gender equality in the implementation of the framework through a gender-responsive approach.</li> </ul>

**Topic 28. TROPICAL CROPS AT RISK FROM POLLINATOR LOSS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE, SHIFT IN LAND USE, FINDS STUDY**

*Important for the subject: Environment*

Tropical crops like **coffee, cocoa, watermelon** and **mango**, face a potential crisis due to the **loss of insect pollinators**, according to a new study led by researchers from the **University College London** and the **Natural History Museum**.

**Three-fourths** of the world's **flowering plants** and **about 35 per cent** of the world's **food crops** depended on animal pollinators to reproduce, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

**Study findings:**

- Combined pressures of **climate change** and **agricultural activities** have led to **large reductions in insect pollinators**.

- **Altered climate and change in land-use** have reduced the number of **insects** pollinating key tropical crops.
- The **number of insects** that pollinate those plants **declined by 61 per cent**. Most affected regions: **Sub-Saharan Africa, South America and Southeast Asia**.
- In terms of total production potentially at risk, **China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and the Philippines** emerged as being most at risk. Most affected crops: **Cocoa** (at highest risk), **mango, watermelon**.
- The **main factors driving this decline** were identified to be **destruction of habitat, improper land-use such as grazing, fertilisers and crop monoculture of farming, along with high pesticide use**.
- **Impact:** Increased income insecurity for small-scale farmers, reduced production and productivity, threat to biodiversity, region may become prone to Invasive Alien Species (IAS), spread of plant and animal diseases among others.

### Topic 29. WAYANAD IS SUMMER HOME FOR ELEPHANTS, SAYS A STUDY

*Important for the subject: Environment*



The **Wayanad plateau** witnesses **high footfall of elephants in summer** compared to the surrounding areas in the **Nilgiri landscape**, a new study finds.

Researchers say that some forest areas in the plateau act as **functional corridors for elephants** to move between **forest patches** which need the same recognition as **historical elephant corridors**.

Considering the landscape's prominence in times of climate change, the study calls for **strategic protected area expansion and acquisition of swamps and riparian forests** close to forest areas as one of the conservation investments for the species.

### Water bodies and trees act as summer coolers for elephants:

- Swamps and forests of Wayanad provide the elephants with shade and opportunities to take mud baths as a buffer against thermal stress.
- Elephants visit Wayanad during summer while during winter they prefer other habitats to the east of the Nilgiri landscape that comprises protected areas like **Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves**.

### About the Wayanad plateau:

- The **Wayanad Plateau** forms a **continuation of the Mysore Plateau**, the southern portion of **Deccan Plateau** which **links the Western Ghats with the Eastern Ghats**.
- It is set high in the **Western Ghats** with altitudes ranging from **700 to 2100 meters**. **VellariMala**, a 2,240 m (7,349 ft) high peak situated on the **trijunction of Wayanad, Malappuram, and Kozhikode districts**, is the **highest point in Wayanad district**.
- The **Wayanad plateau** in the **Brahmagiri-Nilgiri-Eastern Ghats landscape of peninsular India** supports the **largest breeding population of Asian elephants** (*Elephas maximus*) globally.
- This area provides year-round water availability and forage to elephants.
- **Wayanad plateau needs better protection and conservation measures:** Out of 344 sq km of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, almost 100 sq km area is plantation.
- This **high fragmentation of forests** is one of the main reasons for **increasing conflict between humans and elephants**.
- Other factors including the **increased population of elephants**, especially the male elephants from better protection measures in the recent past, **depletion of palatable plant species for herbivores** due to the **spread of invasive plant species**, changing forest fire dynamics, etc. are pushing elephants out of forests and towards plantations and human habitations.
- There is a call for **long-term research to fully comprehend the importance of Wayanad as a dry season habitat for elephants** in the Nilgiri landscape.
- The study suggests a **strategic protected area expansion and acquisition of swamps and riparian forests close to forest areas** as one of the conservation investments in the landscape.
- Minimize habitat degradation from various factors like the spread of invasive plants, grazing, monoculture plantations, man-made large fires, etc through eco-restoration plans.

### Asiatic elephants:

- The **Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*)** is the **only living species** of the **genus *Elephas*** and is distributed throughout the **Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia**, from **India** in the west, **Nepal** in the north, **Sumatra** in the south, and **Borneo** in the east.

- **Three subspecies** are recognised—**E. m. maximus** from **Sri Lanka**, **E. m. indicus** from **mainland Asia** and **E. m. sumatranus** from the **island of Sumatra**. Formerly, there was also the **Syrian elephant** or **Western Asiatic elephant (Elephas maximus asurus)** which was the **westernmost population of the Asian elephant (Elephas maximus)**.
- This **subspecies became extinct in ancient times**. Skeletal remains of **E. m. asurus** have been recorded from the **Middle East: Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey** from periods dating between at least **1800 BC** and likely **700 BC**.
- It is **one of only three living species of elephants or elephantids** anywhere in the world, the others being the **African bush elephant** and **African forest elephant**.
- It is the **second largest species of elephant** after the **African bush elephant**. The **Asian elephant is the largest living land animal in Asia**.
- The **Asian elephant** is a globally **endangered species** with **50,000 individuals** remaining in the wild. About **60 percent** of the population is in **India** with **25 percent** in the **global biodiversity hotspot** of the **Western Ghats**.
- The existing habitat is **highly fragmented** with many **anthropogenic pressures** coupled with other factors like climate change leading to the degradation of these patches.
- With their habitats lost or fragmented, elephants are increasingly coming into **conflict with humans**.

### Topic 30. WHEN TIGERS AND JACKALS GET THE SAME PROTECTION

*Important for the subject :Environment*

An inordinate number of species have been included in the new schedules of the **Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022**, without an objective or replicable process.

**Schedule 1**, which confers the **highest protection**, contains about **600 species of vertebrates and hundreds of invertebrates**, while **Schedule 2** contains about **2,000 species** (with 1,134 species of birds alone).

**Issues for conservation:**

- The **WLPA** was originally intended to **regulate the use of various species** (including hunting), **restrict trade**, and **police the trafficking of species**.
- The **amended Act** goes one step further by aligning itself with **CITES**, and including the **CITES appendices**. Nowhere in the Act is there a clear connection between endangerment and conservation.
- It is unclear where resources should be allocated on the basis of this list.
- A particular consequence of listing has been the **presence of the spotted deer (chital) in Schedule 1**. Common throughout India, these are **invasive in the Andaman Islands** and have caused untold harm to the vegetation and herpetofauna. But **they cannot be legally culled or removed** because of the **WLPA**.

- The **Tree Preservation Acts** of **Kerala** and **Karnataka** proscribe the **felling of native trees**. Instead of **promoting conservation**, these Acts **disincentivise plantation owners from planting native trees**, and **promote exotics such as Silver Oak**, that they can cut any time they need to.
- The new Act elevates **wild pigs** and **nilgai** to **Schedule 1**.

Wildlife Protection Act 1972	Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The WPA Act is the first act which for the first time concluded a comprehensive list of the country's endangered wildlife.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Act amends the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 by increasing the species protected under the law.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Act prohibited the hunting of endangered species.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre can designate a management authority to grant export or import permits for the trade of specimens and a scientific authority to give advice on the trade impact on the survival of the specimens</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduled animals are prohibited from being traded as per the Act's provisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre will appoint a Chief WildLife Warden who processes applications for breeding in captivity or artificially propagating any scheduled specimen</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Act provides for licenses for the sale, transfer, and possession of some wildlife species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation reserves: Under the Act, though state governments still have powers to declare areas adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries as a conservation reserve but act also empowers the central government to a notify a conservation reserve.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It provides for the establishment of wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obligations under CITES: Under CITES, plant and animal specimens are classified into three categories (Appendices) based on the threat to their extinction. The Convention requires countries to regulate the trade of all listed specimens through permits. It also seeks to regulate the possession of live animal specimens. The Act seeks to implement these provisions of CITES.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation reserves: Under the Act, state governments may declare areas adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries as a conservation reserve, for protecting flora and fauna, and their habitat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationalizing schedules: Act reduces the total number of schedules to four by: (i) reducing the number of schedules for specially protected animals to two (one for greater protection level), (ii) removes the schedule for vermin species, and (iii) inserts a new schedule for specimens listed in the Appendices under CITES (scheduled specimens).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion in CITES: It helped India become a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES is an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penalties: The Amended Act prescribes imprisonment terms and fines for violating the provisions of the Act. The Act increases these fines. The Act also enhances the penalties prescribed for violation of provisions of the Act. For 'General violations', the maximum fine is increased from Rs 25,000 to Rs. 1 lakh. In case of Specially protected animals, the minimum fine of Rs. 10,000 has been enhanced to Rs. 25,000.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of Schedules: The Act created six schedules which gave varying degrees of protection to classes of flora and fauna. Schedule I and Schedule II (Part II) get absolute protection, and offences under these schedules attract the maximum penalties. The schedules also include species that may be hunted.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penalties: (Section 51 of the Wildlife Protection Act): If the offences committed in connection with the animal described in Schedule-I or Part-II of Schedule-II where the offence was related to hunting in the sanctuary or a national park or exchange in the territory of a sanctuary or a national park, such an offence shall be punishable by imprisonment not less than three years but up to seven years and a fine not exceeding ten thousand rupees.</li> </ul>	

**Topic 31. ENTHUSIASM AMONG BIRDWATCHERS AS ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH SIGHTING RECORDED IN GUJARAT IN A FIRST**

*Important for the subject :Environment*



The **orange-headed thrush (Geokichlacitrinacitrina)**, usually spotted in the **Himalayas, Eastern Ghats, and Sri Lanka**, was seen in **Ahmedabad** early this year.

The **number of species of birds** recorded in **Gujarat** has gone up to **117**.

- This is also the first record of this species in Gujarat, taking the species count to **618**.

**About Orange-headed thrush (Geokichlacitrinacitrina)**

- **Geokichlacitrinacyanotus**, a **subspecies of orange-headed thrush**, is a resident bird in forests of **north and south Gujarat regions** and there are scattered records of this subspecies in the **Saurashtra region** also.
- The **orange-headed thrush** is **omnivorous**, eating a wide range of **insects, earthworms and fruit**. It nests in **trees** but **does not form flocks**.
- **Geokichla c cyanotus** can be distinguished from **Geokichla c. cintrina** by its **black vertical stripes across the eye and the ear coverts**.
- They forage on the foliage on the forest floor and their **range extends into south-east Asia**.
- **Birds of this species** are known to **migrate** from their breeding grounds in the **Himalayas** to their **wintering grounds in the Eastern Ghats and Sri Lanka**.

**Topic 32. BUTTERFLY MAKES A RARE CALL IN HIMACHAL**

*Important for the subject :Environment*

A **butterfly** that is **rare in the western Himalayas**, the **paintbrush swift**, has been photographed and documented for the **first time** in **Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district**.

This butterfly species is sighted at **lower hills** of the **Dhauladhar mountain range**.

**Himachal Pradesh** is home to about **25%** of the **total number of butterfly species** found in **India**.

- The butterfly species was photographed during a field survey conducted under the **Wild Bhattiyat Project** initiated by the **Bhattiyat Forest Range** of the **Dalhousie Forest Division** of the **Himachal Pradesh Forest Department**.
- The species was discovered in **1878** in the **Eastern Himalayas**, but never photographed in H.P. earlier.
- **Other butterfly species sighted in H.P. are:** Anomalous nawab, blank swift, tailed jay, siren, etc.

**Paintbrush swift (Baoris farri):**

- A butterfly species of the HesperIIDae family.
- It is **identified** based on **two separated spots** in the **upper forewing cell**.
- Other closely related species like the **blank swift** have **no cell spot** while the **figure-of-eight swift** has **two conjoined cell spots**.
- The **species' larvae** feed on **bamboo** and some other grass species.
- Paintbrush swift's **habitat distribution** is common in **northeast, central** and **south India**, and **rare in Uttarakhand**.

### Topic 33. RED TIDE

*Important for the subject: Environment*

Beach-goers in Puducherry were shell-shocked on Tuesday, October 17, 2023 after they witnessed the strange phenomenon of the sea turning red.

**What is the news?**

- The entire stretch of coastal waters from **Vaithikuppam** on the northern side of the Promenade, up until Gandhi statue has become red, reportedly due to **algal bloom**

**Why beach has become red?**

- “Industrial pollution or ‘Red Tide’ can be factors behind the sea turning red. This phenomenon has been observed in Vaithikuppam and a few other patches on the coastline over the past one week. Red Tide is a toxic algal bloom and is known to be harmful to marine life.

**What is a red tide?**

- Harmful algal blooms, or HABs, occur when colonies of algae—plant-like organisms that

live in the sea and freshwater—grow out of control while producing toxic or harmful effects on **people, fish, shellfish, marine mammals, and birds**. The human illnesses caused by HABs, though rare, can be debilitating or even fatal.

- While many people call these blooms ‘red tides,’ scientists prefer the term harmful algal bloom. One of the best known HABs in the nation occurs nearly every summer along Florida’s Gulf Coast. This bloom, like many HABs, is caused by **microscopic algae** that produce toxins that kill fish and make shellfish dangerous to eat. The toxins may also make the surrounding air difficult to breathe. As the name suggests, the bloom of algae often turns the water red.
- HABs are a national concern because they affect not only the health of people and marine ecosystems, but also the ‘health’ of local and regional economies.

