



SIVARAJAVEL IAS ACADEMY
AN IDEAL INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

the **CATALYST**

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COP28 UAE

IN FOCUS

THE UAE CONSENSUS



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The **CATALYST**

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The CATALYST is a monthly magazine for current affairs which tries to give aspirants an in-depth comprehension of certain topics which appeared in different sources over the month. The Magazine has been designed in such a way that the reading experience is enriching and insightful for the readers.

The contents have been grouped into a thematic structure to help aspirants focus on the overall GS syllabus.

Inside The Catalyst Magazine

- I. Special Coverage
- II. Within the Sub themes first few topics will be Prelims oriented followed by indepth coverage of Mains Topics.
- III. Book Summary Relevant for UPSC Exam.
- IV. Fact Sheet and Quotes have also been provided.

**New sections will be added or removed based on the new updates we include in the forthcoming issues.*

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SIVARAJAVEL IAS ACADEMY

AN IDEAL INSTITUTE FOR **CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS**

the **CATALYST**

From the Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

The 28th Conference of Parties (COP-28) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Dubai, UAE, from 30th November to 12th December, 2023.

Representatives from 197 countries showcased their efforts to limit global warming and this was the first time when the countries formally assessed their progress under the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the COP-28 Presidency's Session on "Transforming Climate Finance" that focused on making climate finance more available, accessible, and affordable to developing countries. India also welcomed the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund and establishment of the UAE Climate Investment Fund at COP-28. India and Sweden co-launched the Phase II of the Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT 2.0). They also launched the Industry Transition Platform, which will connect the governments, industries, technology providers, researchers and think tanks of the two countries.

The conference aimed to identify global solutions for limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees.

In this December Issue (From Dec 1 to Dec 31, 2023, Current Affairs), we have covered **a range of topics with special emphasis on CoP 28, the last winter session of the 17th Lok Sabha, Article 370 verdict, arsenic contamination, IUCN updated Red List etc.** This month's Book summary is on "**The Cases That India Forgot**" by Chintan Chandrachud.

I am also thrilled about the "100 Days Study Challenge" that will be conducted by our academy from 29th January 2024. I believe that the programme will help aspirants to consistently focus their attention on Prelims preparation and also get their study sessions constantly tested every day, during the upcoming critical weeks.

We are constantly motivated by the reception given by our dear readers. We aspire to enrich the forthcoming issues. All feedback is welcome and suggestions to improve the magazine can be sent to sivarajaveliasacademy@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
P. Mohan

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UNFCCC COP 28

UNFCCC

The UNFCCC secretariat (UN Climate Change) is the United Nations entity tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change.

UNFCCC stands for United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Convention has near universal membership (198 Parties).

COP 28:

Emirati leadership:

COP:

- The COP is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention.
- All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP.
- COP reviews the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements.

Host of COP:

- Regional group members hold consultations to determine which country from their region will make an offer to host a conference.
- The host country of the COP normally rotates among the five United Nations regional groups (The African Group, the Asia-Pacific Group, the Eastern Europe Group, the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) and the Western European and Others Group (WEOG)). Once agreed, the country selected by the regional group to host the conference sends its offer formally to the UNFCCC secretariat.
- It is usually the country holding the COP Presidency that hosts the conference.
- However, if there is no offer to host, the default site is the seat of the secretariat in Bonn, Germany.
- In the case of several conferences a country that held the COP Presidency did not host the conference itself.

COP President:

- Members of the regional group in the hosting region engage in consultations to reach a consensus on the selection of a country's representative to be nominated for the position of President-designate.
- Once agreed, the chair of that regional group sends this information formally to the UNFCCC secretariat. At the opening of each COP, the candidate nominated is elected President.
- The UNFCCC have a Code of Conduct. In accordance with rule 22.3 of the draft rules of procedure of the UNFCCC Code of Conduct, "the President shall participate in the session in that capacity and *shall not simultaneously exercise the rights of a representative of a Party.*"
Note: Party denotes a country
- These draft rules of procedure have not yet been adopted by the COP
- Further to this rule, it is **improper** for the President to involve himself or herself in an issue being discussed with regards to his or her country. But that **does not necessarily** mean that a presiding officer (the COP President is one of many presiding officers nominated by governments) must recuse himself or herself when an issue concerning his or her country is being discussed

Criticism on the Emirati Leadership:

- Dr. Sultan al-Jaber is the president of COP28, this year's United Nations climate conference currently being held in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates.
- Al-Jaber is the UAE's environment minister, and he is also the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC).
- The potential conflict of interest in al-Jaber's roles has been put back under the microscope following the revelation of remarks he reportedly made on the role of fossil fuels as nations seek to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius
- "There is no science out there, or no scenario out there, that says the phase-out of fossil fuel is what's going to achieve 1.5," al-Jaber said in an online event on Nov. 21, 2023.
- Every year, the country hosting the U.N. climate talks designates an official from its own government (like govt. ministers) to serve as COP president. They are meant to put aside their own national interest to find mutual agreement between the nearly 200 countries that participate in the talks.
- The Presidential role requires prioritizing global interests, not national ones. Al Jaber faced criticism for promoting national interests, particularly in fossil fuel deals, which goes against the impartial nature expected in this position.

Dubai Consensus

- The Dubai Consensus, a significant resolution towards reducing fossil fuel dependency, was adopted in COP 28, Dubai.
- The resolution *emphasizes transitioning away from fossil fuels* to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, aligning with scientific recommendations to limit global temperature rise.
- The text's reference to natural gas as a transitional fuel could favor gas-producing countries and overlook the need for developed countries to close the finance gap in climate adaptation.

OUTCOMES OF COP 28:

Global stocktake(GST) - "decides" on a "road map to mission 1.5C"

- This is the First-ever "global stocktake" under the Paris Agreement (COP 25)
- GST – a core component of the Paris Agreement
- **The global stocktake (GST) is a five-yearly temperature check that is a vital part of the Paris Agreement, housed under Article 14.**
- Nations that signed on to the agreement in 2015 also agreed to monitor, assess and periodically review collective progress towards meeting the Paris long-term temperature goal and to take stock of their climate actions. (Review of Nationally Determined Contributions).
- The GST is meant to help countries collectively assess where they are, where they want to go and how to get there in terms of climate action and to identify gaps to course correct.
- It is meant to be an assessment of mitigation and adaptation actions so far, as well as climate finance provided and technology transferred from developed to developing countries, "in the light of equity and the best available science", per the Paris Agreement.

Scope:

- Nations agreed to evaluate progress on mitigation – cutting emissions – as well as adaptation to climate hazards and "means of implementation and support".
- Submissions were categorized into several areas of climate action, decided at COP24 in 2018:
 - Mitigation (cutting emissions).

- Adaptation to climate hazards.
- Means of implementation and support
- Finance flows and technology sharing
- Efforts related to Loss and Damage
- Efforts related to “response measures”
- International cooperation.
- “Response measures,” encompasses social and economic consequences, such as impacts on the fossil-fuel industry workforce.
- Sources of Input included greenhouse gas inventories, national climate plan assessments, and analysis of adaptation projects.
- The stocktake decides that all countries should submit their next climate pledges “at least 9-12 months in advance” of COP30, which will be held in November 2025 in Belem, Brazil.

Loss and damage / climate reparations

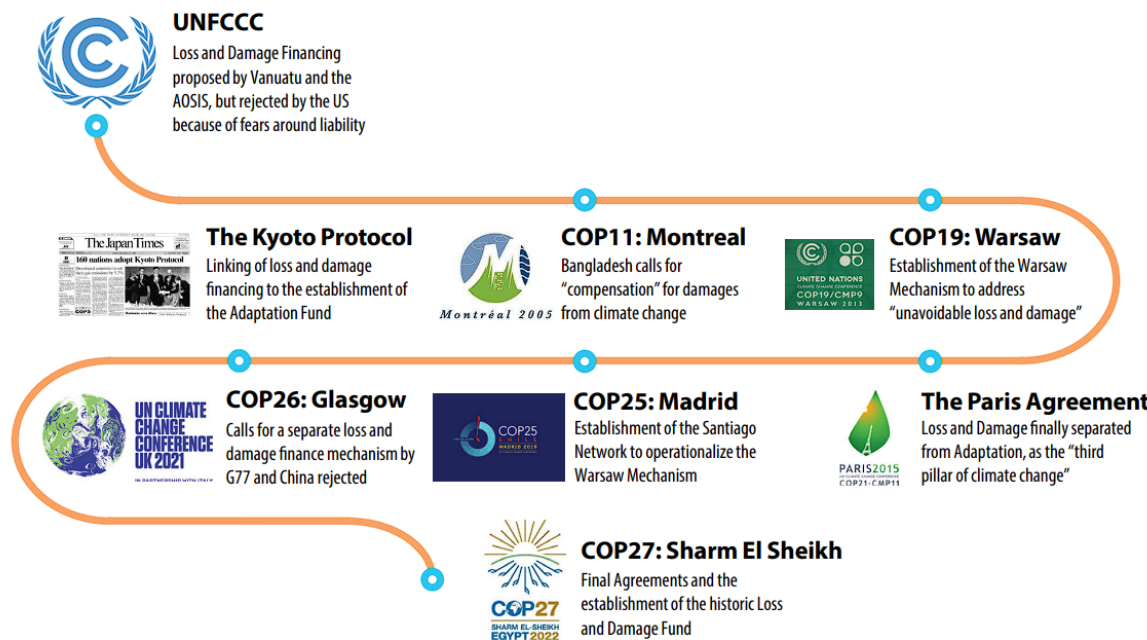
- “Loss and damage” is a term used to describe the *unstoppable harm caused by climate disasters*. The term loss and damage means *the impacts of human-induced climate change* affecting people around the world. Damage refers to things that can be repaired, like damaged houses, and losses refer to things that have been lost completely and won’t come back – like human lives.
- The Loss and Damage Fund is accountable to and functions *under the guidance of the Conference of Parties* serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA). Since the decision, an amount of around USD 700 million to date has been pledged by several countries, including *United Arab Emirates, Germany, United Kingdom, European Union, Japan*.
- The purpose of the Fund is *to assist developing countries* that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in *responding to economic and non-economic loss and damage* associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events

Evolution of the Loss and Damage:

- The *Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damages*, set up in 2013, was the first formal acknowledgment of the need to compensate developing countries struck by climate disasters
- For more than 30 years, *small-island states, in particular, have been fighting for funds* to help them deal with everything from hurricane damage to sea-level rise
- At the last *UN climate summit in 2021, COP26* in Glasgow, a group of largely developing nations representing six out of every seven people in the world *called for developed countries to commit to pledging funds for loss and damage*. However, this call faced opposition from large economies such as the US and EU – and, ultimately, was rejected.
- The fund, based at the World Bank but managed independently, has received commitments worth at least \$450 million. L&D fund was first announced during *COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh* (Egypt) in 2022.
- It is *different from climate adaptation funds* because loss and damage refer to a situation in which communities can no longer adapt to climatic impacts or prepare for it because the damage has already been done.