### **Are all Algal blooms harmful?**

- But not all algal blooms are harmful? Most blooms, in fact, are beneficial because the tiny plants are food for animals in the ocean. In fact, they are the major source of energy that fuels the ocean food web.
- A small percentage of algae, however, produce powerful toxins that can kill fish, shellfish, mammals, and birds, and may directly or indirectly cause illness in people. HABs also include blooms of non-toxic species that have harmful effects on marine ecosystems. For example, when masses of algae die and decompose, the decaying process can deplete oxygen in the water, causing the water to become so low in oxygen that animals either leave the area or die.

## **Topic 34. SC VERDICT ON SAME SEX MARRIAGES**

### ***Important for the subject : Polity***

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has pronounced the verdict on marriage equality today.

### **More about the news:**

- A **five-judge Supreme Court bench**, led by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, issued a unanimous **ruling against legalizing same-sex marriage** in India, also **rejecting civil unions for non-heterosexual couples in a 3:2 verdict**.
- They stated that **Parliament should decide on the issue**, emphasizing the **inability of the court to alter provisions or interpretations of the Special Marriage Act**.
- The petitions **aimed for a gender-neutral reading of the Special Marriage Act** to

include same-sex marriages, but the **majority view was that there is no fundamental right to marry.**

- The court deliberated for ten days in April and May, considering various arguments related to equality, privacy, legal rights, and the impact on children.
- **Opponents included the Central government, the NPCR, and the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind.**

#### **What is Special Marriage Act:**

- The Special Marriage Act of 1954 (SMA) **provides an alternate route to religious laws for marriage.**
- It **governs a civil marriage** where the **state sanctions the marriage rather than the religion.**

#### **Who can get married under the Special Marriage Act:**

- The **applicability of the Act** extends to the people of **all faiths, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists, across India.**
- The **minimum age** to get married under the **Special Marriage Act** is **21 years for males and 18 years for females**

#### **What are the provisions of Special Marriage Act:**

- As per **Section 5 of the Act**, the parties to the marriage are **required to give a notice, in writing, to a “Marriage Officer”** of the district in which at least **one of the parties has resided for at least 30 days** immediately preceding the notice.
- The **parties and three witnesses** are required to sign a **declaration form before the Marriage Officer.**

Once the declaration is accepted, the parties will be given a **“Certificate of marriage” which is essentially proof of the marriage.**

#### **Topic 35. CAN AAP BE AN ACCUSED IN DELHI EXCISE POLICY CASE**

##### ***Important for the subject : Polity***

The Enforcement Directorate considers implicating AAP in a money laundering probe tied to scrapped Delhi excise policy.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) told the Supreme Court that it is **contemplating adding the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as an accused** in its money laundering probe linked to the Delhi government’s **now-scrapped excise policy.**

- ED said that it is planning to **invoke Section 70 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act** to probe the role of AAP in this regard.
- Main allegation of the ED is that **AAP was the recipient of the proceeds of crime** in

the excise scam.

**What is the law under which a political party can be booked for money laundering:**

- **Section 70 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) deals with offenses by companies.**
- **Section 70 of the PMLA 2002 states that if a company commits a contravention of any provision of the Act, every person who was in charge of the company's business at the time of the contravention is also liable.**
- **The provision to Section 70 states that the person in charge of the company's business can defend themselves by proving that the contravention took place without their knowledge or despite all due diligence.**
- **Despite political parties not being incorporated as 'companies' under the Companies Act 2013, the PMLA's Section 70 contains a significant explanation that could potentially be important for the subject political parties to anti-money laundering regulations.**
- **The explanation defines a 'company' as any corporate entity, encompassing firms and other associations of individuals.**
- **The term 'association of individuals' is expansive enough to include political parties. The Representation of the People Act, Section 29A, defines a political party as an association or body of Indian citizens registered with the Election Commission, self-identifying as a political party.**

**Has a political party ever been booked for money laundering:**

- **If AAP is directly named as an accused in the excise scam under the PMLA, it would be the first instance of a political party being accused of money laundering.**
- **However, political parties have been booked and investigated under the Income Tax Act.**
- **Trusts and NGOs are already under the PMLA ambit. In May, the Finance Ministry in a notification included trustees of an express trust also within the PMLA.**

**Some facts Enforcement Directorate:**

- **It is a Multi-Disciplinary Organization mandated with the task of enforcing the provisions of two special fiscal laws – Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA).**
- **The origin of this Directorate goes back to 1st May, 1956, when an Enforcement Unit was formed, in Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947.**
- **In the year 1957, this Unit was renamed as 'Enforcement Directorate'. The administrative control of the Directorate was transferred from Department of Economic Affairs to Department of Revenue in 1960.**

**The Directorate enforces two laws;**

- **FEMA, a Civil Law having quasi-judicial powers, for investigating suspected**

contraventions of the **Exchange Control Laws and Regulations** with the powers to impose penalties on those adjudged guilty.

- **PMLA, a Criminal Law**, whereby the Officers are empowered to conduct enquiries to locate, provisionally attach/confiscate assets derived from acts of Schedules Offenses besides arresting and prosecuting the Money Launderers.
- The ED has its **headquarters in New Delhi** and has many regional offices all over the country.
- **Composition**– Besides directly recruiting personnel, the **Directorate also draws officers from different Investigating Agencies**, viz., Customs & Central Excise, Income Tax, Police, etc. on deputation.
- It is **headed by the Director of Enforcement**, who is an **IRS officer** Other functions:

**What is ED's Jurisdiction:**

- **Both FEMA or PMLA** apply to the whole of India. So, the ED can take action against any person on which this act applies.
- **Cases under FEMA** may lie in civil courts where **PMLA cases will lie in criminal courts.**
- The agency has **jurisdiction over a person** or any other legal entity who commits a crime.
- **All the public servants** come under the **jurisdiction of the agency** if they are involved in any offence related to money laundering.
- **ED can not take an action suo motu. One has to complain** to any other agency or Police first and then ED will investigate the matter and will identify the accused.
- The **ED will investigate the matter and may attach the property of an accused person** and also make an arrest and start proceeding with the violation of the provisions of FEMA and PMLA act.
- The matter will be **resolved by way of adjudication by courts or PMLA courts.**

**Topic 36. SC SEEK RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT REPLY ON AAP MP PETITION**

***Important for the subject : Polity***

SC seeks Rajya Sabha secretariat's reply on AAP MP's petition

**More about the news:**

- The **Supreme Court** has agreed to examine the plea of **AAP leader Raghav Chadha challenging his indefinite suspension** from the Rajya Sabha.
- Chadha's suspension was **due to his involvement in including names of some Rajya Sabha members in a select committee without their consent.**
- The top court has issued a **notice to the Rajya Sabha Secretariat** and scheduled the

hearing for October 30.

- The **suspension's duration, according to Chadha's argument, should not extend beyond the particular session** during which it was imposed.
- The privileges committee is **expected to provide a report on the matter**

### Who can suspend an MP:

- It is the **role and duty of the Presiding Officer i.e Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha** to maintain order so that the House can function smoothly.
- In order to ensure that proceedings are conducted in the proper manner, **the Speaker/ Chairman is empowered to force a Member to withdraw from the House.**

### What are the rules under which the Presiding Officer/Chairman acts:

#### For Lok Sabha

- **Rule Number 373** of the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business**
- The **Speaker can order a member to immediately leave the House** if the member's conduct is disorderly.
- Those directed to withdraw **must do so promptly and stay absent for the remainder of the day's sitting.**

#### **Rule 374:**

- The **Speaker can name a member who disrespects the Chair's authority or persistently obstructs House business.**
- The named member **faces suspension from the House, but this suspension should not exceed the remainder of the session.**
- The suspended member **must leave the House premises.**

#### **Rule 374A (Added in December 2001):**

In cases of gross violations or serious charges, if named by the Speaker, a **member is automatically suspended from the House's service for five consecutive sittings or the remaining session, whichever is shorter.**

#### For Rajya Sabha:

##### **Rule 255 of the Rule Book of Rajya Sabha:**

It empowers the **Chairman of Rajya Sabha to direct any Member to withdraw immediately from the House for any disorderly conduct.**

#### **Rule 256**

- This rule empowers the Chairman to name the members who persistently disregards the authority of the Chair or **abuses the rules of the Council.**
- After that, the House may **adopt a motion suspending the Member for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session.**
- It should be noted that, **unlike Lok Sabha (under rule 374A), Rajya Sabha can not suspend its members without passing a motion for the same.**



**What are the terms of Suspension:**

- The **maximum period** of suspension is for the **remainder of the session**. Suspended members **cannot enter the chamber or attend the meetings** of the committees.
- He **will not be eligible to give notice** for discussion or submission. He **loses the right to get a reply to his questions**.

**Can courts intervene in a matter of suspension of MPs:**

- **Article 122** of the Indian Constitution **establishes the principle that parliamentary proceedings are not Important for the subject to questioning in a court of law**.
- Nevertheless, there **have been instances** where the **judiciary has intervened in the procedural workings** of legislatures.
- One such case involves the **Maharashtra Legislative Assembly**, which, **during its 2021 Monsoon Session**, **passed a resolution to suspend 12 BJP MLAs** for a year.
- This matter eventually **reached the Supreme Court**, which ruled that the resolution's **legal effect extended only for the duration of the Monsoon Session and not beyond**.

**Topic 37. WHY IS MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN A MUST FOR SURROGACY****HIGH COURT ASK CENTER*****Important for the subject: Polity***

The Delhi High Court has questioned the government on why marital status is a requirement for women to be eligible for surrogacy under the law

**More about the news:**

- The **Delhi High Court** questioned the **government regarding the requirement of marital status for women to access surrogacy under the law**.
- The court's division bench, headed by **Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula**, **asked the government's counsel** to explain why a **woman's marital status is linked to her eligibility for surrogacy**.
- The government's counsel said they would seek instructions on this matter, with the case scheduled for the **next hearing on October 31**.

**What is this case all about:**

- The case revolves around a **44-year-old single, unmarried woman challenging section 2(1)(s) of the Surrogacy Act** that **limits surrogacy access to Indian widows or female divorcees, excluding women like her**.
- The petitioner also **challenges the regulation forcing single women** (widows or divorcees) to **use their own eggs for surrogacy**.

- She argues that her age **makes it medically inadvisable** to use her own gametes and that she wishes to **use donor female gametes**. Her brother has consented to donate his gametes for genetic connection.
- The plea argues that the **Act's provisions unfairly restrict reproductive choices based on marital status**, and the court also requested a medical opinion supporting the petitioner's inability to use her own gametes.

### What is Surrogacy:

- Surrogacy is defined as a **practice wherein one woman bears and gives birth to a child with the intention** to thereafter **hand it over to the intending couple**.
- While **commercial surrogacy is not allowed** in India such procedures are **allowed only for altruistic purposes** with **many restrictions on the person** seeking to apply under the law.

### What are the Surrogacy Laws:

In 2021, the Indian Parliament passed two key laws:

- **The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act**, which **governs surrogacy practice in India**. It offers a **ten-month gestation period** for existing surrogate mothers to safeguard their well-being.
- **The Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act**, designed to **regulate and supervise assisted reproductive technology** clinics and banks. This law **permits services for women aged 21 to 50 and men aged 21 to 55**, covering procedures such as **gamete donation, intrauterine insemination, and in-vitro fertilization (IVF)**.

### What is Surrogacy Act 2021:

- The Act sought to **regulate the surrogacy part** of a rather flourishing infertility industry in the country.
- It is defined as a **practice where a woman undertakes to give birth to a child for another couple and agrees to hand over the child to them after birth**.

### Altruistic surrogacy:

- The Act allows '**altruistic surrogacy**' — wherein **only the medical expenses and insurance coverage is provided by the couple** to the surrogate mother during pregnancy.
- **No other monetary consideration will be permitted.**

### The intending couple:

- Any couple that has '**proven infertility**' is a candidate.
- The '**intending couple**' as the Act calls them, will be eligible if they have a '**certificate of essentiality**' and a '**certificate of eligibility**' issued by the appropriate authority.

**The former will be issued if the couple fulfills three conditions:**

- A certificate of infertility of one or both from a **district medical board**; An **order of parentage and custody** of the surrogate child passed by a Magistrate's court;
- **Insurance cover** for the surrogate mother.

#### **Eligibility Certificate:**

- An eligibility certificate mandates that the couple fulfill the following conditions:
- They should be **Indian citizens** who have been **married for at least five years**;
- The **female must be between 23 to 50 years and the male, 26 to 55 years**;
- They **cannot have any surviving children** i.e **biological, adopted or surrogate**;
- However, this **would not include a 'child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from life threatening disorder or fatal illness.'**

#### **Surrogate mother:**

- Only a **close relative of the couple** can be a surrogate mother, **one who is able to provide a medical fitness certificate**.
- She should have **been married, with a child of her own**, and must be **between 25 and 35 years**,

She can be a **surrogate mother only** once.

#### **Regulating Body:**

- The **Centre and State governments are expected to constitute a National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and State Surrogacy Boards (SSB) respectively**.
- This body is tasked with enforcing standards for surrogacy clinics, investigating breaches and recommending modifications.
- Further, **surrogacy clinics need to apply for registration within 60 days** of the appointment of the appropriate authority.

#### **Offenses:**

- **Offences under the Act include commercial surrogacy, selling of embryos, exploiting, abandoning a surrogate child etc.**
- These may **invite up to 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs. 10 lakh**.

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### **Topic 38. SPEAKER NOT DOING HIS JOB, GIVING FINAL OPPORTUNITY SAYS TOP COURT**

#### ***Important for the subject :Polity***

Supreme Court gives 'final opportunity' to Maharashtra Speaker to give 'realistic' timeline to decide disqualification pleas

#### **More about the news:**

- The Supreme Court has given the Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Rahul Narwekar, a final chance to provide a realistic timeline for resolving **disqualification petitions** stemming from a rift within the Shiv Sena political party.
- The Court expressed **displeasure over the delay** in these cases and noted that the Speaker, acting as a tribunal in these proceedings, is **Important for the subject to the Court's jurisdiction**.
- Previously, a Constitution bench had emphasized the need for expedited resolution of disqualification petitions, and the Court insisted on a **more reasonable schedule**.
- The next hearing is scheduled for **October 30**, with the Solicitor General agreeing to work with the Speaker to establish clear modalities for swift resolution.

### What is the Anti-Defection Law:

- Defection, in the context of politics, **pertains to the act of changing one's political allegiance**. It specifically involves a **member of a political party leaving their party to either join another party or become an independent representative**.
- **Anti-defection Law** in India was enacted in **1985** through the **52nd Amendment Act of 1985** as part of the **Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India**.
- Anti-defection laws **aim to prevent or discourage defection by imposing penalties on politicians who switch parties or otherwise violate party discipline**.

### What are the important provisions of the Anti-Defection Law:

- **Disqualification:** A member of a House belonging to any political party becomes disqualified for being a member of the House, If he **voluntarily gives up his membership** of such a political party; or
- If he **votes or abstains from voting in such House** contrary to **any direction issued by his political party** without obtaining prior permission of such party and his abstention from voting **should not be condoned by his party or the authorized person within 15 days of such incident**.
- **Independent Members:** An independent member of a House becomes **disqualified** from remaining a member of the House if **he joins any political party** after such an election.
- **Nominated Members:** A nominated member of a House becomes **disqualified for being a member of the House if he joins any political party** after the **expiry of six**

months from the **date he takes his seat** in the House.

- **Exceptions:** The above disqualification on the ground of defection **does not apply** in the following **two cases**:
- **Merger:** If a member goes out of his party due to a merger of the party with another party. A merger takes place when **two-thirds of the members** of the party have agreed to such a merger.
- **Presiding Officer:** If a member, after being elected as the presiding officer of the House, **voluntarily gives up the membership** of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office. This exemption has been **provided in view of the dignity and impartiality of this office**.
- **Deciding Authority:** The **Speaker of the House or the Chairman of the Legislative Council**, as the case may be, has the **authority to decide on questions** relating to defection, and **his or her decision is final and cannot be challenged in any court**.
- **Rule-Making Power:** The **presiding officer of a House** is empowered to **make rules to give effect to the provisions** of the Tenth Schedule. According to the rules made so, the presiding officer **can take up a defection case only when he receives a complaint from a member of the House**.
- **Role of Whip:** The whip is **responsible for communicating the party's position** to its members and ensuring **they vote in line with that position**. In the case of a member defying the whip and **voting against the party's official position, they may be Important for the subject to disciplinary** action under the anti-defection law.

### Topic 39. TRANSPERSONS HAVE RIGHT TO MARRY UNDER EXISTING LAW

*Important for the subject: Polity*

The Supreme Court on Tuesday held that transgender persons in heterosexual relationships have the right to marry under existing law.

**About Judgment:**

- A Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud held that **“transgender persons in heterosexual relationships have the freedom and entitlement to marry** under the existing statutory provisions”.
- The gender of a person is not the same as their sexuality. A person is a transgender

person by virtue of their gender identity. A **transgender person may be heterosexual or homosexual** or of any other sexuality.

- If a transgender person is in a heterosexual relationship and wishes to marry their partner (and if each of them meets the other requirements set out in the applicable law), such a marriage would be recognised by the laws governing marriage
- Since a transgender person can be in a heterosexual relationship like a cismale or cis-female, a union between a transwoman and a transman, or a transwoman and a cisman, or a trans man and a ciswoman can be registered under marriage laws.
- A transgender man has the right to marry a cisgender woman under the laws governing marriage in the country, including personal laws.
- Similarly, a transgender woman has the right to marry a cisgender man. A transgender man and a transgender woman can also marry.

### **Topic 40. SC DIVIDED ON ALLOWING UNMARRIED COUPLES TO ADOPT CHILDREN JOINTLY**

#### ***Important for the subject: Polity***

The Constitution Bench, which delivered a majority judgment in the same sex marriage case on Tuesday, was divided in its opinions on whether unmarried couples, including same sex partners, can jointly adopt children.

Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud held that Regulation 5(3) of the Adoption Regulations, which bars unmarried partners from being prospective adoptive parents, **was ultra vires the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act and violative of the fundamental rights of queer couples.**

#### **Laws Related to Adoption in India:**

- Adoptions in India are governed by two laws: **the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA) and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.**
- Both laws have their separate eligibility criteria for adoptive parents. **Those applying under the JJ Act have to register on CARA’s portal** after which a specialised adoption agency carries out a home study report.
- After it finds the candidate eligible for adoption, a child declared legally free for adoption is referred to the applicant.
- Under HAMA, a “**dattakahom**” ceremony or an adoption deed or a court order is sufficient to obtain irrevocable adoption rights.
- Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs are legalized to adopt kids under this Act

#### **Recent Development:**

- The Parliament passed the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021 in order to amend the **Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act), 2015.**
- The key changes include **authorising District Magistrates and Additional District**

**Magistrates to issue adoption orders** under Section 61 of the JJ Act.

- Earlier in JJ Act 2015, adoption of a child is final on the issuance of an adoption order by the civil court.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced the **Adoption Regulations-2022**, which has streamlined the adoption process.
- District Magistrates (DMs) and Child Welfare Committees have been directed to upload adoption orders and case status in real time.
- Since the implementation of the Adoption Regulations-2022, 2,297 adoption orders have been issued by DMs nationwide, resolving a significant portion of pending cases.

### What are the Major Challenges Related to Adoption in India

- **Lengthy and Complex Adoption Process:** The adoption process in India can be lengthy, bureaucratic, and complex, leading to delays in the placement of children with suitable families.
- India's **tedious and interminable adoption process** can clearly be seen in the statistics with the CARA which states that while more than 30,000 prospective parents are currently waiting to adopt, less than 7% the number of children — 2131— are legally free for adoption.
- Around two-third of them are children with special needs, and it takes three years for an adoption process to complete.
- **Illegal and Unregulated Practices:** Unfortunately, there are instances of illegal and unregulated adoption practices in India. This includes baby trafficking, child-selling, and the existence of unregistered adoption agencies, which exploit vulnerable children and biological parents.
- In 2018, Ranchi's Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity came under fire for its "baby-selling racket" after a nun from the shelter confessed to selling four children.
- **Returning Children after Adoption:** India also faces an unusual upsurge in adoptive parents returning children after adopting.
- In 2020, CARA stated that over 1,100 children adopted across the country have been returned to child care institutions by their adoptive parents in the last five years.

### Topic 41. RAM TEMPLE GET FCRA NODE

#### Important for the subject: Polity

Ram temple gets FCRA node.

#### More about the news:

- The Union Home Ministry has **given approval to the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust**, allowing them to **receive foreign donations** for building the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

- The Trust confirmed that contributions must be sent to a **specific bank account in SBI's 11 Sansad Marg branch in New Delhi.**
- The **consecration ceremony for the temple is planned for January**, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to attend.
- The **first phase of temple construction** is set to finish by December this year

### What is FCRA:

- The law sought to regulate **foreign donations to individuals and associations** so that they functioned in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic.
- The law was **enacted during the Emergency in 1976** amid apprehension that foreign powers were interfering in India's affairs by pumping in funds through independent organizations.
- It is implemented by the **Union Home Minister**

### What are the provisions of the act:

- The FCRA requires every person or NGO seeking to receive foreign donations to be

#### **To be registered under the Act**

- To **open a bank account** for the receipt of the foreign funds in **State Bank of India, Delhi**. To **utilize those funds only for the purpose for which they have been received** and as stipulated in the Act
- To **file annual returns and not to transfer the funds to another NGO**

### How is FCRA registration granted:

- FCRA registrations are **granted to individuals** or associations that have **definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programmes.**
- NGOs that want to receive foreign funds **must apply online with the required documentation.**
- **Authority**– The **Ministry of Home Affairs** makes inquiries through the **Intelligence Bureau into the antecedents** of the applicant and approves or rejects the application **within 90 days.**
- In case of failure to process the application in the given time, the **MHA is expected to inform the NGO of the reasons for the same.**

#### **Eligibility- Under the FCRA, the applicant**

- Should **not be fictitious or benami**
- Should **not have been prosecuted or convicted** for indulging in activities aimed at conversion through inducement or force, **either directly or indirectly, from one religious faith to another**
- Should not have been **prosecuted for or convicted of creating communal tension or disharmony**



- Should not have been **found guilty of diversion or misutilisation** of funds Should not be engaged or **likely to be engaged in the propagation of sedition**
- **Validity**– Once granted, FCRA registration is **valid for five years and NGOs are expected to apply for renewal within six months** of the date of expiry of registration.
- In case of failure to apply for renewal, **the registration is deemed to have expired.**

## Topic 42. HOW MPS ASK QUESTIONS IN LOK SABHA

### *Important for the subject: Polity*

The BJP MP had accused Mahua Moitra of accepting money from a businessman to ask questions in Parliament.

### What is the procedure for raising the questions:

- The procedure for raising questions is governed by:
- **Rules 32 to 54** of the “**Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha**”
- **Directions 10 to 18** of the “**Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha**”.
- To ask a question, an **MP has to first give a notice addressed to the lower house’s Secretary-General**, intimating their intention to ask a question.\

### **The notice usually contains:**

- The **text of the question**, The **official designation of the Minister to whom the question is addressed**,
- The **date on which the answer is desired**
- The **order of preference**, in case the **MP tables more than one notice of questions for the same day.**
- A Member is **allowed to give not more than five notices** of questions, **both for oral and written answers**, in all, **for any day.**
- **Notices received in excess of five from a Member for a day, are considered for the subsequent day(s)** concerning that Minister **during the period of that session only.**
- Usually, the **period of notice of a question is not less than 15 days.** There are **two ways** through which **MPs can submit the notices** of their questions.
- **First**, through an **online ‘Member’s Portal’**, where they have to **enter their ID and password to get access.** Second, through the **printed forms available in the Parliamentary Notice Office.**
- After **submission of the notices**, the **next stage** is when the **Speaker of Lok Sabha** examines the **notices of the questions** in the **light of the laid-out rules.**
- **It is the Speaker, who decides if a question, or a part thereof, is or isn’t admissible.**

### What are the conditions for the admissibility of questions:

- There exist several regulations that dictate the **eligibility of a question** presented by a

Member of Parliament.

- For instance, these questions are **generally limited to 150 words** in length and must **abstain from including arguments, defamatory remarks, or references to an individual's character or behavior** unless it relates to their official or public role.
- Additionally, **questions addressing broad policy issues are typically not permitted due to the limitations of providing a comprehensive policy** within a question's response.
- Furthermore, a **question is not admissible** if its **Important for the subject matter is pending judgment before any court of law** or any other tribunal or **body set up under law or is under consideration before a Parliamentary Committee.**
- A query also **cannot seek information on matters which may weaken the unity and integrity of the country.**

### What are the different types of questions:

- There are **four types of questions**: **starred, unstarred, short-notice questions, and questions addressed to private Members.**
- **Starred Questions:** These questions are **asked by MPs** and are **answered orally** by the Minister-in-charge. MPs can **ask one starred question per day**, and they must be **submitted at least 15 days in advance.**
- **Only 20 starred questions** can be **listed for oral answers on a given day**, and supplementary questions can be asked after the oral response.
- **Unstarred Questions:** Unstarred questions **receive written replies from the Ministry.** They also **need to be submitted at least 15 days** in advance, but they **do not allow for follow-up questions.** A total of **230 unstarred questions** can be listed for **written answers in a day.**
- **Short Notice Questions:** These are questions related to **urgent public matters** and can be asked **with less than 10 days' notice**, provided **reasons for the short notice** are given. Short notice questions are **answered orally, and supplementary questions can follow.**
- **Questions to Private Members:** These questions are **addressed to the MP themselves.** They are asked when the **Important for the subject matter** relates to a **Bill, Resolution, or any matter concerning the Business of the House** for which that MP is **responsible.** The **procedure** for these questions is **similar to questions addressed to a Minister, with variations as determined by the Speaker.**

### What is the importance of raising questions:

- Asking questions in the Lok Sabha is an **inherent parliamentary right** for MPs, serving as a **means of legislative control** over the executive branch.
- This practice is **used to acquire information, critique government policies, highlight shortcomings, and encourage ministers** to take action for the **public's benefit.**
- It also **allows the government to gauge public reactions** and can lead to the **formation of commissions, inquiries, or new legislation.**

## **Topic 43. GOVERNMENT NOT CLEARING ALL COLLEGIUM PICKS IN ONE GO DISTURBS SENIORITY SAYS SUPREME COURT**

*Important for the subject: Polity*

Supreme Court concern on Government selectively clearing Collegium picks. The Supreme Court of India **expressed concern** over the **selective clearance of names from the list recommended by the Collegium** for the appointment and transfer of judges.