Need for the Loss and damage fund facility:

- **Climate Justice:** The loss and damage (L&D) fund is seen as a fundamental expression of climate justice. It addresses the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries, which often bear the brunt of the consequences despite contributing less to global emissions.



- **Response to Unavoidable Effects:** The fund is designed to respond to the more unavoidable and severe effects of climate change. This includes damages and losses that are beyond the capacity of affected countries to cope with on their own.
- **Replenishment by Developed Countries:** The financial and technological resources in the fund are expected to be replenished by developed countries. This acknowledges historical contributions to climate change and the responsibility of wealthier nations to support those most affected.

Can India and China receive from L&D funds?

- The US - a developed country and the second largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world - and other developed nations say China and India should join them in not only making significant cuts in emissions for meaningful global climate action, but also contribute to the fund.
- But China and India disagree, arguing their high levels of emissions are a recent development when compared to the historic emissions of developed countries like the US and the UK.
- They also claim they are still developing countries, as set out in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change signed in 1992, and therefore actually qualify to receive the loss and damage fund they are being asked to contribute to.
- The two Asian giants also point to the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which basically means all countries have responsibility to cut greenhouse gas emissions, but their share of responsibility depends on their development needs.

Implications of Loss and Damage (L&D) Funds on India:

- **Economic Impact:** L&D funds mitigate potential economic losses from climate change, addressing the estimated 3% to 10% annual GDP risk by 2100.
- **Leadership Role:** India can bolster its Global South leadership by actively engaging in L&D discussions, advocating for developing nations and shaping climate dialogues.
- **Scientific and Technical Contribution:** India's strong capacity allows it to contribute significantly to L&D mechanisms, leading research efforts and enriching climate science.
- **Political and Negotiation Strategies:** India can use L&D discussions to pressure developed

nations to meet financial obligations, supporting climate justice principles and securing support for adaptation.

- **Reformist Agenda:** Engaging with L&D mechanisms provides a platform for India to advocate broader reforms in the global financial architecture, aligning with climate justice.
- **Soft Power and Geopolitical Influence:** Proactive engagement in L&D discussions enhances India's soft power, allowing it to shape narratives, set agendas, and gain geopolitical benefits.

Challenges in the implementation of the L and D fund:

Political and Diplomatic Challenges:

- I. **Division of Responsibilities:** Determining the division of responsibilities among developed and developing nations is a significant challenge. Deciding who pays into the fund (donors) and who benefits (recipients) requires careful negotiation and agreement.
- II. **Categorization of Countries:** The existing UNFCCC categorization of countries into developed (Annex-I) and developing (Non-Annex-I) nations poses challenges. Ensuring that vulnerable countries are accurately identified and receive the necessary support is crucial.
- III. **Governance Structure:** Defining the governance structure of the Loss and Damage fund remains an open question. Deciding whether the mechanism will operate within the UNFCCC or as an independent entity with its own mandate raises governance challenges.

Climate Finance Challenges:

- I. **Scale of Funding:** Determining the scale of funding for the Loss and Damage fund is a critical challenge. Tentative estimates suggest a need for substantial financial commitments, potentially reaching USD 400 billion per year. Ensuring that the fund meets the demands of impacted nations is essential.
- II. **Additionality:** Securing additional funds for loss and damage without diverting resources from existing climate finance commitments, such as the \$100 billion per year pledge, is a challenge. The fund must be genuinely additional to existing financial commitments.
- III. **Disbursement Mechanism:** Deciding how the finance will be disbursed and establishing transparent reporting requirements are essential challenges. Ensuring efficient and accountable use of funds while addressing the diverse needs of vulnerable countries is a complex task.

Technical Challenges:

- I. **Definition of Loss and Damage:** Developing a clear and universally accepted definition of loss and damage is a technical challenge. Agreeing on what constitutes loss and damage and how it should be measured is crucial for the fund's effectiveness.
- II. **Assessment of Loss and Damage:** Establishing methodologies for assessing loss and damage requires technical expertise. Developing standardized metrics for vulnerability and attribution is challenging but necessary for fair and accurate fund allocation.
- III. **Technical Resources:** Ensuring adequate technical resources and knowledge for the development and adoption of vulnerability and attribution metrics is a challenge. Building the necessary capacity to assess and address loss and damage is crucial for the fund's success.

Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)

- The Global Goal on Adaptation is *a collective commitment* under Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement aimed at “*enhancing [the world’s] adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change.*”
- Proposed by the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) in 2013 and established in 2015.

Key Questions to be Addressed

01

Governance

Who Pays?
Who Benefits?
Where will the fund be Sited?

02

Financial

How will the finance be disbursed?
What would be the reporting requirements?

03

Scientific

How to define loss and damage?
How will loss and damage be assessed?

Santiago Network

- The Santiago Network, established in December 2019 at COP 25, plays a crucial role in **addressing climate change impacts in developing countries**.
- It focuses on **catalyzing technical assistance** from various organizations, bodies, networks, and experts to support developing countries in averting, minimizing, and **addressing loss and damage caused by climate change**.
- Its mandate includes facilitating access to knowledge, resources, and technical assistance needed to address climate risks comprehensively.
- At COP28, **UNDRR and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) were announced as the hosts** of the Santiago Network secretariat
- Countries including Canada, Japan, Spain, Switzerland and the United States of America have announced their financial contributions to the work of the Santiago network.

- The GGA is meant to serve as a unifying framework that can drive political action and finance for adaptation on the same scale as mitigation.
- This means setting specific, measurable targets and guidelines for global adaptation action as well as enhancing adaptation finance and support for developing countries.

Themes covered by the Goal –

Seven target areas to improve adaptation measures to be achieved by 2030.

1. Reducing climate-induced **water scarcity** and enhancing **climate resilience** to water-related hazards,
2. Attaining **climate-resilient food**,
3. **Agricultural production** and supply and distribution of food,
4. Strengthening resilience against **climate-related health impacts**,
5. Reducing **climate impacts on ecosystems** while accelerating the **use of nature-based solutions**,
6. Increasing the **resilience of infrastructure** and human settlements to climate impacts,

7. **Reducing poverty and livelihood vulnerability** in areas with high climate risk and **protecting cultural heritage** from the impacts of climate-related risks.

Adaptation Finance:

- Adaptation efforts in developing countries are severely underfunded. Unlike efforts to cut emissions, adaptation projects – which tend not to directly bring in revenue – struggle to attract private investment. This means that public, grant-based funding from wealthy nations is seen as particularly important for supporting these kinds of projects.
- GGA merely urges developed country parties **to double their contributions** towards adaptation finance by 2025 while inviting other parties to contribute on a voluntary basis. It also **does not outline how funds for adaptation should be raised after 2025**.
- The U.N.'s Adaptation Gap report estimates funding needs now stand between \$194 billion and \$366 billion per year, which is 10 to 18 times more than current adaptation finance flows. The UNFCCC's Adaptation Fund has received just a fraction of this – \$1.3 billion – from 26 countries, according to the Climate Fund Pledge Tracker.

New Collective Quantified Goal

- In 2009, developed countries pledged to provide \$100 billion annually to developing nations by 2020. However, it became evident that addressing climate change requires significantly higher financial resources. As a result, the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) was established in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement**.
- The NCQG aims to **align with the evolving needs of developing nations**, considering scientific evidence and addressing the growing demands for Loss and Damage funding.
- The NCQG is thus, termed the “most important climate goal”. It pulls up the ceiling on commitment from developed countries.
- The NCQG is **expected to be finalised by 2024**. It will replace the current climate finance goal of \$100 billion annually from developed countries.

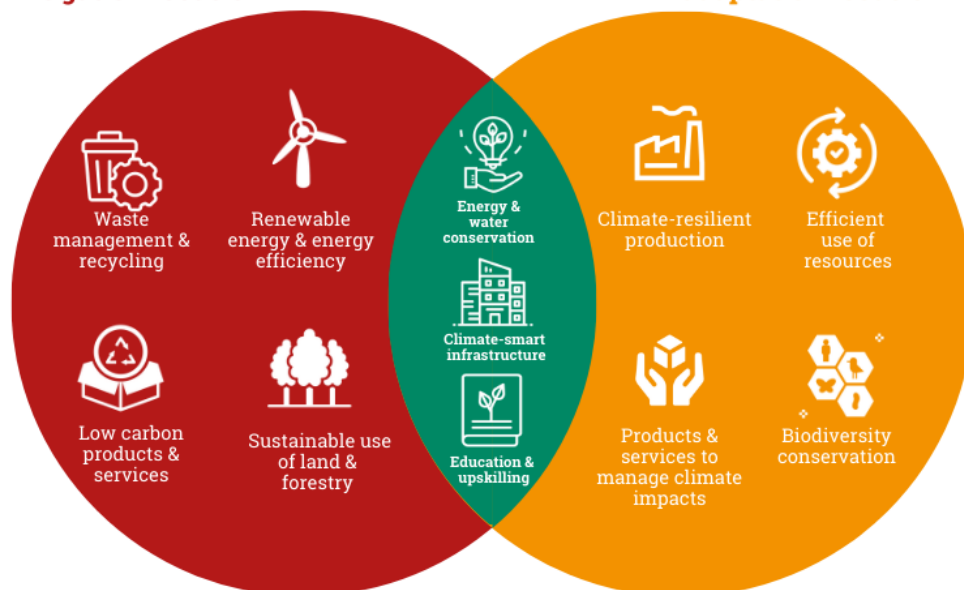


Floods in Mumbai in 2017. Established with the Paris Agreement in 2015, the Global Goal on Adaptation aims at enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change. [Photo by Paasikivi/Wikimedia Commons](#).