- The court **highlighted** the issues related to **seniority when some names are notified while others are held back**.
- Two petitions were filed, seeking contempt of court proceedings against the government **for delaying the Collegium's recommendations**.
- The court noted that **some candidates withdraw their names due to selective clearances, and stressed the need to address** this issue.
- The matter is scheduled for a hearing on November 7.

### **What is the collegium system:**

- The **ruling in the Third Judges Case**, gave **legal backing** to the **current system of appointment of judges and created the collegium of the CJI and four senior-most judges**.
- **The principal objective of the collegium is to ensure that the best available talent is brought to the Supreme Court Bench**.
- The collegium system is **not rooted in the Constitution** or a specific law promulgated by Parliament.
- The SC collegium is **headed by the incumbent CJI and comprises the four other senior most judges of the court at that time**.

### **What the Constitution says:-**

- **Articles 124(2) and 217** of the Constitution deal with the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts.
- The **appointments are made by the President**, who is required to **hold "consultations" with "such of the judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts" as he may think is needed**.
- For appointments other than the Chief Justice, "the Chief Justice of India shall always be consulted".

### **Evolution of the system-**

- The collegium system evolved out of a series of judgments of the Supreme Court that are called the **"Judges Cases"**.

### FIRST JUDGES CASE:

- In **SP Gupta vs Union of India, 1981**, the Supreme Court held that the **concept of primacy of the CJI was not really rooted in the Constitution**.
- The Constitution Bench also held that the **term “consultation”** used in Articles 124 and 217 **did not mean “concurrence”**.
- Therefore though the **President** will consult these functionaries, his **decision doesn't have to concur with them**.
- This judgment **tilted the balance of power in favour of the executive**.

### SECOND JUDGES CASE:

- In **The Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association vs Union of India, 1993**, a **nine-judge Constitution Bench** overturned the decision in **SP Gupta**, and devised a specific procedure called the **‘Collegium System’**.
- The verdict in the case **accorded primacy to the CJI in appointment and transfers**, and ruled that the **term “consultation” would not diminish the primary role of the CJI**.
- The verdict said that the **recommendation should be made by the CJI in consultation with his two senior most colleagues**.
- It added that **although the executive could ask the collegium to reconsider the matter, if the collegium reiterated the recommendation, the executive was bound to make the appointment**.

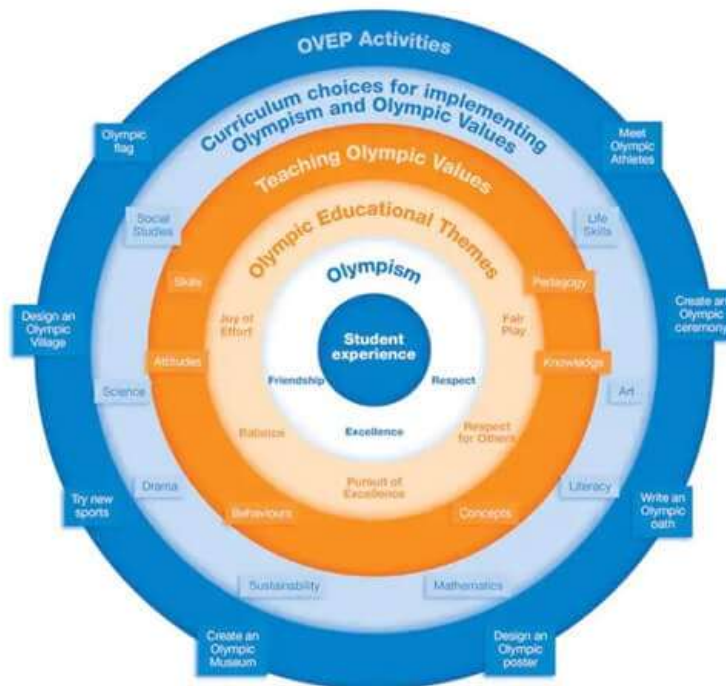
### THIRD JUDGES CASE:

- In **1998**, then **President K R Narayanan** issued a **Presidential Reference to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution** over the meaning of the term **“consultation”**.
- The question was whether **“consultation”** required consultation with a number of judges in forming the CJI's opinion, or whether the sole opinion of CJI could by itself constitute a **“consultation”**.
- In response, the **SC laid down nine guidelines which has come to be the existing form of the collegium**.
- The SC laid down that the **recommendation should be made by the CJI and his four seniormost colleagues instead of two**.
- **It was also held that even if two judges gave an adverse opinion, the CJI should not send the recommendation to the government**.

**Topic 44. OLYMPIC VALUE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

*Important for the subject :International Relations*

# Implementing OVEP



India's First Olympic Values Education was launched in Odisha.

The Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP) is based on the **Olympic philosophy** that learning takes place through the **balanced development of body and mind**.

- It is a **series of free and accessible teaching resources** created by the IOC, to **complement academic curricula** using the **context of Olympic sports and the core principles of Olympism**.
- The programme **aims to disseminate this values-based curriculum** to help children **become active, healthy and responsible citizens**.
- The first OVEP **launched in India** in **Odisha**.
- It is a programme **funded by the IOC** and was **launched by the Abhinav Bindra Foundation (ABF)**.

## **Topic 45. IOC AMENDS OLYMPIC CHARTER TO STRENGTHEN ITS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS**

*Important for the subject :International Relations*

During the 141st session of International Olympic Committee being held at Mumbai changes were introduced in the Olympic Charter,

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) **amended the Olympic Charter to reinforce its commitment to human rights** during its 141st Session.

- The IOC **incorporated additional wording** emphasizing **respect for human rights into the Fundamental Principles of Olympism.**
- This change **reflects the work of the Legal Affairs Commission and the Advisory Committee on Human Rights.**
- IOC President Thomas Bach considered it a significant step towards human rights in the Olympic Movement.
- The Olympic Charter **was also aligned with the Guidelines on Athlete Expression, ensuring freedom of expression for all Olympic Games** participants while adhering to Olympic values and principles.
- The **International Federation of American Football gained full IOC recognition.**
- Russia's IOC members Yelena Isinbayeva and Sharmil Tarpishchev were absent, and a human rights activist, Peter Tatchell, claimed to be prevented from leaving his hotel room by Mumbai police, intending to protest the IOC Session.
- **Salt Lake City in the USA expressed interest in hosting the 2034 Winter Olympics and potentially the 2030 Games.**

### **What is Olympic Charter:**

- Olympic Charter is the **codification of fundamental principles of Olympism** and rules and bye-laws adopted by the **International Olympic Committee.**
- The Charter was **first published in 1908**, under the title of **Annuaire du Comité International Olympique.**
- Some of the rules contained in this **first Charter had, however, been written by Pierre de Coubertin around 1898.**
- Although the **title Olympic Charter** is generally used in **reference to all the editions**, it is **only since 1978 that it has actually appeared** as the title on the publication.
- It governs the **organization, actions and functioning of the Olympic Movement and establishes the conditions for celebration of Olympic Games.**
- It **establishes the relations between International Federations, National Olympic**

## Committees and Olympic Movement.

### Some details about International Olympic Session:

- An IOC session is the **annual meeting of the members of the IOC.**
- It **comprises 101 voting members and 45 honorary members.**
- It **decides on the key activities** of the global Olympics movement.

### The powers of the Session are:

- **To adopt or amend the Olympic Charter. To elect the members of the IOC, the Honorary President and the honorary members.**
- **To elect the President, the vice-presidents and all other members of the IOC Executive Board. To elect the host city of the Olympic Games.**
- An Olympic Session is the general meeting of the members of the IOC and its supreme organ. **All IOC Session decisions are final.**
- India hosted the **141st International Olympic Committee (IOC) session at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai.**
- In this session newly added sports in the **2028 Olympics are Cricket, Baseball, Softball, Lacrosse Return, Flag Football.**

### Some details about International Olympic Association:

- The International Olympic Committee is a **non-governmental sports organization based in Lausanne, Switzerland.**
- It is **constituted in the form of an association** under the **Swiss Civil Code (articles 60–79).** It was **founded in 1894 by Pierre de Coubertin and Demetrios Vikelas,** it is the authority responsible for organizing the modern **Summer, Winter, and Youth Olympic Games.**
- **Demetrios Vikelas** was the **first president** of the IOC.
- **The 141st session** of IOC is being held in **Mumbai.**

### Some details about Indian Olympic Associations:

- Indian Olympic Association (IOA) was **established in 1927** as a **Non-Profit Organization under Societies Registration Act, 1860.** It was founded by **Sir Dorabjee Tata and Dr. A.G. Noehren.** It is an **autonomous body** recognised by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.**
- India **first participated in the Olympics in 1900 in Paris.** The country was **represented by Norman Pritchard,** an Anglo Indian. A **32-member Executive Council,** headed by **President** and assisted by different Standing Committees that includes Important for the subject-field experts work for effective governance. **The election for the Executive Council is held once every 4 years.**

## **Topic 46. AZERBAIJAN PRESIDENT RAISES NATIONAL FLAG IN KARABAKH**

*Important for the subject :International Relations*

President Ilham Aliyev raised Azerbaijan’s flag in the main city of Nagorno-Karabakh

### **More about the news:**

- Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev raised his country’s flag in **Nagorno-Karabakh, sealing Baku’s takeover of the region** following a swift military offensive in September, ending three decades of Armenian separatist rule.
- The region’s **capital, Khankendi** also **known as Stepanakert**, appeared deserted after the offensive. Aliyev visited various sites in the region and marked his visit on the 20th anniversary of his presidency.
- Pope Francis called for the **protection of Karabakh’s ancient Christian Armenian monasteries and churches**, urging respect for places of worship amid allegations of “ethnic cleansing” by Armenia, a charge denied by Azerbaijan.

### **Some facts about Nagorno Karabakh:**

- It shares borders **with Iran, Turkey, Russia, Georgia, and Armenia.**
- It is a **mountainous area in the South Caucasus.**
- Under international law it is **recognised as part of Azerbaijan but ethnic Armenians constitute the majority.**
- **The Lachin corridor** is the **only road linking Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.**

## **Topic 47. ISRAEL, HAMAS, AND THE LAWS OF WAR**

*Important for the subject :International Relations*

Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, sparking a deadly conflict with significant civilian casualties and hostilities.

### **What are the laws of war:**

- **Two fundamental aspects of international law govern conflicts. Jus ad Bellum:** This aspect of international law **addresses the conditions and justifications for countries to use force** in their international relations. It is **regulated by the United Nations (UN) Charter.**
- **Jus in Bello:** Jus in bello concerns the rules that **dictate how a war is to be fought, specifying what military actions** are permissible. Even if a country is justified under the UN Charter to use force, it **must adhere to these rules.**



- This law of war, known as **international humanitarian law (IHL)**, outlined in customary international law, the **1949 Geneva Conventions**, and the **1977 Additional Protocols**, prescribes rules to **protect civilians and minimize suffering during armed conflicts**.
- Regardless of the justness of their cause, **warring parties must abide by IHL**

#### Do the laws of war apply to the ongoing military conflict:

- The **conflict between Israel and Hamas** is considered an **armed conflict in international law**.
- It falls under the category of **non-international armed conflict (NIAC)** because it involves **non-governmental forces i.e. Hamas in battle with governmental forces i.e. Israel**.
- **Both parties are obligated to adhere to International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

#### What about civilian killings:

- International Humanitarian Law (IHL) aims to **protect civilians in armed conflicts by distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants**.
- Both Hamas and Israel **must adhere to IHL**.
- **Indiscriminate attacks on civilians**, as in **Israel's bombing of Gaza**, are **illegal**, and a **disproportionate use of force violates the Geneva Conventions**, constituting war crimes.

#### Is hostage-taking legal:

- Hamas's hostage-taking of Israelis is illegal and classified as a **war crime under Article 8 of the Rome Statute and Article 1 of the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages**.

#### What about the Gaza Strip blockade:

- Israel's plan to block essential supplies in Gaza, affecting two million people, **constitutes collective punishment, a breach of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**.
- It **violates the principle that individuals shouldn't be punished for others' actions and IHL's requirement for effective advance warnings before attacks**.
- Both sides **should uphold IHL**.