Climate Change Mitigation

Actions to avoid and/or reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Small and medium-sized enterprises in climate change mitigation focus on:



Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on agriculture and food security

- The Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security (SSJW), agreed at COP27 last year, is the *only formal UNFCCC workstream to address agriculture and food systems*.
- SSJW is the successor to the Koronivia joint work for agriculture, which was established at COP23 in Bonn, in 2017.
- The government negotiators in Dubai **failed to agree on a roadmap for the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Implementation of Climate Action on Agriculture and Food Security (SSJW)**.
- The goal of the SSJW negotiations at COP28 was *to establish a roadmap for the joint work*.
- The SSJW was established last year at COP27 as a 4-year programme to promote a holistic approach to addressing issues related to agriculture and food security including providing support and technical advice to Parties, promoting synergies, and strengthening partnerships among relevant stakeholders.
- One year of the SSJW mandate has already passed, and the Parties agreed to continue debating the process during the inter-sessional meetings in Bonn in June 2024.

Contentions with Article 6 of Paris Agreement

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement covers *international carbon markets* and other “*cooperative approaches*” that nations could use to help meet their climate targets.

Outside the international climate regime, the so-called “**Voluntary**” carbon market (VCM) has been under intense scrutiny this year, after high-profile investigations highlighting its shortcomings.

At COP 26, The rules were finally agreed on

- bilateral country-to-country carbon trading under Article 6.2
- the centralised international carbon market under Article 6.4
- “non-market approaches” (NMAs) under Article 6.8

Non market approaches – Carbon tax, Building codes, Vehicle Standards, development of clean energy resources etc.,

The Paris Agreement’s text outlined requirements for those taking part in the carbon markets, but left the details – the Article 6 “rulebook” – undecided.

At COP28 in Dubai, however, countries once again failed to reach agreement on Article 6.2 and Article 6.4, both of which were subject to “rule 16”, meaning talks will resume next year.

Just Transition Work Programme

As the climate crisis ratchets up, so, too, must global efforts to address its root causes and escalating impacts. This means *rapidly shifting economies and finance flows to pathways that are consistent with low-carbon, climate-resilient development*

The International Labour Organization estimates that around 80 million jobs could be lost due to the climate transition. Stakes are especially high for the countries and communities that still depend on fossil fuels and other emissions-intensive sectors for their livelihoods.

Just transition:

To ensure that these vulnerable people are not left behind, all climate action must be underpinned by principles of a just transition.

Broadly, this means *moving toward a green global economy in a way that won’t create or exacerbate inequalities or cause other unintended economic and social harms.*

It also means *creating opportunities in the green economy that benefit all people and communities and promoting sustainable development.*

Just Transition Work Programme:

Launched within the Sharm el-Sheikh implementation plan (on COP 27), the just transition work programme (JTWP) held its first high-level ministerial round table at COP28, preparing the work programmes’s activities for the next five years.

The work programme on just transition pathways (JTWP) was created *to boost global understanding of just transition pathways.*

It aims *to facilitate countries’ just transitions to a low-emissions and climate-resilient future* through actions that also contribute to reducing inequalities, both within and between countries.

The JTWP will facilitate *knowledge-sharing and development of best climate action practices* in line with a just transition and encourage conversations between countries and other stakeholders — such as policymakers, NGOs and local communities — to devise more *effective ways of realizing just transitions in the socioeconomic and environmental spheres*.

The work programme *can inform ongoing national, regional and international work on just transitions*. This includes supporting and guiding country-level policy processes such as the Just Energy Transition Investment Plans (JET IPs) and Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs).

Just Energy Transition Partnership

- JETP is a financing mechanism. In a Partnership, wealthier nations fund a coal-dependent developing nation to support the country’s own path to phase-out coal and transition towards clean energy while addressing the social consequences. JETP funding can go through grants, loans, or investments.
- The first Just Energy Transition Partnership was with South Africa and was announced at COP 26 Glasgow in November 2021
- The second Partnership was announced at the G20 Bali Summit in November 2022. A second tranche of countries announced as partners in the JETP approach included India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Senegal.

Action for Climate Empowerment



Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) is a term adopted by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to denote work under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement.

The over-arching goal of ACE is to empower all members of society to engage in climate action, through the six ACE elements - climate change education and public awareness, training, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on these issues. The “*Glasgow ACE work programme*” was agreed at COP26. At

last year’s talks in Sharm el-Sheikh, countries agreed on a *new four-year ACE “action plan”*.

Initiatives and Pledges:

Fossil Fuels

Powering Past Coal Alliance:

- Nine new countries signed up to the Powering Past Coal Alliance, a large group of nations *pledging to phase out “unabated” coal power* first founded at COP26 in Glasgow two years ago.
- The Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA) is a coalition of national and subnational governments, businesses and organisations working to advance the transition from unabated coal

power generation to clean energy.

- *New joining countries* - This included the US, Czech Republic, Kosovo, Cyprus, Norway, the Dominican Republic and Iceland, UAE and Malta.
- India is not a member of the alliance

Coal Transition Accelerator:

- An initiative called the coal transition accelerator was launched by France, alongside Canada, the European Commission, Indonesia, Malaysia, Senegal, UK and US.
- It aims to share expertise, design new policies including through best practices and lessons learned and unlock new sources of public and private financing to facilitate just transitions from coal to clean energy.

Global Pledge on Renewables and Energy Efficiency:

118 countries signed up to the Global Pledge on Renewables and Energy Efficiency, which ***commits signatories to triple renewable energy and double energy efficiency(or at least 11,000 GW, and must double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around 2% to over 4% every year until 2030.)***and recognises that ***continued investment in unabated coal fire plants*** in incompatible with efforts to limit warming to 1.5C.

By signing on to the pledge, governments across the world have recognised that the development of renewables, and not new coal, is the key to future prosperity. The pledge will accelerate the growing global momentum to end new coal power, demonstrated by the collapse in the global pipeline of proposed coal power plants since the Paris Agreement in 2015.

Both China and India were notably absent from the initiative, despite backing a tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030 at the G20 summit in Delhi in September.

Reasons for India not joining in the Pledge:

- India aims to reach 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030, about three times the current capacity of about 180 GW. However, given the constraints regarding renewable energy, it will continue to fall back on coal-generated electricity.
- India's decision not to join the pledge can likely be attributed to the focus on coal and investments in it. It can also be due ***to a principled position on not joining initiatives that could prejudice or undermine ongoing negotiations under the UN climate framework***
- The language of the pledge on coal, according to some experts, does present a problem for India. The pledge recognises the need to increase the pace and scale of deployment of renewables and energy efficiency significantly between now and 2030 for a system free of unabated fossil fuels.
- But instead of a phasing out all fossil fuels, the pledge stresses the need to ensure that the renewables deployment is accompanied by the phasedown of unabated coal power. It calls for "ending the continued investment in unabated new coal-fired power plants, which is incompatible with efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C."

Oil & Gas Decarbonization Charter

The COP28 Presidency and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today announced 50 oil and gas companies have joined the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter, a global industry Charter dedicated to high-scale impact, and to speed up climate action within the industry.

The Charter formalizes COP28 President Dr. Sultan Al Jaber's calls for the industry to align around net zero by or before 2050, zero-out methane emissions, eliminate routine flaring by 2030 and to continue working towards industry best practices in emission reduction.

Signatory companies represent over 40 percent of global oil production, with National Oil Companies representing over 60 percent of signatories - the largest-ever number of NOCs to commit to a decarbonization initiative.

In its assessment of COP28 pledges, the research group Climate Action Tracker called the charter “a prime example of a *greenwashing initiative by oil-and-gas companies*”.

Food Systems

Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action, signed by 159 parties.

The non-binding Declaration emphasizes the transformative potential of agriculture in responding to climate change and ensuring global food security. The signatories commit to integrating agriculture and food systems into their climate action, adopting inclusive policies, securing finance, promoting innovations, and strengthening international trade.

India is not a signatory to the declaration.

Forests

Forest and climate leaders' partnership (FCLP)

The presidency held an event to showcase “progress” from the **forest and climate leaders' partnership (FCLP)**, an alliance of 26 countries – launched at COP27 – that have pledged to halt and reverse forest loss by 2030.

The FCLP aims to *accelerate global progress to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030*, while delivering sustainable development and promoting an inclusive rural transformation, through a voluntary and focused partnership of countries that are making a strong contribution to this agenda through national action and international collaboration.

The coalition includes Australia, Canada, the Republic of Congo, Costa Rica, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Japan, Kenya, South Korea, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, the UK and the US. Brazil, which will host COP30 as the “tropical forests COP” in 2025, turned heads by announcing a new “tropical forests forever” fund proposal on 1 December.

UK environment secretary Steve Barclay arrived to tout the country's pledge to ban the sale of products with illegal deforestation in their supply chains. At the summit, his department announced that the rules would apply to palm oil, cocoa, beef, leather and soy.

Nature

Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People.

- In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the UNFCCC - UAE COP28 presidency and Convention on Biological Diversity - China COP15 presidency released a **Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People**.
- It recognised that urgent action is required to deliver the goals of both the Paris Agreement and Global Biodiversity Framework.
- It is endorsed by 15 countries
- The statement “recognised” that climate change poses a large threat to biodiversity and “noted” that the “continued loss and degradation of nature increases climate vulnerability”.
- The countries also pledged to ensure “comprehensiveness and coherence” between their next national climate pledges (“nationally determined contributions” or “NDCs”), due to be submitted before COP30 in 2025, and their next national nature plans (“national biodiversity strategies and action plans” or “NBSAPs”), due to be submitted before COP16 next year.

Methane

Global Methane Pledge

- At the COP26 summit in Glasgow the Global Methane Pledge was launched. The pledge asks countries to cut their methane emissions by 30% over 2020-30 and agree to stronger reporting standards.
- Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and three other countries signed up to the Global Methane Pledge
- Global Methane Pledge (GMP) partners announced Over US\$1 billion in new grant funding for methane action mobilised since COP27, Game-changing new national commitments and legislation from top oil and gas methane emitters,
- There is no differentiation in this text on industrial and agricultural methane and those could be bones of contention for the future,”

Full launch of the Methane Alert and Response System -

The Methane Alert and Response System (MARS) is *the first global satellite detection and notification system* providing actionable data on very large methane emissions around the world. Already in 2023, MARS has notified over 120 major emissions events across 4 continents to stakeholders with the power to act.

The Global Methane Hub, in collaboration with IMEO and its partners, launched a Campaign to comprehensively deliver increased funding to enable governments, businesses, and other actors to radically reduce methane emissions, including harmful leaks, and drive effective policy change through never-before-leveraged data. At COP28, the Global Methane Hub announced \$10m in seed funding toward the Campaign and a funding target of \$300m by COP29.

Health

Emirates Declaration on Climate and Health

- The presidency announced the Emirates Declaration on Climate and Health, with 123 signatories.
- The declaration recognised the *“urgency of taking action on climate change” for better health outcomes* “from deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions”.
- Ahead of the declaration, a set of groups, including the Rockefeller Foundation, Green Climate Fund and Asian Development Bank, *announced \$1bn in funding for climate and health.*
- The COP28 Declaration on Climate and Health is *a non-binding, non-negotiated* call to action and collective commitment that reflects the concerns and common position of countries on the importance of health within climate discourse and in the COP process.
- It begins to articulate how climate-health is defined and how parties come together to address the urgent need for integrating climate and health.

The declaration is intended to serve as a call to action and joint vision from countries to convene and collaborate around, and can be taken forward to at the upcoming World Health Assembly and at future COPs.

WHO Framework

The World Health Organization (WHO) has unveiled a *new Operational framework for building climate resilient and low carbon health systems*. This comprehensive Framework is designed to *enhance the resilience of health systems* while simultaneously reducing greenhouse gas emissions to help safeguard the health of communities worldwide.

The key objectives of the WHO Framework are:

- to guide health sector professionals in addressing climate-related health risks through collaboration;
- to strengthen health system functions for climate resilience and low carbon health approaches;
- to support development of specific interventions for climate risk reduction and emissions reduction; and
- to define roles and responsibilities for health decision-makers in climate resilience.

The benefits of implementing this Framework extend far beyond the realm of health care. By reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing the resilience of health systems, we are contributing to the broader objectives of universal health coverage (UHC), global health security, and the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Global Cooling Watch 2023

The Global Cooling Watch report, Keeping it Chill: How to meet cooling demands while cutting emissions – by the UN Environment Programme-led Cool Coalition

- The Global Cooling Watch report demonstrates the potential and the pathways to achieve near-zero emissions from cooling. Using a model created specifically for this report, it presents pathways to get to near-zero emissions in the key cooling sectors and provides a call to action for countries to pursue the policies and strategies that have the greatest impact in reducing cooling-related emissions and advancing sustainable cooling for all.
- The report is released *in support of the Global Cooling Pledge*, a joint initiative between the United Arab Emirates as host of COP28 and the Cool Coalition.

Global Cooling Pledge

- 66 countries signed a new pledge to cut emissions from fridges and air conditioning over the coming decades
- It aims *to raise ambition and international cooperation* through collective global targets to reduce cooling related emissions by 68% from today by 2050, significantly increase access to sustainable cooling by 2030, and increase the global average efficiency of new air conditioners by 50%.

Local governments and private funders committed \$57m to support the implementation of the pledge, according to the COP28 presidency.

GLOBAL RIVER CITIES ALLIANCE

- The Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA), led by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, was launched at COP28, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- The alliance includes countries namely India, Egypt, Netherlands, Denmark, Ghana, Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Japan and river-cities of **The Hague (Den Haag)** from the Netherlands, **Aelaide** from Australia, and **Szolnok** of Hungary

- The alliance also includes International funding agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and knowledge management institution like KPMG entering into a partnership, widely expanding the reach of the existing River Cities Alliance (RCA), formed by NMCG in association with National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in 2021.
- GRCA is a unique alliance covering **275+ global river-cities in 11 countries, international funding agencies and knowledge management partners** and is first of its kind in the world.
- The launch of GRCA, signifies a momentous step in global efforts toward river conservation and sustainable water management. Following this, partner countries are poised to coordinate post-COP activities, shaping the architecture of GRCA for effective implementation.

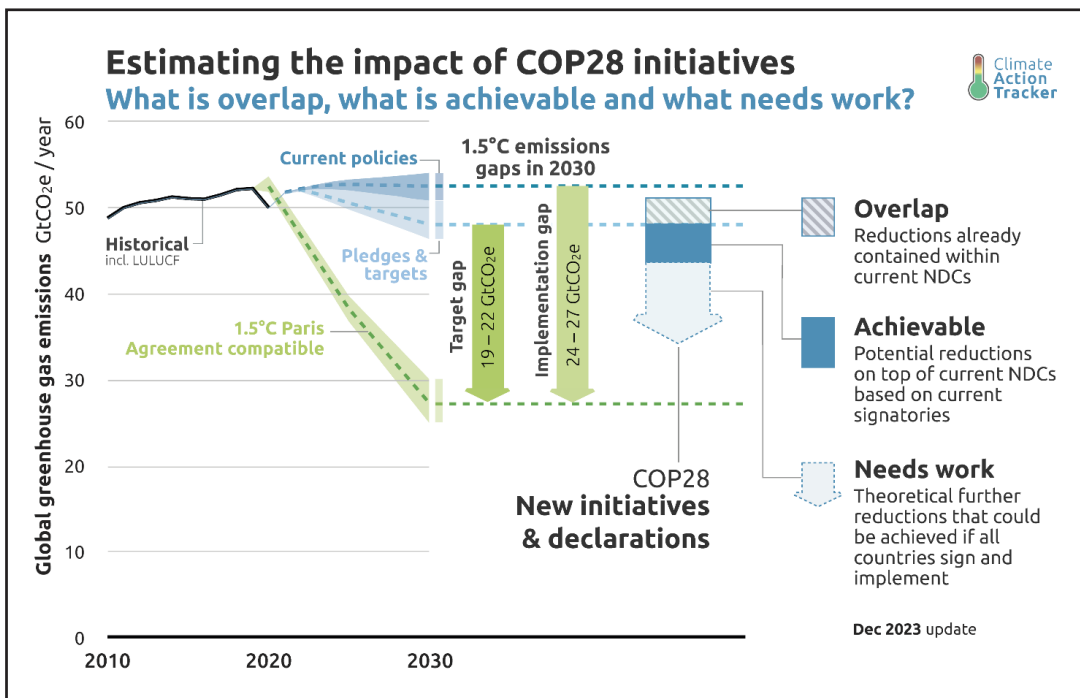
Evaluation of COP 28

The COP28 outcomes had a lot of firsts, such as the declaration on climate and health, acknowledgement of the role of nature-based solutions for biodiversity conservation and climate, and the need to transition away from fossil fuels. Some 134 countries also agreed to a landmark declaration to transition to sustainable and resilient food systems.

However, some challenges and differences between developed and developing countries remain to be addressed.

- Fossil Fuel Subsidies - While developed countries advocated for phasing them out, developing countries, **including India, refused over a phase-out's implications on economic growth and development.**
- Climate Finance – Need for the emphasis over CBDR, Arguments to increase flow of climate finance and technologies to facilitate job transitions and inclusive development.
- Market Mechanisms
- Role of World bank as agency for managing L and D fund
- Private sector engagement in climate actions