#### What are war crimes:

- War crimes **encompass grave breaches of humanitarian laws** within conflicts.
- **The Rome Statute of the ICC provides the definition**, which draws from the

principles of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

- It centers on the principle of individual accountability for actions committed on behalf of a state or its armed forces. Illustrative examples include **hostage-taking, deliberate killings, torture or inhumane treatment of prisoners of war, and the recruitment of child soldiers.**

#### What is Criteria for War Crimes:

- **International humanitarian law** employs **three key principles** to determine whether an individual or military has committed a war crime.
- **Distinction:** This principle **forbids targeting objectives** that are likely to cause **excessive harm to civilians or civilian infrastructure** compared to the expected military advantage.
- **Proportionality:** Proportionality restricts **the use of disproportionate force in response to an attack.** For instance, it prohibits indiscriminate retaliation, such as bombing an entire city for the death of a single soldier.
- **Precaution:** Parties involved in a conflict are **obligated to take measures that prevent or minimize harm** to the civilian population.

#### What are the Geneva Conventions (1949):

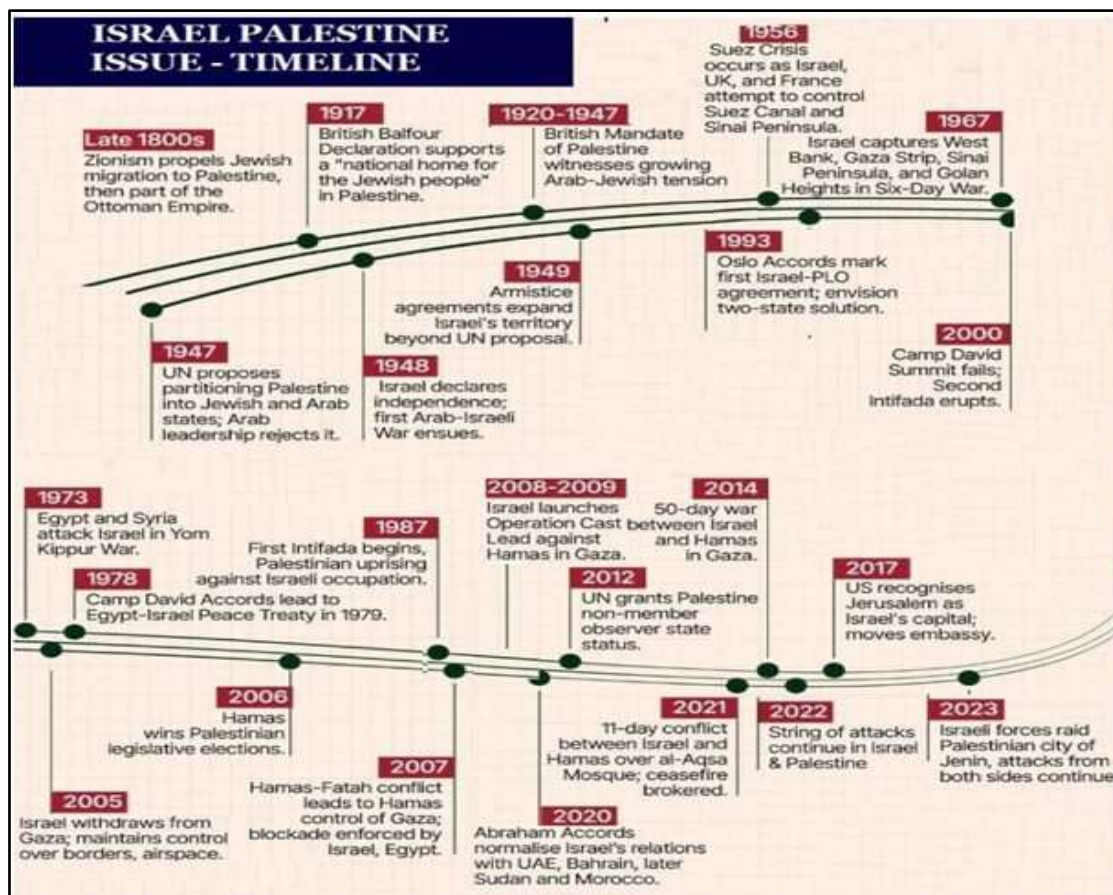
- The Geneva Conventions, **established in 1949** along with their **Additional Protocols**, represent crucial international agreements that **set forth fundamental regulations to mitigate the cruelty of armed conflict.**
- These conventions **provide safeguards for non-combatants** i.e. civilians, medical personnel, humanitarian workers and individuals who are no longer able to participate in combat i.e. injured, sick, and shipwrecked military personnel, as well as prisoners of war.
- The **First Geneva Convention** protects **wounded and sick soldiers on land during war.**
- The **Second Geneva Convention** protects **wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during war.**
- The **Third Geneva Convention** applies to **prisoners of war, including a wide range of general protections such as humane treatment, maintenance and equality across**

prisoners, conditions of captivity, questioning and evacuation of prisoners, transit camps, food, clothing, medicines, hygiene and right to religious, intellectual, and physical activities of prisoners.

- The **Fourth Geneva Convention** protects **civilians, including those in occupied territory**. The other Geneva Conventions were concerned mainly with combatants rather than civilians.
- **Two Protocols of 1977**: Additional to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions were adopted in 1977. They **strengthen the protection of victims of international (Protocol I) and non-international (Protocol II) armed conflicts** and place limits on the way wars are fought. In **2005**, a **third Additional Protocol** was adopted creating an **additional emblem, the Red Crystal, which has the same international status as the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems**.

### Topic 48. HOW JEWS FIRST MIGRATED TO ISRAEL AND HOW ISRAEL WAS BORN

*Important for the subject :International Relations*



Israeli military orders Gaza City civilians to evacuate amid potential ground offensive in ongoing conflict.

### What is Anti-semitism and Zionism:

- **The Hebrew Bible** defines ‘Israel’ as the name given by God to Jacob, a descendant of Abraham, who is a key figure in the **three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.**
- The descendants of Abraham settled in Canaan, which corresponds to the approximate territory of **modern-day Israel.**
- Over the course of history, Canaan was part of various empires, including the Greeks, Romans, Persians, Crusaders, and Islamists.
- In the **late 19th century**, the **land of Canaan** was **under Ottoman rule**, and the Jewish population, scattered in various countries, faced vulnerability and persecution, particularly in Europe.
- Incidents such as the **1880s pogroms in Imperial Russia** and the **1894 Dreyfus affair in France** highlighted **prevailing anti-Semitic prejudices.**
- A growing sentiment within the Jewish community emerged, emphasizing the need for a **secure homeland, leading to the movement known as Zionism.**
- In **1896**, **Theodor Herzl**, an Austro-Hungarian, published a pamphlet called ‘**Der Judenstaat**,’ outlining his vision for a Jewish nation, establishing him as the **father of political Zionism.**
- Initially, **potential locations for a Jewish homeland included countries like Uganda and Argentina.**
- However, **the focus eventually shifted to Palestine** due to its **historical importance in Judaism and the presence of numerous holy sites.**

### Before World War I:

- **Jewish migration to Palestine, known as Aliyah**, commenced in the late 19th century. The initial wave, termed the **First Aliyah (1881-1903)**, saw **Jewish migrants buying and farming large tracts of land**, leading to losses for the native Palestinian population.
- **Palestine was then part of the Ottoman Empire**, and its residents identified themselves in various ways, with land often owned by absentee landlords.
- **New Jewish settlers didn’t assimilate, rarely interacted with Arabs**, and employed fewer Arab laborers.
- **Arab tenants lost their homes and communities** when Jews purchased land. The **Jewish settlers maintained distinct European sensibilities**, introduced modern technologies, and were **financially supported by wealthy Jews abroad.**
- **Growing tensions and resentment** among the local population resulted from the changing demographics and land ownership.
- In 1908, **after the Young Turks revolution overthrew the Ottoman Sultan**, Jewish migration efforts became **more streamlined.**

- Efforts to gain international support for the Jewish cause were underway outside of Palestine.

### **The Balfour Declaration:**

- The **Balfour Declaration of 1917** was a significant event that **changed the course of West Asia**.
- It was a **letter from a British official, Arthur James Balfour, to Baron Lionel Walter Rothschild**, expressing British support for the **establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine**. The British government **aimed to secure Jewish support for its World War I efforts**. This framework **influenced future resolutions** but often lacked substantial action on Palestinian rights.
- **Palestinian nationalism was rising**, but internal divisions hindered their efforts, while a long-standing conflict had bred deep-seated hostility and sporadic violence between Jewish and Palestinian communities.

### **British Mandate and World War II:**

- **After World War I**, following the **Ottoman Empire's defeat**, Palestine came **under British mandate**.
- Over three decades, despite numerous commissions, white papers, and resolutions, violent conflicts persisted. **Arab resentment grew against Jewish settlements and British rule**, while **Jews established disciplined militias**.
- Moderate Jewish voices advocating for Arab rights lost influence, and two main Arab factions emerged, led by the **Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nashashibi family**.
- **World War II and the Holocaust** garnered international sympathy for Jews, strengthening Jewish armed groups.
- The years **1936-1938 marked significant bloodshed**, leading to **proposals for partition and a British White Paper in 1939 favoring Palestinians**.
- Ultimately, in **1947**, the **British withdrew from Palestine**, leaving the issue to the **UN amidst deep-seated distrust and hostility**.

### **UN resolution and wars:**

- During this period, **Jewish determination to secure their homeland** was evident, even though they were a minority.
- In **1947, the UN voted to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The Palestinians rejected this, and Israel declared independence in 1948**, leading to civil war and the exodus of many Palestinians.
- Israel successfully **defended itself against neighboring countries**, leading to more Arab-Israeli conflicts.
- Today, **139 UN member states recognize Palestine, while 165 recognize Israel**, but **Gaza and the West Bank remain under Israeli military control**.

### Situation after the independence of Israel:

- **Arab Israeli war 1948**– Israel declared statehood in 1948 leading to invasion by neighboring Arab states i.e **Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria**. It resulted in **Israeli survival and signing of Armistice Agreements** with territorial changes.

The territory was **divided into 3 parts**

**The Jewish Israel**

**The Arab West Bank**

**Gaza Strip**

- The agreement **established temporary borders** between **Israel and neighboring Arab states**.
- **West Bank**– It was **controlled by Jordan**.
- **Gaza Strip**– It was **administered by Egypt**
- **Suez crisis 1956**-Israel, France and UK launched a **military campaign** against Egypt over **nationalization of Suez Canal**.
- During this period, **Israel captured Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip** but withdrew under international pressure in 1957.
- **1967 Six day war**- Israel **gained territory including Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights (Syria)**.
- **1973 Yom Kippur War**- Also known as **October War**, it began with the **surprise attack by Egypt and Syria** on Israel during Yom Kippur, the holiest and most solemn day in the Jewish calendar.
- **Camp David Accords 1978** – It established the “**Framework for Peace in the Middle East**” and brought about the **end of simmering conflict between Egypt and Israel**. **Egypt became the 1st Arab country to conclude a peace treaty with Israel**.

## Topic 49. GLOBAL MARITIME INDIA SUMMIT 2023

*Important for the subject :International Relations*



PM to inaugurate the Global Maritime India Summit 2023

### More about the news:

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi **inaugurated the Global Maritime India Summit 2023** via video conferencing in **Mumbai**.
- He unveiled ‘**Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**,’ a blueprint for India’s maritime blue economy, and laid the **foundation stone for projects worth over Rs 23,000 crores** in line with this vision.
- He emphasized the importance of India’s maritime capabilities in global trade and detailed the government’s efforts to strengthen the sector.
- The summit serves as a **platform to attract investment in India’s maritime industry**, promoting port development, sustainability, and international collaboration.
- Modi **invited global investors to contribute to India’s development** as it aims to become a developed nation by 2047.
- The event witnessed the participation of ministers and stakeholders from around the world to discuss various aspects of the maritime sector.

### What is Global Maritime India Summit 2023

- Global Maritime India Summit 2023 is a **premier maritime sector focused event** to bring together **pivotal figures from the industry** to explore opportunities, understand challenges, and stimulate investment within **India’s maritime sector**.
- Building upon the legacy of its preceding editions, this **third installment aims** to unveil broader prospects for domestic and international maritime stakeholders and investors.
- The summit will witness the **participation of Ministers from across the globe representing countries from Europe, Africa, South America, and Asia** including central Asia, Middle East and BIMSTEC region.

- The summit is also to be **attended by Global CEOs, Business leaders, Investors, Officials, and other stakeholders worldwide.**
- Further, several Indian states will also be represented at the summit by the Ministers and other dignitaries.

### **Topic 50. GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON AI SUMMIT**

*Important for the subject: International Relations*

PM Modi invites Google to ‘contribute’ to the AI summit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a **virtual interaction with Google and Alphabet Inc CEO Sundar Pichai.**

He invited Google to participate in the **Global Partnership on AI Summit in December**, discussed Google’s role in expanding India’s electronics manufacturing, and encouraged AI tools in Indian languages and for good governance.

The Prime Minister **welcomed Google’s fintech operations center plans in Gujarat**, focusing on financial inclusion and development in India.