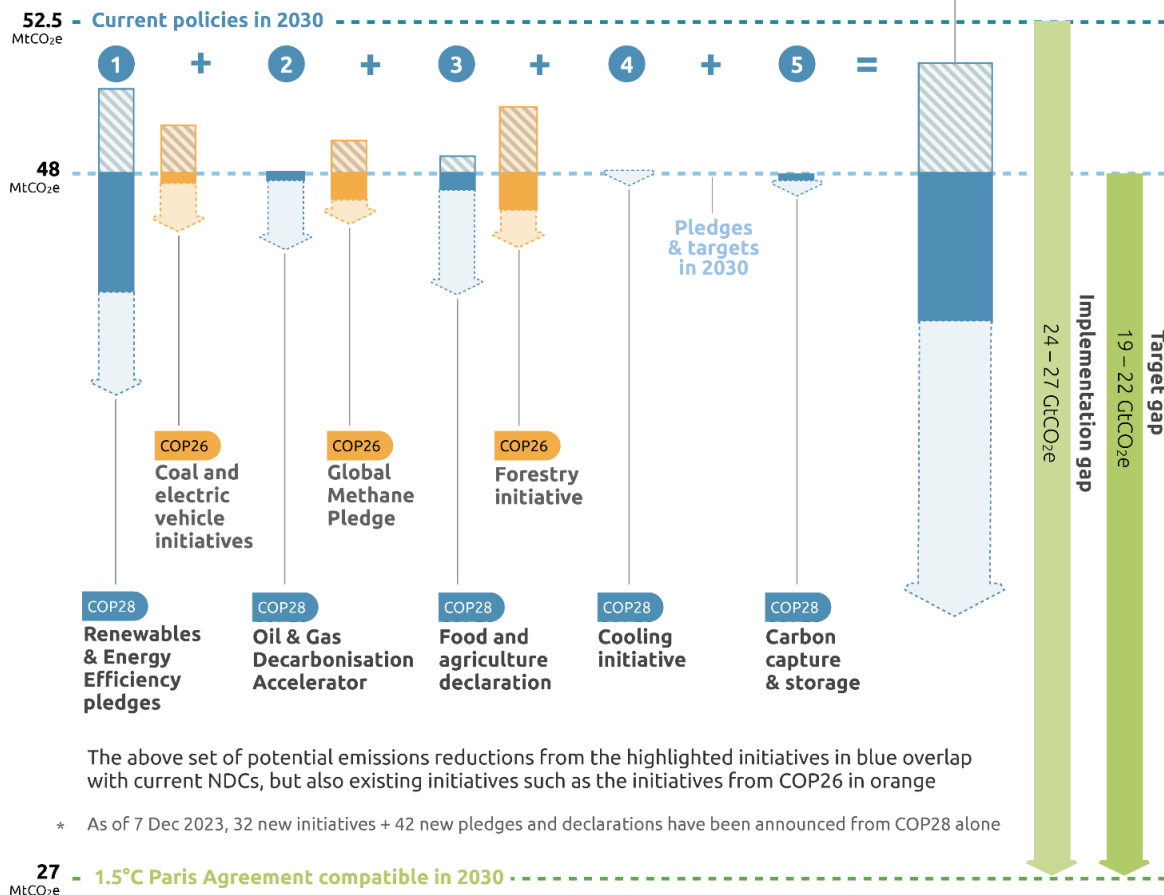
In sum, COP28 provided a mixed bag of outcomes.



Total potential impact from key COP28 initiatives

Indicative estimates of emissions reductions from recently announced initiatives,* some impacts overlapping, some achievable and others need work

Climate Action Tracker
Dec 2023 update



Overlap
Reductions already contained within current NDCs

Achievable
Potential reductions on top of current NDCs based on current signatories

Needs work
Theoretical further reductions that could be achieved if all countries sign and implement



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POLITY

SPECIAL Coverage



PARLIAMENT

WINTER SESSION

ROUNDUP

2023

WINTER SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT

CONTEXT:

The Winter Session of the Parliament from December 4 to December 21, 2023, witnessed a legislative journey marked by a significant number of Bills, suspension of MPs, security breaches, and procedural deviations.

BILLS WITNESSED IN THE PARLIAMENT

- CEC Appointment Bill
- Post Office Bill
- Indian Telecom Bill
- Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill
- The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023.
- The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

CEC APPOINTMENT BILL

The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on August 10, 2023.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- **Selection Committee for Appointments:** The chief election commissioner and other election commissioners will be appointed by the President based on the recommendation of a Selection Committee comprising the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition or the leader of the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha.
- **Validity of Recommendations:** Recommendations made by the Selection Committee will be valid even in case of a vacancy in the Committee.
- **Search Committee:** A Search Committee, headed by the Law Minister will propose a panel of names to the Selection Committee. Eligibility for these posts includes holding (or having held) a post equivalent to the Secretary to the central government.



- **Salary and Conditions of Service:** The salary and conditions of service of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners will be equivalent to the salary of a Supreme Court Judge.
- **Term and Reappointment:** Members of the Election Commission will hold office for six years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They cannot be re-appointed.
- **Removal Process:** The manner of removal of the CEC and ECs is retained as specified in the Constitution{Article 324(5)}.
 - The CEC removable in the same manner as a Supreme Court Judge and the ECs removable only upon the recommendation of the CEC.
- **Status of CEC and ECs:** They enjoy the status of a judge of the Supreme Court. The Bill has retained that status.
- **Safeguards CEC and ECs from legal proceedings:** It is related to actions taken during their tenure, provided such actions were carried out in the discharge of official duties.
 - The amendment aimed to shield these officials from civil or criminal proceedings related to their official functions.
 - These changes aim to redefine the process of appointment and the service conditions of the election commissioners, impacting the operational dynamics of the Election Commission of India

Debates around the Bill

- **Select Committee Rejected:** The Opposition wanted to send the Bill to a select committee but this was rejected by the House.
- **Against SC Judgement:** Several Opposition leaders said that the government has defied the Supreme Court judgement by removing the chief justice of India from the panel and replacing it with a cabinet minister.
- **Question on intent of the bill:** It could negate and subjugate the Election Commission to the authority of the Executive.

POST OFFICE BILL

Highlights of the Bill

- The Bill replaces the Indian Post Office Act, 1898. The Act regulates India Post, a departmental undertaking of the central government.
- The government will not have exclusive privilege over conveying letters. Services to be provided by India Post will be prescribed under Rules.
- The Director General of Postal Services will be appointed to head India Post. He will have powers to make regulations on various matters including tariffs for services and supply of postage stamps.



- The government may intercept an article transmitted through India Post on specified grounds, including security of the state and public order.
- India Post will not incur any liability with regard to its services, except any liability prescribed through Rules.

Key Issues and Analysis

- The Bill does not specify procedural safeguards for interception of articles transmitted through India Post. Lack of safeguards may violate freedom of speech and expression, and right to privacy of individuals.
- The grounds for interception include 'emergency', which may be beyond reasonable restrictions under the Constitution.
- The Bill exempts India Post from liability for lapses in postal services. Liability may be prescribed through Rules by the central government, which also administers India Post. This may lead to conflict of interest.
- The Bill does not specify any offences and penalties. For instance, there are no consequences for unauthorised opening of postal articles by a postal officer. This may have adverse implications for the right to privacy of consumers.

INDIAN TELECOM BILL

Recently, the government introduced the Telecommunications Bill 2023 in the Lok Sabha. It seeks to repeal the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950. It also amends the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997.

Highlights of the Bill

- The Bill seeks to replace the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933.
- Authorisation will be required from the central government to: (i) establish and operate telecommunications networks, (ii) provide telecommunications services, or (iii) possess radio equipment.
- Spectrum will be allocated through auction, except for specified entities and purposes for which it will be assigned administratively.
- Telecommunication may be intercepted on specified grounds including security of the state, public order, or prevention of offences. Telecom services may be suspended on similar grounds.
- The Bill provides a mechanism to exercise the right of way for laying telecom infrastructure in public as well as private property.
- The central government may provide for measures to protect users such as requiring prior consent to receive specified messages, and creation of a do not disturb register.

Key Issues and Analysis

- The Bill provides that procedure and safeguards related to interception will be prescribed by the central government. The question is whether these should be provided by the Bill.
- The Bill may allow mass surveillance; such measures may violate the fundamental right to privacy on the account of proportionality.
- The Bill does not specify procedural safeguards with respect to powers to search premises and vehicles.
- The requirement of biometric verification for users may not be proportionate and hence, may infringe upon the fundamental right to privacy.
- Telecommunication services, as defined under the Bill, may cover internet-based services.
- The Bill vests several regulatory functions with the central government. This is distinct from sectors such as power and finance, where these functions have been delegated to the regulators.
- The government may add, modify or remove offences in the Third Schedule to the Bill by a notification. The question is whether such changes should only be through an Act of Parliament.

PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF PERIODICALS BILL

Recently, the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, was passed in the Lok Sabha that seeks to repeal the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867.

Objective -

The 1867 Act exercise complete control over the press and the printers and publishers of newspapers and books along with heavy fines and penalties including imprisonment for various violations. In today's age of free press and the Government's commitment to uphold media freedom, the 1867 law was archaic and outdated. The bill aims to remove the legacy of the British Raj.

What are key features of the bill?

- **Press Registrar General (PRG)** – It creates a new position who is entrusted with tasks like
 - Issuing certificates of registration to periodicals
 - Maintaining records of registered periodicals
 - Collecting application fees
 - Disbursing the Centre's funds for the Act's implementation
- **Registration** – A simple online mechanism has been put in place to apply for title verification and grant of certificate of registration.
- **Facsimile edition of a foreign periodical** – Foreign periodicals can be printed in India with



prior *approval of the Central Government* and its registration with the Press Registrar General (PRG).

- **Role of District magistrate/local authority** – It reduced their role with regard to grant of Certificate of Registration and title allotment.
- **Suspension** – It allows the PRG to suspend a periodical's registration for a **minimum period of 30 days which can extend to 180 days for**
 - Registration obtained by furnishing false information
 - Failure to publish periodicals continuously
 - Giving false particulars in annual statements
- **Cancellation** – The PRG may cancel the registration if
 - The publisher does not correct defects that lead to suspension
 - A periodical has the same title as any other periodical
 - The owner/ publisher has been convicted of a terrorist act or unlawful activity, or for acting against the security of the State
- **Penalties** – If a periodical is published without registration, the PRG may direct its publication to be stopped and not compliance with such direction within 6 months will be punishable with imprisonment of up to 6 months.
- **Press and Registration Appellate Board** – It will be **headed by the Chairman of the Press Council of India** (PCI) and comprise **2 PCI members**.
- It will hear appeals against refusal of registration, imposition of penalties, suspension, or cancellation of registration.

PCI is an autonomous, statutory, quasi-judicial body which governs the conduct of the print media and is also empowered to hold hearings on receipt of complaints and take suitable action where appropriate.

THE ADVOCATES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Recently, the Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023, was passed in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Its purpose was to weed out 'touts' from the legal system.

Key features of the Bill include:

- **Touts:** The Bill provides that every High Court, district judge, sessions judge, district magistrate, and revenue officer (not below the rank of a district collector) may frame and publish lists of touts. Tout refers to a person who: (i) either proposes to procure or procures the employment of a legal practitioner in a legal business in return of any payment, or (iii) frequents places such as the precincts of civil or criminal courts, revenue-offices, or railway stations to procure such employment. The Court or judge may exclude from the premises of the Court any person whose name is included in the list of touts.

- Preparation of lists: The authorities empowered to frame and publish the list of touts may order subordinate courts to hold an inquiry into the conduct of persons alleged or suspected to be touts. Once such a person is proven to be a tout, his name may be included by the authority in the list of touts. No person will be included in such lists without getting an opportunity of showing cause against his inclusion.
- Penalty: Any person who acts as a tout while his name is included in the list of touts will be punished with imprisonment up to three months, a fine up to Rs 500, or both.

THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR RESERVATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Recently, the Lok Sabha has passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

What are the key features of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Amendment Bill 2023?

Number of seats in the Legislative Assembly:

- **The Second Schedule** of the Representation of the People Act, of 1950 provides for the number of seats in legislative assemblies.
- The 2019 Act amended the Second Schedule of the 1950 Act to specify the total number of seats in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly to be 83.
 - **Resevation:** It reserved six seats for Scheduled Castes. No seats were reserved for Scheduled Tribes.
- **Number of Seats:** The Bill increases the total number of seats to 90. It also reserves seven seats for Scheduled Castes and nine seats for Scheduled Tribes.
- **Nomination of Kashmiri Migrants:** The Bill adds that the Lieutenant Governor may nominate up to two members from the Kashmiri migrant community to the Legislative Assembly.
 - One of the nominated members must be a woman.
- Migrants also include individuals who have not been registered due to:
 - Being in government service in any moving office,
 - Having left for work, or
 - Possessing immovable property at the place from where they migrated but are unable to reside there due to disturbed conditions.

Nomination of displaced persons:

- The Bill adds that the Lieutenant Governor may nominate one member representing displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir to the Legislative Assembly.



- Such displacement should have occurred in 1947-48, 1965, or 1971 due to civil disturbances or fear of such disturbances. These include successors-in-interest of such persons.
- Displaced persons refer to individuals who left or were displaced from their place of residence in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and continue to reside outside such a place.

PARLIAMENT SECURITY BREACH - CENTRE APPROVES DEPLOYMENT OF CISF IN PARLIAMENT COMPLEX

Days after the Parliament security breach, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has asked the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to carry out a survey of the Parliament premises for regular deployment.

- Union Home Ministry has approved the deployment of CISF in the Parliament complex. The decision comes days after the December 13 security breach in the Parliament.
- The CISF will work with the Parliament Security Services to control access to the new and old Parliament complex.

Existing security system in Parliament

- At present, access control such as frisking and scanning the baggage is the responsibility of the Delhi police,
 - Eight Delhi police security personnel who were responsible for frisking and baggage scanning were suspended after the incident.
- The **Parliament Duty Group (PDG)**, an armed component of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is deployed in case an armed intervention is required.
- The **Parliament Security Service** under the Lok Sabha Speaker is the overall in-charge of security.

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)

- CISF is one of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) established under an Act of Parliament, “Central Industrial Security Force Act, 1968.
- CISF was established in 1969 to provide integrated security cover to certain sensitive public sector undertakings with a strength of only three battalions.
 - The force has since grown into a premier multi-skilled organization with a present strength of 1,63,590 personnel.
- It works under the administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs and its headquarter is located at New Delhi.

SUSPENSION OF MPS

Recently 78 opposition MPs have been suspended for disrupting Parliamentary proceedings over the Parliament security breach issue.

What is the issue?

- Presiding officers of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha suspended the opposition lawmakers for disrupting the parliamentary proceedings.
- They were suspended as the legislators demanded a discussion and a statement from the Home Minister regarding last week's security breach.
- This was the highest number of MPs suspended in a single day in the history of Indian Parliament.
- The opposition accused the government of failing to provide security on the 22nd anniversary of a deadly attack on the parliament.
- The speaker of the Lok Sabha, has said that security is his responsibility and is conducting a review. He has blamed the MPs for breaking the rules of the House.
- At least 149 suspensions have been meted out, both Houses included, since 2019, compared with at least 81 in 2014-19, and at least 36 in 2009-14.
- Over the years, 4 broad reasons have been identified for disorder in legislatures.
 - The lack of time available to MPs for raising important matters,
 - The unresponsive attitude of the government and retaliatory posture by Treasury benches,
 - Deliberate disruption by parties for political or publicity purposes, and
 - The absence of prompt action against MPs disrupting Parliamentary proceedings.
- Parliamentary processes can carry on, following the suspension of the opposition MPs, as the quorum of 10% will be met by the governing party and its allies with an overwhelming majority.

What are the rules and procedures for suspension of MPs in Lok Sabha?

- Power to suspend: Speaker
- Rules of procedure and conduct of business: Rules 373, 374, and 374A
- Procedure for suspension: Rule 374A allows the Speaker to automatically suspend an MP for five days or the remaining part of the session.

What are the rules and procedures for suspension of MPs in Rajya Sabha?

- Power to suspend: Chairman
- Rules of procedure and conduct of business: Rules 255 and 256
- Procedure for suspension: Automatic suspension is not available here, a motion has to be moved and adopted by the House to suspend an MP



What are the common rules and procedures for suspension of MPs in both houses?

Authority of presiding officers:

To direct, name, and suspend MPs for disorderly conduct, as per the rules of procedure and conduct of business in each House.

Mild offences:

- They are punished by admonition or reprimand.
- Admonition is a milder form of reprimand, and is usually given by the Presiding Officer in the House.
- Reprimand is a more severe form of admonition, and is given by the President or the Vice-President of India in the Central Hall of Parliament, in the presence of both Houses.

Punishment of withdrawal:

- If the Presiding officer is of the opinion that the conduct of any member is grossly disorderly, may direct such Member to withdraw immediately from the House.
- The member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting.

Punishment of suspension:

- Continuing to disregard the Presiding Officer's directions can invite the punishment of suspension.
- A member can be suspended, at the maximum, for the remainder of the session only.

Reinstate suspended member:

The house at any time can reinstate a suspended member by passing a motion.

Extreme misconduct:

The House may expel a member "to rid the House of persons who are unfit for membership."

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Regarding the office of the Lok Sabha speaker, consider the following statements: (2012)

1. He/She holds the office during the pleasure of the President.
2. He/She need not be a member of the House at the time of his/her election but has to become a member of the House within six months from the date of his/her election.
3. If he/she intends to resign, the letter of his/her resignation has to be addressed to the Deputy Speaker.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) None

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The Speaker is elected by the members of Lok Sabha from amongst its members (as soon as may be, after its first sitting). Hence, statement 2 is not correct.
- Whenever the office of the Speaker falls vacant, the Lok Sabha elects another member to fill the vacancy. The date of election of the Speaker is fixed by the President. Usually, the Speaker remains in office during the life of the Lok Sabha. However, he has to vacate his office earlier in any of the following three cases:
 - If he ceases to be a member of the Lok Sabha. if he resigns by writing to the Deputy Speaker; Hence, statement 3 is correct.
 - If he is removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the members of the Lok Sabha. Such a resolution can be moved only after giving 14 days advance notice. Hence, statement 1 is not correct. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. The Indian Constitution has provisions for holding joint session of the two houses of the Parliament. Enumerate the occasions when this would normally happen and also the occasions when it cannot, with reasons thereof. (2017)

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

What's Inside?



सत्यमेव जयते

1. GOVERNOR AS CHANCELLOR
2. ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS IN UNSTAMPED CONTRACTS VALID, SAYS CONSTITUTION BENCH
3. GRAM MANCHITRA APP
4. DECRIMINALISING MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE
5. ARTICLE 370 VERDICT
6. NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY (NALSA)

PROTECTING BASIC STRUCTURE
FROM JUDICIAL ARBITRARINESS

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GOVERNOR AS CHANCELLOR

Context:

Governors acting as Chancellor are not bound by advice of ministers, says the Supreme Court.

About:

The Supreme Court of India **ruled that Governors, when acting as University Chancellors, are not obligated to follow the advice of the council of ministers.** The decision came as the court invalidated the reappointment of Gopinath Ravindran as Vice-Chancellor of Kannur University.

The three-judge bench, led by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, emphasized that the Chancellor and the State Government are distinct authorities according to statutes, and the **Governor, as Chancellor, acts in a personal capacity.**

The ruling stated that the powers and duties exercised by the Governor as the University Chancellor have no connection to those performed as the Governor of the state.

The judgment highlighted the principle that statutory powers must be executed by the designated body or authority and any delegation of such powers is considered an abdication of statutory mandate, contrary to the rule of law.

The decision referred to a 1981 judgment emphasizing the Governor's independence in appointing/removing a Vice-Chancellor, asserting that the Governor, as the ex officio Chancellor, is not bound by the advice of the council of ministers in this context.

Past references:

In 1997, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the **Governor is not bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers** when performing duties related to a separate statutory office, such as that of the Chancellor in educational institutions.

The **Sarkaria and Puunchi Commissions**, which addressed the Governor's role in educational institutions, agreed that the Governor is not legally obligated to follow the advice of the Council of Ministers while carrying out statutory functions. Both commissions suggested that it could be beneficial for the Governor to consult the relevant Minister despite not being bound by their advice.

The Sarkaria Commission recommended that state legislatures should refrain from granting statutory powers to the Governor beyond those envisioned by the Constitution. The PUNCHHI Commission noted that the Governor's role as Chancellor may expose the office to controversies or public criticism, advocating for limiting the Governor's role to constitutional provisions.

The West Bengal University Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2022 cites this recommendation from the Puunchi Commission in its Statement of Objects and Reasons.