#### **What is Global Partnership on AI summit:**

- The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) is a **multi-stakeholder initiative** which **aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice on AI by supporting cutting-edge research** and applied activities on AI-related priorities.
- Its **establishment was announced** during the **2018 G7 Summit** by Canadian PM Justin Trudeau and French President Emmanuel Macron  
GPAI was **officially launched** on **June 15, 2020**
- The Global Partnership in Artificial Intelligence is **described as the ‘fruition of an idea developed within the G7.’**
- At present, GPAI has **twenty-nine member states** i.e **Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union (EU).**

**India joined the GPAI in 2020 as a founding member.**

- Its **Secretariat is hosted at the OECD.**
- Currently, India has assumed the **presidency Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) for 2022-23**
- The **2022 GPAI Summit took place in Tokyo, Japan**

#### **What is the composition and structure of GPAI**

- GPAI has a **Council and a Steering Committee**, supported by a **Secretariat hosted by**



the OECD, and two Centres of Expertise: one in Montreal (CEIMIA, the International Centre of Expertise in Montreal for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence) and one in Paris (at INRIA, the French National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology).

- These Centers of Expertise will facilitate **GPAI's four working groups** and their research and practical projects, across various sectors and disciplines. The working groups will **initially focus on four themes**:
- **Working Group on Responsible AI (Montreal)**
- **Working Group on Data Governance (Montreal)**
- **Working Group on the Future of Work (Paris)**
- **Working Group on Innovation and Commercialization (Paris)**

### **Topic 51. UN APPROVED A KENYA-LED SECURITY MISSION TO TROUBLED HAITI**

*Important for the subject :International Relations*

The UNSC has approved international intervention in the form of a foreign security mission, **led by Kenya, to restore security, and control spiralling violence in Haiti**. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) voted to adopt the resolution in this regard.

#### **Where is Haiti?**

- Haiti occupies the western one-third of the island of Hispaniola, situated between Cuba and Puerto Rico, which it shares with the Dominican Republic.
- The Atlantic Ocean borders Haiti's northern shores, while the Caribbean Sea is to the west and south.

#### **Violence in Haiti**

- Haiti has experienced a surge in violence over the past year as **armed groups took control of large parts of the country**, including the capital Port-au-Prince.
- This has resulted in widespread killings of nearly 2,800 people, including 80 minors, between October 2022 and June 2023.
- Human rights groups have reported a rise in sexual violence and crimes against women.
- In addition to this, mass looting and burning of houses have led to the displacement of thousands of people, with around 200,000 fleeing their homes.
- As per estimates, almost half the population is in need of humanitarian assistance.

#### **Why is the UN sending a multinational security mission to Haiti?**

- Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry first sought international support to assist the national police in October 2022 This was after the country plunged into a crisis when a group of **gangs called G9** and Family seized control of the entry of the main fuel port Varreux in the capital.

- They were **protesting the PM's decision to cut fuel subsidies**. To make matters worse, there was a **shortage of bottled water in the backdrop of a new outbreak of cholera**.
- As the crisis deepened and overwhelmed the short-staffed police force, Haitian leaders turned to the international community for help.
- They sought a specialised armed force to counter gangs and their sponsors.

### **About the mission:**

#### **Not operated by the UN**

- Unlike the U.N. peacekeeping mission to Haiti that ended in 2017, the multi-national security mission approved by the UNSC will not be operated by the United Nations.
- Kenya has volunteered to lead the force. Other countries like the Bahamas, Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda have also offered support

#### **Operational support to the Haitian National Police**

- The force will provide operational support to the Haitian National Police.
- This includes building its capacity to counter gangs, improve security conditions in the country and secure ports, airports and critical intersections.
- The forces will have the authority to make arrests in coordination with Haitian police. It also intends to create favourable conditions in the country to pave the way for elections. Polls have not taken place in Haiti since 2016

#### **Support from US**

- The United States has made it clear that it won't send its troops.
- It, however, has pledged \$100 million in logistical support like intelligence, communications, airlift operations and medical aid.

#### **What led to the delay in intervention?**

- Haiti's troubled past with foreign military interventions is being viewed as the primary reason for the delay in the deployment of a multinational security mission to counter the gang violence in the country. The last time a force was sent to stabilise Haiti was in 2004 when former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown in a rebellion.
- This was followed by a **U.N. peacekeeping mission — the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)** which went on from 2004 to 2017.
- The mission was marred by allegations during its deployment in the country. A sewage runoff from a peacekeeper camp was blamed for causing a cholera epidemic which saw more than 10,000 deaths. There were also serious allegations of sexual abuse against the U.N. peacekeepers.
- Since then, Haitians have been sceptical about the intervention of a foreign armed force.
- Besides the country's troubled past with interventions under the aegis of the U.N., countries were also wary of lending support to Prime Minister Henry who does not enjoy the popular support of Haitians.

## Topic 52. INDUS SHIELD 2023

*Important for the subject :International Relations*

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) launched **Indus Shield 2023**, a **14-nation exercise**, at one of its operational bases in the country

### More about the news:

- The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) launched **Indus Shield 2023**, a **14-nation exercise**, at one of its operational bases in the country.
- The countries participating in the exercise are **Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Egypt, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the UAE, and Uzbekistan.**

## Topic 53. RAFAH BORDER CROSSING

*Important for the subject: International Relations*



Egypt is keeping the Gaza Rafah border shut.

### Where is the Rafah crossing and who controls it

It is crossing between the **Gaza Strip and Egypt** and is the **sole route for aid to enter Gaza directly outside Israel**.

It is the **only exit that does not lead** to Israeli territory.

- The crossing is at the **south of the Gaza Strip** and wedged between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.
- The crossing is **controlled by Egypt**.
- There are **only two other border crossings** i.e. **Erez, a border crossing with Israel in north Gaza, and Kerem Shalom, a commercial crossing between Israel and Southern Gaza**.

### Why is history Of Rafah Crossing

- **1906 Ottoman-British Agreement:** Established the border between Ottoman-ruled Palestine and British-ruled Egypt, running from Taba to Rafah.
- **1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty:** Restored the **1906 border**, giving Egypt control of Sinai and Israel control of Gaza. **Rafah Crossing became an international border**.
- **1982 Gaza-Egypt Border:** Opened after the **Camp David Accords**, but **Israel-controlled border crossings remained a concern**
- **1994 Gaza-Jericho Agreement:** Gave **Palestinian Authority (PA) limited control over Rafah Crossing**, but **Israel maintained overall security control**.
- **2000 Ariel Sharon Incident:** Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque triggered the **Second Intifada**, affecting Rafah Crossing's complexities.
- **2001 Israeli Ban on Palestinian Workers:** Israel excluded Palestinian personnel from working at Rafah Crossing due to the Second Intifada.
- **2005 Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA):** Brought the **crossing under Palestinian control but allowed Israel to close it at will**.
- **2006 Closure after Gilad Shalit's Capture:** Israel closed Rafah Crossing in response to **Shalit's capture**, remaining closed for a year.
- **2011 Arab Spring:** Mubarak's exit in Egypt led to **regular reopening of Rafah Crossing**. However, **Sisi's coup in 2013 closed it again**.

**COVID-19: In 2020, Hamas closed the crossing due to the pandemic.**

- **2021 Reopening:** After international borders eased, **Hamas and Egypt held talks and reopened Rafah Crossing**.

## **Topic 54. DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDORS (DFC)**

*Important for the subject: Geography*

‘95% of Freight Corridors will be ready by March

**Completion Status:** 95% of the total 2,843-kilometer Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) and Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) is expected to be completed by March 2024.

- **Operational Sections:** The 1,337-kilometer EDFC is entirely operational, while approximately 70% of the WDFC is ready for operation.
- **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC):** Spans 1,337 kilometers **from Sahnewal near Ludhiana in Punjab, crossing through Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and ending at Sonnagar in Bihar.**
- **Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC):** Connects **Dadri in Uttar Pradesh to Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Mumbai**, covering a 1,506-kilometer route through states such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.

### **Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC):**

- **Description:** It is a broad gauge corridor that extends for 1,504 kilometers, starting at **Dadri in Uttar Pradesh and concluding at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust near Mumbai.**
- **Establishment:** The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (**DFCCIL**) was established in **October 2006 as a dedicated body to oversee the project.**
- **Funding:** The project is being funded **through a soft loan of \$4 billion from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** under special terms for economic partnership (STEP).
- **Key Locations:** The corridor passes through **Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Palanpur, Phulera, and Rewari, traversing through the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.**

### **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC):**

- **Route and Coverage:** The EDFC spans a route length of 1,856 km, **stretching from**

**Dankuni in West Bengal to Ludhiana in Punjab, covering several key states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal.**

- **Railway Infrastructure:** The EDFC is a critical railway infrastructure project, dedicated to enhancing the transportation of freight across multiple regions in northern and eastern India.
- **Components:** The corridor is designed with two main components – the first is to augment rail transport capacity, enhance service quality, and enable higher freight throughput, while the second involves institutional development to support DFCCIL and the Ministry of Railways in leveraging heavy haul freight systems.

**Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd. (DFCCIL):**

- **Overview:** DFCCIL operates as a special purpose vehicle under the Ministry of Railways, responsible for planning and implementing the 3,306 km long Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) across the country.
- It is responsible for planning, development, financial resource mobilization, construction, maintenance, and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors.
- DFCCIL is registered as a company under the Companies Act of 1956, emphasizing its organizational structure and governance. **Project Cost:** The total estimated project cost for the DFCs, including the Western and Eastern corridors, amounts to over ₹81,000 crore.
- **Decongestion and Punctuality:** The construction of the DFCs project aims to alleviate congestion on existing saturated paths, thereby improving the punctuality of passenger trains.

**Importance of DFCs:**

- **Relieving Traffic Congestion:** DFCs are crucial in separating freight and passenger traffic, enhancing the speed of freight movement, and alleviating congestion on the country's major routes. **Diverse Cargo Transportation:** The corridor will be utilized for transporting various commodities such as fertilizers, food grains, salt, coal, iron & steel, and cement.
- **National Integration:** It will be integrated with the Eastern DFC, forming four significant hubs – Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, effectively linking major parts of the country.

## **Topic 55. GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAG FOR GOAN CASHEWS**

### ***Important for the subject: Geography***

The Geographical indication (GI) tag for Goan cashews holds significant implications for the cashew industry in Goa.

### **Significance of GI Tag for Goan Cashew**

- The GI tag ensures that cashews bearing this label are authentic products originating from Goa. This **helps consumers distinguish between genuine Goan cashews and those sourced from outside the state**, which are often falsely marketed as ‘Goan cashews.’
- Goan cashew **manufacturers and processors can use the GI tag as a trademark in the international market**. This protection helps safeguard the reputation and quality associated with Goan cashews.
- Goa has a long history of cashew cultivation, and the **GI tag helps in preserving the cultural and historical legacy of Goan cashews**.
- By promoting authentic Goan cashews, the GI tag can potentially boost the demand for these products, benefitting local cashew producers, manufacturers, and the state’s economy.

### **Cashew**

- Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*) is an evergreen tree native to coastal northeastern Brazil. It is cultivated in tropical and subtropical regions around the world, including India.
- Cashew trees are grown in tropical and subtropical regions around the world, where the average temperature is between 25 and 30 degrees Celsius and the annual rainfall is between 1,000 and 1,500 millimetres. The trees prefer well-drained, sandy soils with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0.
- India is the world’s largest producer of cashews, accounting for over 20% of global production. While India leads in raw cashew nut production, Vietnam leads in the processing of cashews.
- Maharashtra is India’s largest cashew nut-producing state. Maharashtra is followed by Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
- The nut is edible and is used in a variety of cuisines. The cashew apple, which is the fruit of the cashew tree, is also edible and can be eaten fresh, juiced, or processed into jams and jellies. Cashew apples are a good source of vitamins and minerals, including vitamin C, vitamin A, and iron.
- Cashew shell liquid is a valuable byproduct that is used in the production of varnishes, paints, and other industrial products. Cashew shell liquid is also used in the production of cashew nut butter. They are a good source of protein, fibre, and healthy fats. They are also a good source of vitamins and minerals, including magnesium, copper, manganese, and phosphorus.

## Historical Background of Cashew in Goa

- **Cashew was introduced to Goa by the Portuguese in the 16th century.** Initially, it was primarily cultivated for afforestation and soil conservation purposes. However, it was not until a century after its introduction that the economic value of cashew nuts became apparent.
- The edible value of cashew nuts was reportedly discovered by Goan prisoners who were exiled to the Portuguese territory of Africa (Mozambique) during Goa's freedom movement in the mid-18th century.
- The **first cashew factory in Goa began operations in 1926**, and the first consignment of cashew kernels was exported in 1930. Over time, cashew production transitioned from a cottage industry to a large-scale one, driven by demand, particularly from the United States.
- Before Goa's liberation in 1961, the region exported substantial quantities of processed cashew nuts, both locally grown and imported from Portuguese colonies in Africa. On average, around 1500 tonnes of processed cashew nuts were exported to countries like the USA, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and West Germany.
- The cashew processing industry accounted for about 60% of industrial production in Goa by 1961, and it was a significant contributor to foreign trade. Various factors, including favourable import duties, port expenses, lower rents, wages, and salaries, contributed to the industry's growth and success.

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## Topic 56. IMD ISSUES YELLOW ALERT IN 9 DISTRICTS

*Important for the subject: Geography*

### **Colour- Coded Weather Warning:**

It is **issued by the IMD** whose objective is to alert people ahead of severe or hazardous weather which has the potential to cause damage, widespread disruption or danger to life.