What is the role of the Chancellor in public universities?

State public universities are established through laws passed by state legislatures. In most laws the Governor has been designated as the Chancellor of these universities. The Chancellor functions as the head of public universities, and appoints the Vice-Chancellor of the university. The Chancellor can declare invalid, any university proceeding which is not as per existing laws.

The Chancellor also presides over the convocation of the university, and confirms proposals for conferring honorary degrees. (This is different in Telangana, where the Chancellor is appointed by the state government). The Chancellor presides over the meetings of various university bodies.

ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS IN UNSTAMPED CONTRACTS VALID, SAYS CONSTITUTION BENCH

Context:

Recently, a seven-judge Constitution Bench ruled that arbitration agreements in unstamped or insufficiently stamped commercial contracts remain valid, enforceable, and existent.

What are the Highlights of the Judgment in simplified terms?

The court held that unstamped or insufficiently stamped agreements are not void or unenforceable.

The Arbitration Act is independent of the Stamp Act. Even if a document is invalid under the Stamp Act, any arbitration agreement reached over the invalid document is valid.

The court applied the “separation presumption” by which an arbitration agreement is presumed to have a separate existence from the contract. This means that the validity of the arbitration agreement is independent of the validity of the underlying contract.

The separation presumption applied in this case gave effect to the doctrine of competence-competence. According to this doctrine, the arbitral tribunal has its own authority/ is competent to decide its own jurisdiction. Thus, an arbitration agreement can be valid if the arbitral authority gives it approval, despite the case being of unstamped or insufficiently stamped commercial contracts.

With this, the 7 judge bench has overruled an earlier verdict of the Supreme Court in the N.N. Global case.

Note- In the N. N. Global case, a five-judge bench ruled that an arbitration agreement without proper stamping was deemed void and unenforceable.

What is the Significance of the Judgement?

Swift resolution of commercial disputes- Previously, disputes of this nature faced

obstacles due to parties failing to pay the necessary stamp duty or inadequately stamping contracts.

The ruling provides a significant boost to India’s aspirations of becoming a global arbitration hub.

What is Arbitration?

Arbitration is a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in which a neutral third party resolves a dispute outside of court. Arbitration in India is governed by the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

What is the Arbitration Council of India (ACI)?

Constitutional Background: The Constitution of India, Article 51, India is obliged to endeavor to:

Foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one country.

Encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration. ACI is a step in realization of this constitutional obligation.

Objective:

ACI aims to promote arbitration, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute redressal mechanisms.

Composition of the ACI:

The ACI will consist of a Chairperson who is either:

A Judge of the Supreme Court/ A Judge of a High Court/ Chief Justice of a High Court.

An eminent person with expert knowledge in conduct of arbitration.

Other members will include an eminent arbitration practitioner, an academician with experience in arbitration, and government appointees.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)**Prelims**

Q1. With reference to Lok Adalats, which of the following statements is correct? (2010)

- (a) Lok Adalats have the jurisdiction to settle the matters at pre-litigative stage and not those matters pending before any court
- (b) Lok Adalats can deal with matters which are civil and not criminal in nature
- (c) Every Lok Adalat consists of either serving or retired judicial officers only and not any other person
- (d) None of the statements given above is correct

Ans: (d)

Q2. With reference to Lok Adalats, consider the following statements: (2009)

1. An award made by a Lok Adalat is deemed to be a decree of a civil court and no appeal lies against thereto before any court.
2. Matrimonial/Family disputes are not covered under Lok Adalat.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. What are the major changes brought in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 through the recent Ordinance promulgated by the President? How far will it improve India's dispute resolution mechanism? Discuss. (2015)

GRAM MANCHITRA APP

Context:

In order to encourage the Spatial Planning by the Gram Panchayat, Ministry of Panchayati Raj had launched the Geographic Information System (GIS) application "Gram Manchitra".

Uses:

This application facilitates and supports Gram Panchayats to perform planning at Gram Panchayat level using geo-spatial technology.

It provides a single/ unified Geo Spatial

platform to better visualize the various developmental works to be taken up across the different sectors and provide a decision support system for Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

Gram Manchitra provides several planning tools that use GIS technology to help Gram

Panchayat officials develop realistic and achievable development plans.

These tools provide a decision support system in the preparation of development plans viz. tools for identifying potential sites for development projects, asset tracking, estimating the costs of projects, and assessing the impact of projects.

DECRIMINALISING MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE

Context

A woman recently died from septic shock after a surgery in Jamshedpur, leading her brother to allege medical negligence due to unauthorized surgeon substitution and lack of postoperative care.

The case has ignited discussions on the legal and ethical aspects of medical negligence in India, amidst proposed changes to exempt doctors from criminal prosecution.

Doctors will now be exempted from “criminal prosecution” in alleged medical negligence cases when a patient dies, according to the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), passed in the Parliament recently.

The medical fraternity is hailing this “decriminalisation.” But those who have been victims of medical negligence are at crossroads about this amendment.

What Does the New Law Say?

In a recent development, Home Ministry announced in Parliament that doctors will be exempted from criminal prosecution in cases of death due to negligence. However, according to Section 106(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita (BNSS), the rulebook set to replace the Indian Penal Code, doctors will continue to face a two-year imprisonment and/or a fine if convicted. This is lesser than the Sanhita’s recommended punishment of five years for other cases of death by negligence (for example, by rash driving).

The BNSS in its current form has not made any explicit distinction between medical negligence versus accident.

Several existing clauses in the BNSS may

offer protection to some doctors from criminal prosecution. For example, clause 26 provides an illustrative example of acts done in “good faith” that are exempt from criminal prosecution:

A, a surgeon, knowing that a particular operation is likely to cause the death of Z, who suffers under the painful complaint, but not intending to cause Z’s death, and intending, in good faith, Z’s benefit, performs that operation on Z, with Z’s consent. A has committed no offence.

In a similar vein, clause 30 adds:

Z is thrown from his horse, and is insensible. A, a surgeon, finds that Z requires to be trepanned. A, not intending Z’s death, but in good faith, for Z’s benefit, performs the trepan before Z recovers his power of judging for himself. A has committed no offence.

Perspectives from both the sides

In the light of exempting doctors from criminal prosecution for negligence, doctors say, “the criminal prosecution of doctors has become a form of harassment and doctors are mortally afraid of the criminal law.” This influences the decision a doctor makes in critical moments.

Exemption of doctors from criminal prosecution will provide the nation “better results in patient care.”

However, bioethicists, lawyers, and members of the public express concerns that a blanket exemption of doctors from criminal prosecution for negligence might lead to an increase in medical malpractice and put marginalised populations at an increased risk.

Ayushmita Samal, a Delhi-based sexual and reproductive health researcher, added that

a blanket exemption might lead to an increase in cases of deaths by medical negligence among women, queer, and transgender persons, and those who live in rural areas.

As an example, Samal spoke of her aunt's death in 2015. A resident of a village in Bhadrak, Odisha, her aunt died of septic shock after a nurse-cum-midwife allegedly failed to detect a miscarriage. Samal feels that this could have been avoided had the nurse-cum-midwife taken her aunt's concern of not feeling the baby's movement more seriously.

The absence of a legal recourse for patients when they suspect medical negligence, they may

lose faith in the legal system.

Way forward

Exempting doctors from criminal prosecution for medical negligence is a multifaceted issue requiring careful consideration of legal, ethical, and societal factors.

Any policy changes must strive to protect patients' rights while also considering the challenges faced by medical professionals, ensuring that the healthcare system remains just, accountable, and focused on delivering high-quality care.

ARTICLE 370 VERDICT

Context

A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court, led by CJI DY Chandrachud, has unanimously upheld the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 bestowing special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Key facts in this Judgement

1. Jammu and Kashmir did not retain sovereignty

- The Yuvraj Karan Singh's proclamation stated that the provisions of the Indian Constitution would govern the relationship between the J&K and India.
- Section 3 of the J&K Constitution explicitly states that "the State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India."
- Further, the Preamble to the J&K Constitution shows a "clear absence of...a reference to sovereignty."

This is an example of the asymmetric federalism model where one state may enjoy a greater degree of autonomy than another. This does not mean that it has a different kind of autonomy or sovereignty

2. Article 370 is a temporary provision

The Constitution framers placed Article 370 with the temporary and transitional provisions

contained in Part XXI. The Instrument of Accession (IoA) made it "abundantly clear" that Article 1 which stated that "India that is Bharat shall be a Union of States" applied in its entirety to J&K.

Also, when the Constitution was adopted on 26 January 1950, J&K was a Part B State.

3. President's power under Article 370:

The Chief Justice also held that the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly could not limit the powers of the President to abrogate Article 370.

"Article 370's historical context, its text, and its subsequent practice" indicates its temporary nature. The President's power can be exercised post-dissolution "in line with the aim of full integration of the State,"

4. Constitutional validity of proclamations under President's Rule

First, the bench on Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy's decision in *S.R. Bommai v Union of India* (1994), where he held that when the President's Rule is imposed, it was a "necessary consequence" that the concerned state government is removed, to avoid simultaneous governance by the Union and state governments. The federal structure then becomes "diluted because the Union is empowered to take over the executive and legislative powers of the State."

NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY (NALSA)

Context:

Justice Sanjiv Khanna, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court, as the Executive Chairperson of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

About:

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society.

Functioning of NALSA:

NALSA lays down policies, principles, guidelines and frames effective and economical schemes for the State Legal Services Authorities to implement the Legal Services Programmes throughout the country.

Primarily, the State Legal Services Authorities, District Legal Services Authorities, Taluk Legal Services Committees, etc. have been asked to discharge the following main functions on regular basis:

1. To Provide Free and Competent Legal Services to the eligible persons;

2. To organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes and
3. To organize legal awareness camps in the rural areas.