**Warnings are updated daily.**

**The IMD uses 4 colour codes are:**

- **Green (All is well):** No advisory is issued.
- **Yellow (Be Aware):** Yellow indicates severely bad weather spanning across several days. It also suggests that the weather could change for the worse, causing disruption in day-to-day activities.



- **Orange/Amber (Be prepared):** The orange alert is issued as a warning of extremely bad weather with the potential of disruption in commute with road and rail closures, and interruption of power supply.
- **Red (Take Action):** When the extremely bad weather conditions are certainly going to disrupt travel and power and have significant risk to life, the red alert is issued.
- These alerts are universal in nature and are also issued during floods, depending on the amount of water rising above land/in a river as a result of torrential rainfall.
- For e.g., when the water in a river is 'above normal' level, or between the 'warning' and 'danger' levels, a yellow alert is issued.

### About India Meteorological Department:

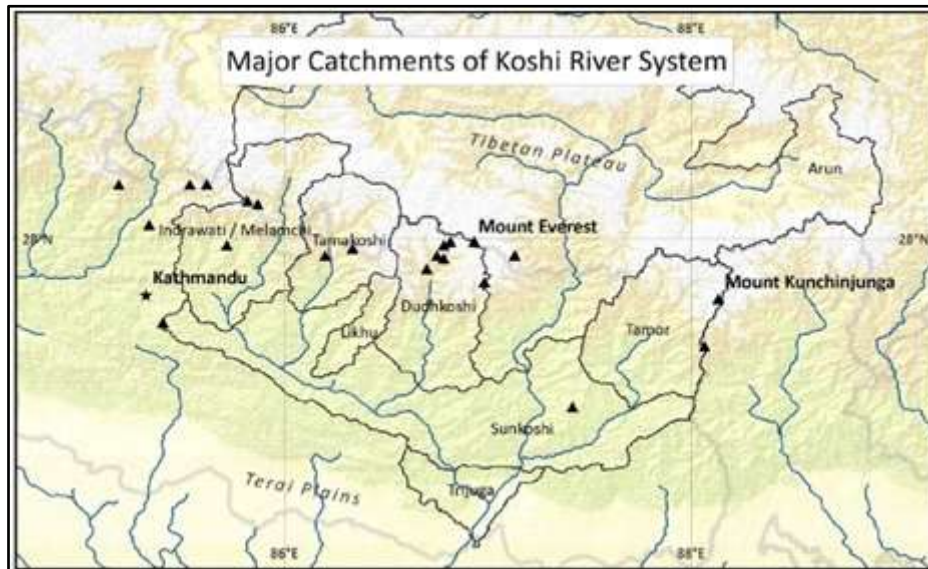
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is an agency of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India**.
- It is the **principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology**. IMD is headquartered in Delhi and operates hundreds of observation stations across **India and Antarctica**.
- Regional offices are at Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Nagpur, Guwahati and New Delhi. IMD is also **one of the six Regional Specialised Meteorological Centres of the World Meteorological Organisation**.
- **It is regional nodal agency for forecasting, naming and disseminating warnings about tropical cyclone in the Indian Ocean north of the Equator** including the Malacca Straits, the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf.
- IMD collaborates with other agencies such as the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting and the National Institute of Ocean Technology.
- **IMD also operates seismic monitoring centres at key locations for earthquake monitoring and measurements.**
- IMD undertakes observations, communications, forecasting and weather services
- In collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation, the IMD also uses the IRS series and the Indian National Satellite System (INSAT) for weather monitoring of the Indian subcontinent.

**IMD was first weather bureau of a developing country to develop and maintain its own satellite system.**

1. IMD Forecasts monsoon based on:
2. Sea Surface Temperature
3. ENSO
4. Relative Humidity
5. Wind Direction
6. Wind Speed
7. Pressure Patterns
8. Cloud Cover etc.

## Topic 57. NEPAL AND INDIA AGREE TO REDUCE HEIGHT OF SAPTAKOSHI DAM

*Important for the subject :Geography*



Nepal and India have agreed to **reduce the height of the proposed Saptakoshi High Dam** amid concerns in Nepal over the potential inundation of a large swathe of land upstream of the dam.

A **Nepal-India Joint Team of Experts** was established to study the **Saptakoshi High Dam Multipurpose Project** and the **Sunkoshi Storage and Diversion Project**.

It will reduce the **hydropower generation** to around **2,300MW**, down from the earlier proposed **3,000MW** from the multipurpose project.

**Proposed hydropower projects between India- Nepal:**

- **Saptakoshi High Dam Multipurpose Project**
- **Sunkoshi Storage and Diversion Project**
- **A 756MW Tamor Storage Hydroelectric Project** on the **Tamor river**.
- **The 635MW Dudh Koshi Hydropower Project**.
- **The 683MWSunkoshi 3 Hydropower Project**

**Saptakoshi river:**

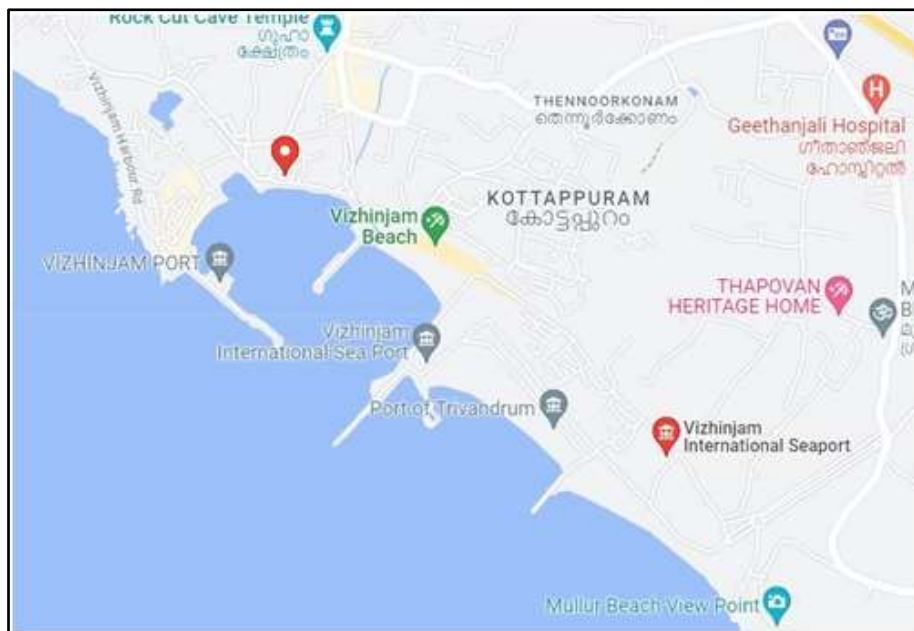
- The **Kosi** or **Koshi** is a **transboundary river** which flows through **China, Nepal and India**. It drains the **northern slopes of the Himalayas in Tibet** and the **southern slopes in Nepal**.
- From a major confluence of tributaries north of the **Chatra Gorge onwards**, the **Kosi River** is also known as **Saptakoshi** for its **seven upper tributaries**. These include

the **Tamur River** originating from the **Kanchenjunga** area in the **east** and **Arun River** and **Sun Kosi** from **Tibet**.

- The **Sun Koshi's** tributaries from **east to west** are **Dudh Koshi, LikhuKhola, Tamakoshi River, Bhote Koshi, Tamor** and **Indravati**.
- The **Saptakoshi** crosses into **northern Bihar, India** where it branches into distributaries before joining the **Ganges** near **Kursela** in **Katihar** district.
- **Kosi** is the **3rd largest tributary of the Ganges** by water discharge after **Ghaghra** and **Yamuna**.

## Topic 58. VIZHINJAM PORT

*Important for the subject : Geography*



Congress fight for credit over the Vizhinjam port

### What is the Vizhinjam International Seaport Project:

- It is a **transshipment deepwater multipurpose seaport project** is being built by **Adani Ports and SEZ Private Limited** in **Vizhinjam** near **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala**,
- The project follows the **design, build, finance, operate, and transfer (DBFOT) model**, which is a type of **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement**.
- In the **DBFOT** model, a **private partner takes on various responsibilities, including designing, building, financing, operating, and eventually transferring the project to**

the public sector.

- This model is typically used for large-scale infrastructure projects, where the private partner receives a concession from the public sector to manage and operate the project for a specified period, typically ranging from 20 to 30 years.
- At the end of this period, control of the project reverts to the public entity that initially granted the concession.
- According to the agreement for this particular project, Adani Group is expected to invest Rs 2,454 crore, and an additional Rs 1,635 crore will be secured from state and central governments as viability gap funding.
- The Kerala government has also contributed by providing 500 acres of land for the project. The DBFOT deal encompasses a 40-year duration, with provisions for possible extensions of up to 20 years.

**What are the features of the Vizhinjam port:**

- Vizhinjam port is India's first international deepwater transshipment port.

Some of the special features are:

- **Unique Depth:** Vizhinjam boasts a natural depth of over 18 meters, expandable to 20 meters, making it capable of accommodating large vessels and mother ships.
- **Versatile Purpose:** The port is designed to handle container transshipment, multi-purpose, and break-bulk cargo. It is strategically located just ten nautical miles from the international shipping route.
- **Low Maintenance:** The port has minimal littoral drift and requires minimal maintenance dredging, reducing operational costs.
- **Competitive Advantage:** Vizhinjam aims to compete with transshipment hubs like Colombo, Singapore, and Dubai. It is expected to reduce container movement costs to and from foreign destinations.
- **Initial Capacity:** The first phase of the project has a capacity of one million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units), which can be expanded to 6.2 million TEU.
- **Job Opportunities:** The project is expected to create 5,000 direct job opportunities, support industrial growth, and boost cruise tourism.
- **Advanced Infrastructure:** Vizhinjam offers state-of-the-art automation and infrastructure to handle Megamax container ships efficiently.

**Why India needs a container transshipment port:**

- India currently has 13 major ports, but lacks the infrastructure to handle ultra-large container ships effectively, leading to the transshipment of about 75% of cargo at ports outside India, including Colombo, Singapore, and Klang.
- In the fiscal year 2021-22, India's total transshipment cargo amounted to approximately 4.6 million TEUs, with roughly 4.2 million TEUs being managed at foreign ports.
- Developing a transshipment hub in India is expected to yield several significant

benefits, including **forex savings, increased foreign direct investment, enhanced economic activity at Indian ports, the growth of associated logistics infrastructure, job creation, improved operational efficiency, and an increase in revenue share.**

- The establishment of a transshipment port can also lead to the **growth of various related businesses, such as ship supplies, ship repair, logistics services, warehousing, and bunkering.**
- A deep water container transshipment port has the **potential to capture a substantial portion of the container transshipment** traffic currently **diverted to ports like Colombo, Singapore, and Dubai**, ultimately contributing to India's economic development and creating numerous job opportunities.

### **Topic 59. ALL FOUR QUAKES WERE IN THE SAME FAULT SYSTEM**

*Important for the subject :Geography*

In a short span of about a week, a region about 40 km from **Herat, Afghanistan** was struck by **four shallow focus earthquakes of 6.3 magnitude.**

**All four earthquakes** occurred on **east-west striking fault planes** that **dip** to either the **north** or **south.**

- The **earthquakes** occurred within the **Eurasia plate** in an **intercontinental mountain belt.**
- They did not occur in the **exact same spot**; rather, they **ruptured different portions of the same fault along its length.**
- It is rare for an earthquake to **rupture the entire length** of the **fault** that the earthquake occurred on, so it requires multiple earthquakes, spread out over some unknown amount of time, to fully rupture a geologic fault.
- Because these **two earthquakes** [on October 7] and the **two subsequent earthquakes** [on October 11 and October 15] are **all approximately the same magnitude**, we would call them '**multiplets**' rather than **mainshocks, foreshocks, or aftershocks.**

**Probable cause of 'multiplets':**

- The release of **stress** in one fault [in Herat] can result in the **loading of stress at another fault.** The **loading of stress** can result in another earthquake which can be of **similar magnitude** or even **higher magnitude.**

**Consequence:**

- **Each earthquake** causes both **uplift** and **subsidence**, with the **primary deformation being uplift.** The earthquake sequence has led to an accumulation of uplift along the fault that is rupturing.
- Since **all the four earthquakes** occurred due to **thrust faulting**, where one block moves up relative to the other, the **area where the earthquakes had occurred would**

experience upliftment.

### Faults

- A fault is a fracture or zone of fractures between two blocks of rock. Faults allow the blocks to move relative to each other. This movement may occur rapidly, in the form of an earthquake – or may occur slowly, in the form of creep.
- Faults may range in length from a few millimeters to thousands of kilometers. Most faults produce repeated displacements over geologic time. During an earthquake, the rock on one side of the fault suddenly slips with respect to the other. The fault surface can be horizontal or vertical or some arbitrary angle in between.
- Earth scientists use the **angle of the fault** with respect to the surface (known as the dip) and the **direction of slip** along the fault to classify faults. Faults which move along the direction of the dip plane are dip-slip faults and described as either normal or reverse (thrust), depending on their motion.
- Faults which move horizontally are known as strike-slip faults and are classified as either right-lateral or left-lateral. Faults which show both dip-slip and strike-slip motion are known as oblique-slip faults.

### Based on Movement:

- **Normal Fault:** In a normal fault, the hanging wall moves downward relative to the footwall. This type of fault is associated with extensional tectonic forces, typically found at divergent plate boundaries.
- **Reverse Fault (Thrust Fault):** In a reverse fault, the hanging wall moves upward relative to the footwall. Reverse faults are associated with compressional tectonic forces and are commonly found at convergent plate boundaries.
- **Strike-Slip Fault:** In a strike-slip fault, the movement is primarily horizontal, with minimal vertical displacement. The rocks on either side of the fault slide past each other horizontally. Examples include the San Andreas Fault in California and the North Anatolian Fault in Turkey.

### Based on Geological Setting:

- **Plate Boundary Faults:** These faults are located at the boundaries of tectonic plates and play a significant role in plate tectonics. Examples include the San Andreas Fault (a transform fault) at the boundary between the Pacific and North American plates and the Himalayan Thrust Fault at the convergent boundary of the Indian and Eurasian plates.
- **Intraplate Faults:** Intraplate faults occur within the interior of tectonic plates, away from plate boundaries. They are less common but can still generate significant seismic activity. An example is the New Madrid Seismic Zone in the central United States.
- **Importance of Studying Faults:** Understanding faults and their characteristics is vital for

various geological and societal reasons:

- **Earthquake Hazard Assessment:** Faults are often associated with seismic activity. Monitoring and studying faults help in assessing earthquake hazards. Knowledge of fault location, slip rates, and past seismic events can inform earthquake preparedness and building construction practices in earthquake-prone regions.
- **Resource Exploration:** Faults can act as conduits for the movement of fluids, such as oil, gas, and groundwater. They can trap and concentrate valuable mineral resources. Geologists study faults to locate and exploit these resources effectively.
- **Plate Tectonics:** Faults are essential components of plate boundaries, which are central to the theory of plate tectonics. Understanding the behavior of faults helps scientists comprehend the movement of tectonic plates, which, in turn, explains the creation of mountain ranges, ocean basins, and continental drift.
- **Geological History:** Faults provide a record of the Earth's geological history. By examining the rocks and structures associated with faults, geologists can reconstruct past tectonic events, changes in stress regimes, and the evolution of landscapes.
- **Environmental and Engineering Considerations:** Knowledge of fault locations is critical for infrastructure planning and environmental protection. Avoiding building structures on or near active fault lines can reduce the risk of damage during earthquakes and other ground movements.
- In conclusion, faults are integral to the field of geology and have far-reaching implications for understanding the Earth's dynamics, natural hazards, and resource distribution. Studying faults is essential for both scientific advancement and practical applications in areas like earthquake mitigation and resource exploration.

## **Topic 60. DOES INDIA NEED TO RELOOK THE DAM SAFETY ACT?**

*Important for the subject: Geography*

A **glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF)** in North Sikkim's South Lhonak Lake washed away one of the **biggest hydropower projects in India**, the **Teesta III dam at Chungthang**.

**Dam Safety Act:**

- A new **Dam Safety Act (DSA)** was passed in late **2021**, in response to deficient surveillance and maintenance causing dam failure-related disasters.
- The Act provides for the **surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of all specified dams** across the country.
- **India** has almost **6,000 large dams** and about **80%** of them are **more than 25 years old** and carry safety risks.
- These are dams with **height more than 15 metres**, or **height between 10 m -15 m** with certain design and structural conditions.

### Provisions of the Dam Safety Act:

- The Act listed **key responsibilities** and **mandated** that **national and State-level bodies** be **established** for implementation.
- A **National Committee on Dam Safety** would oversee **dam safety policies and regulations**;
- A **National Dam Safety Authority** would be charged with **implementation and resolving State-level disputes**
- The **Chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC)** would **head dam safety protocols** at the **national level**;
- A **State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS)** and **State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO)** would be set up.
- **Sikkim** formed an **SCDS** on **August 17** with **nine members and experts** in hydrology and dam design.

### State's responsibility

- Provisions **require States to classify dams based on hazard risk**, conduct regular inspections, create emergency action plans, institute emergency flood warning systems, and undertake safety reviews and period risk assessment studies.
- Hazard profiling and regular assessment are also mandated by the Act. States were asked to report and record incidents of dam failures.
- Until now, **no statutory provision** required **systemic reporting of failures** and **no single agency** was **tasked with tracking this data**.
- The **CWC keeps a record** but the **list is not updated regularly**.

### Is any action taken for failing to comply?

- Failure to comply is **punishable with imprisonment** and/or fines, and “if such obstruction or refusal to comply with directions results in loss of lives or imminent danger thereof, [entity] shall be **punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years**.”

### What are the challenges?

- DSA does not promote risk-based decision-making and fails to incentivise transparency. periodic reviews are often not conducted or if they are, their findings are not easily available in the public domain.
- The **Act requires dam builders to conduct comprehensive dam safety evaluations**, but **there is no standardization of how the failure is analyzed and reported**.

### How is dam safety undertaken?



- **Dam safety** is a function of many parts: designing and constructing dams that adhere to safety margins, maintaining and operating them per guidelines, recording data in real-time in an accessible format, forecasting hazardous events and instituting emergency plans.
- **Periodic reviews** are expected to bring forth **fresh inundation maps** and **new rule curves** (which determine the capacity of dam reservoirs), all of which contribute towards the safety of the downstream areas.

**Important facts:**

- **Tehri Dam** in **Uttarakhand** is the **highest dam in India** built on **Bhagirathi River**. **Hirakud Dam** in **Odisha** built on **river Mahanadi** is the **longest dam of India**.
- **Kallanai Dam** in **Tamil Nadu** is the **oldest dam of India**. It is built on the **Kaveri river** and is about **2000 years old**.

**Topic 61. DOGRA ARCHITECTURE GETS A REVIVAL AT J&K'S MAHARAJ GUNJ**

*Important for the subject :History*

Now, Srinagar Smart City Ltd. and the Kashmir chapter of the **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)** have joined hands to conserve vernacular elements of Kashmiri architecture, including colonnaded walkways, decorative pilasters, and exposed moulded brickwork, in an effort to bring that past to life again.

**History of Dogra Architecture:**

- Architecture of a place is always tandem with climate, economy, ruler, and primarily climate. Jammu plain lies in sub-tropical region and hilly regions enjoy temperate climate. These factors played a prominent role in Jammu architecture.
- Jammu was established by **Raja Jambulochan, and Bahu fort of Jammu was made by Bahulochan**, about 3000 year ago according to jammu historians. When **maharaja gulab Singh** made the Raja of jammu, by Sikh ruler, jammu witnessed a new phase of urbanization and increase in trade, the movement of capital and people between Punjab and Jammu foothills, that gave a **new blend of architecture, between Hindu form of architecture and Islamic form of architecture**.
- The Raja had seen **Sikh form of architecture prevalent in Punjab area, and these three distinct architectural forms were mingled and new form of dogra architecture formed**, climate wise jammu plains enjoy a nexus with Punjab Sialkot Which share the

same type of geographical conditions .

- The houses formed in Jammu plains and shiwalik doons are same as Punjab house are build, these houses were made by “**Nanakshahi**” bricks and one thick timber was used as “**latain**” and then “**ballay**” were used for making “**Barghay**” gypsum mortar was used, houses having courtyard “**Pasaar**” , with one courtyard in middle of rooms, and with one entrance door to house.
- These were very logical for two reasons, one because at that time, **joint family** was the prominent culture and sharing one courtyard was common , secondly, this form of house, was very **helpful against scorching heat of summer**. Still, can find such houses in Jammu and hilly tracts, where people still share one entrance door.

#### About Dogra Architecture:

- The fine example of jammu architects are **mubarak mandi, bahu fort, jasrota palace, billawar palace**, these all buildings were made by kings, the dogra rulers of jammu, these palaces have, “**mehraab**” **type of door and arch shaped terraces, and with doomson the top**, but Mubarak mandi domes are clear example of blend of shikhara and dome style, the sand stones and pebbles, which are found in bulk in Jammu kandi belt, are used very benevolently used for beatification.
- The **mubark mandi remained a hub of Dogra culture** till 1947, that shows **jharokha style of balcony**, which is **Rajasthan architecture, the Rajput king of Jammu**, studied and executed in Jammu buildings.
- **Purmandal**, a sacred place for Hindus as haridwar, the **gulab Singh** had developed and that is a place full of jammu architecture and old houses, the building made by king along the river, resembles kashi architecture along ganga.
- **Krimchi temples** of Udhampura blend of Jammu local architecture and **Hellenistic** (Greek) school of architecture, made in the 12th century, this building complex gives us a wide perception regarding the prosperity and their knowledge about the world famous architectural form. The tragedy with jammu architecture **started by the same dynasty which earlier boosted Jammu architecture**.
- Dogra rulers, did little to spread even, didn't tried to save Jammu architecture, the king had spent lavishly on making modern “**Amar Mehal**” which is a completely a foreign architectural form, later with signing of instrument of accession with India in 1948, the royal palaces and grants for them shrunked.
- The grandeur of **Mubarak Mandi palace diminished**, Jasrotra palace is now in ruins, its buildings are now in pathetic cum sympathetic condition. Buildings are a testimony of a culture but these buildings are now sunk to dirt.
- The earlier form of houses are transformed into big mansions, and with flat terraces, and suitable for small and nuclear families. **Jammu and its Dogriat is subjugated by the bully Punjabi culture**, and the lack of belongingness to its own glorious heritage, lead to this condition, where have very little to conserve and a lot to memories and enduring hope of reviving Dogra architect.

## **Topic 62. KERALA TO CREATE MICROSITE TRACING THE ROOTS OF ISLAM IN STATE TO ATTRACT TOURISTS**

### *Important for the subject :History*

The Kerala government has decided to create a microsite on 'Islam in Kerala', a promotional digital production tracing the roots of Islam in Kerala.

### **More about news:**

- Kerala Tourism has sanctioned a sum of ₹93.8 lakh for this project, which will **showcase the sociocultural evolution of the religion in the State.**
- **The digital production will shed light on the early years of Islam in the State, and the places of worship, architecture, lifestyle, culture, art forms, and festivals associated with the religion.**
- The microsite will feature the saga of Islam in Kerala through **six chapters** with the aim of showcasing it to international and domestic travelers.
- **The first chapter, 'History of Islam in Kerala',** will have details of how the religion took root in the State through traders, and their first settlement along the Malabar coast.
- **Chapter two will be on the Islamic pilgrimage centers in Kerala,** right from Beemapally in Thiruvananthapuram to Juma Masjid in Kasaragod.
- **Chapter three will shed light on the culinary skills of Muslims,** the Mappila cuisine, which is a blend of traditional Kerala, Persian, Yemeni, and Arab food cultures.
- **The chapter on lifestyle will mainly deal with the vibrant costumes of the community,** including those worn at weddings, and pre wedding and post wedding ceremonies, which are expected to be an attraction for tourists.
- **The chapter on architecture** will have details on the blend of the Arabic tradition with indigenous construction techniques.
- **The final chapter will deal with art forms and festivals of Muslims in Kerala,** including the influence of Mappila songs, a popular folklore that emerged in the 16th century.
- Kerala Tourism had earlier created microsities on Christianity, Judaism, and temples in the State.

## Topic 63. COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA (CSWI)

*Important for the subject: Schemes*

### What is Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI):

The Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) was **appointed by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, in 1971.**

Its primary purpose was to **study the status of women in India.** The CSWI was **established in response** to a request from the **United Nations for a status of women report for International Women's Year in 1975.**

The committee had **two main tasks:**

- **Examining the constitutional, legal, administrative provisions related to the social status of women, their education, and employment, and assessing the impact of these provisions.**
- The CSWI's report, titled **"Towards Equality,"** concluded that **there had been an increase in the marginalization of women** in the economy and society. It noted **declining sex ratios, disparities in life expectancy and death rates between men and women, and challenges in women's access to literacy, education, and livelihood opportunities.**
- The report **contributed to a broader understanding** of gender-related challenges and played a role in shaping subsequent policies and initiatives aimed at improving the status of women in India.
- In **1974, the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI)** deliberated on **women's reservation in politics.** Proponents argued it **would boost women's representation,** but the majority upheld gender equality principles, rejecting the idea
- The **Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI)** recommended the **setting up of a National Commission for women** to fulfil the **surveillance functions to facilitate redressal of grievances and to accelerate the socio-economic development of women**

### What is the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):

- The **UNCSW or simply CSW** is the **chief international inter-governmental body** dedicated to the **promotion of women empowerment and gender equality.**
- It **functions** under the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC),** one of the principal organs of the United Nations. It was **established in 1946** by a **resolution of the ECOSOC.**
- The CSW **documents the condition of women's lives** the world over and also strives for **setting global standards on women empowerment and gender equality.**
- In **1996, the ECOSOC** expanded the **mandate of the Commission** to include supervising and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the **Beijing**

**Declaration and Platform for Action.**

- The expanded mandate also **includes bringing in a gender perspective in all of the UN's activities.**
- The Commission is **supported in its work by UN Women, which is its Secretariat. CSW is headquartered in New York, USA.**