Persons eligible for getting free legal services includes:

1. Women and children;
2. Members of SC/ST
3. Industrial workmen
4. Victims of mass disaster, violence, flood, drought, earthquake, industrial disaster.
5. Disabled persons. vi) Persons in custody
6. Persons whose annual income does not exceed Rs. 1 lakh (in the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee the limit is Rs. 5,00,000/-).
7. Victims of Trafficking in Human beings or beggar.

PROTECTING BASIC STRUCTURE FROM JUDICIAL ARBITRARINESS

Context:

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Kesavananda Bharati case and the laying down of the “Basic Structure Doctrine” by the Supreme Court of India in April 1973.

About Basic Structure Doctrine:

The basic structure doctrine is a **common law legal doctrine** that the constitution of a sovereign state has certain characteristics that cannot be erased by its legislature. The doctrine is recognised **in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Uganda**.

It was developed by the Supreme Court of India in a series of constitutional law cases in the 1960s and 1970s that culminated in Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala, where the doctrine was formally adopted.

Bangladesh is perhaps the only legal system in the world which recognizes this doctrine with an expressed, written and rigid constitutional manner through **Article 7B of its Constitution**.

At least, 20 features have been described as “basic” or “essential” by the Courts in numerous cases, and have been incorporated in the basic structure. Only Judiciary decides the basic features of the

Constitution.

In Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain and also in the Minerva Mills case, it was observed that the claim of any particular feature of the Constitution to be a “basic” feature would be determined by the Court in each case that comes before it.

Criticism on the judiciary:

In common parlance, this concept of doctrinal limitation of amending power is limited to the context of the legislating power of the parliament. In this case, since the judiciary has the exclusive power to assign what constitutes ‘basic’ features of the constitution, sometimes the judiciary faces frequent criticism that arises there and then.

1. Critics of NJAC judgement observes that “The judgment has upheld the primacy of one basic structure — independence of judiciary — but diminished five other basic structures of the Constitution, namely, parliamentary democracy, an elected government, the council of ministers, an elected Prime Minister and the elected leader of the opposition.”
2. Basic structure doctrine introduced by a **13-judge Bench** 40 years ago, in

the Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru versus State of Kerala through a **7:6 wafer-thin majority judgment**.

3. The BSD has **allowed Indian judges to adopt radical strategies of initiating public interest litigation**, using methods such as the creative remedy of continuing mandamus.
4. The seven instances of striking down of constitutional amendments on the ground of violation of basic structure doctrine shows that the court did so only because the **amendments threatened judicial independence**, considered as a basic feature. Eg., Fourth Judges case (2015)

In essence, Parliament’s ability to alter the Constitution is limited, and all constitutional amendments are ultimately decided upon, scrutinised and interpreted by the Supreme Court. Thus, after the decisions of the Supreme Court in Kesavananda Bharati case, Indira Gandhi Election case and Minerva Mills case, it can be concluded that the Parliament’s power to amend the Constitution is limited and in the exercise of its constituent power, the Parliament cannot violate the Basic Structure of the Constitution.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



What's Inside?

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KHAN YOUNIS

Context:

Israel recently pushed its forces into Khan Younis, a major southern city that had provided refuge for Palestinians displaced from the north.

About

It is situated north of the Rafah border (Egypt) crossing, near the Mediterranean Sea, and is the second largest city of Gaza Strip after the city of Gaza.

‘Khan’ means hostel and Younis refers to Prince Younis Dawadar who built a garrison in 1387 for soldiers guarding travelers and pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem and Mecca.

Israeli troops fought fierce battles with Hamas in southern Gaza after reaching the heart of the city of Khan Younis, forcing Palestinian civilians to seek refuge elsewhere as the number of safe areas decreased.

There are 8 Palestine refugee camps in the Gaza Strip. They are:

- Khan Younis Camp
- Beach camp
- Bureij camp
- Deir El-Balah Camp
- Jabalia Camp
- Maghazi camp
- Nuseirat camp
- Rafah camp



PARIS CLUB REACHES AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WITH SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka has reached an agreement in principle with India and the Paris Club group of creditors, on a debt treatment plan.

About the Agreement

It is aimed at facilitating the disbursement of the next tranche of the International Monetary

Fund's nearly \$3 billion recovery package.

The Official Creditor Committee (OCC) and Sri Lanka agreed on the main parameters aligned with the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement with the IMF.

The Extended Fund Facility (EFF) provides

financial assistance to countries facing serious medium-term balance of payments problems because of structural weaknesses that require time to address.

About Paris Club

The Paris Club is an informal group of creditor nations (mostly Western creditor countries) that grew from a 1956 meeting in which Argentina agreed to meet its public creditors in Paris.

It describes itself as a forum where official creditors meet to solve payment difficulties faced by debtor countries.

Their objective is to find sustainable debt-relief solutions for countries that are unable to repay their bilateral loans.

It has 22 permanent members, including most of the Western European and Scandinavian nations, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. India participates on an ad-hoc basis.

About the Official Creditor Committee (OCC):

It was formed in response to Sri Lanka's request for debt treatment during last year's economic crisis.

It is co-chaired by India, Japan, and France, as chair of the Paris Club.

China, Sri Lanka's largest bilateral creditor, chose not to participate in the OCC but attended meetings as an observer.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF ARBITRATION

Context

The International Chamber of Commerce organized 6th ICC India Arbitration Day on 2-12-2023 while celebrating the Centenary of the ICC International Court of Arbitration (ICC Court).

What is Arbitration?

Arbitration is one of the ADR processes that are particularly popular in both domestic and international economic disputes, as well as in resolving conflicts between nations.

International accords have come to reinforce the roots of arbitration and promote it globally over time are,

The Geneva Protocol on Arbitration Clause of 1923.

The Geneva convention on the execution of foreign awards 1927.

The New York Convention of 1958 on the recognition and enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards.

Arbitration history

Jay treaty of 1794

The Jay Treaty, which created the first organised arbitral proceeding, is the foundation of

modern-day arbitration. The Treaty of Versailles was signed by the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The pact is the result of disagreements over unresolved concerns following the American Revolutionary War. Three commissions were established as a result of this treaty:

The first commission was established to resolve boundary disputes.

The second commission was established for mixed issues including claims for compensation arising from debts owed by US officials to British national officials, which were to be compensated by the US officials.

The third commission also dealt with mixed issues, which involved claims by US officials against the United Kingdom for the treatment of their property after the US gained independence.

The treaty established modern-day arbitration between two governments, as well as for disputes between citizens of one state and citizens of another.

Mechanism of international arbitration

Consider a dispute between two corporations that are located in different nations. Which court

has jurisdiction in this case? Which country's laws must be adhered to? Having a neutral mechanism that everyone acknowledges makes resolving these inter-country issues considerably easier in these circumstances.

There are a number of arbitration organisations that work under the New York Convention or other treaties. A request for arbitration must be made with one of these associations in order to launch an arbitration. The **International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)** is one of the largest of these organisations.

Origins and history of ICC

ICC was created in 1919 by the French Minister of Commerce, Etienne Clementel along with a handful of entrepreneurs who called themselves the "Merchants of Peace". They believed that strong and mutually beneficial ties among nations through trade, industry and commerce would not only make nations prosperous but also make them less likely to go to war.

The need for an international dispute resolving mechanism became apparent to meet the rise in international trade and investment.

In May 1922, the ICC Executive Committee approved the creation of an international court for commercial disputes and the ICC Court of Commercial Arbitration was inaugurated on 19 January 1923.

From our post-war beginnings, the central

tenet of the ICC Court has been the belief that trust in an independent, neutral and robust dispute resolution process, free from political dynamics, is key to encouraging trade and investment across borders.

Who are the ICC Court Members?

Members of the ICC Court are **appointed for three-year terms by the World Council**. This is done on the proposal of one member from ICC national committees and other ICC groups, or upon proposal by the President of the Court.

Once appointed, ICC Court members must remain independent from national committees in the performance of their functions. Alternate members are appointed by the World Council on the proposal of the ICC Court's President.

International Court of Arbitration

The International Court of Arbitration is the world's leading arbitral institution established in 1923.

It performs an essential role by **providing businesses, governments and individuals** with a variety of customisable services for every stage of their dispute.

Although called a court in name, they do not make formal judgments on disputed matters. Instead, they administer arbitrations by exercising judicial supervision of arbitration proceedings.

INDIA RE-ELECTED TO INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION

Context

India was re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council with the highest tally in the elections held at its assembly for the 2024–25 biennium

India's re-election falls under the Category of 10 states with "**the largest interest in international seaborne trade**", alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain,

Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

India secured the large-scale support of the international community at the International Maritime Organisation for India to continue to serve the global maritime domain.

The Amrik Kaal Vision 2047 has also set goals to strengthen India's global maritime presence. There are 43 initiatives identified as part of Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 Action Plan of

which, the key initiatives focus on strengthening our global maritime presence which includes dedicated IMO cell in India, appointment of a permanent representative at IMO headquarters, London, implementation of BIMSTEC Master Plan, creating a robust BIMSTEC institutional structure to ensure implementation of regional projects in a coordinated & timely manner etc.

International Maritime Organisation

The **International Maritime Organisation** (IMO) is the leading authority that regulates the maritime industry, which supports global trade, transportation, and all marine operations.

It is the United Nations specialized agency with **responsibility for the safety and security of shipping** and the **prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships**. IMO's work supports the UN sustainable development goals. India joined the IMO in **1959**.

IMO currently has **175 Member States** and three Associate Members. There are 66 intergovernmental organizations which have observer status with IMO. There are 88 international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO.

As part of the United Nations family, IMO is actively working towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the associated SDGs.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide a blueprint for the transition to a healthier planet and a more just world for present and future generations. With concrete targets, the Goals aim to end poverty and hunger, expand access to health, education, justice and jobs, promote inclusive and sustained economic growth, while protecting

our planet from environmental degradation.

Role of IMO in supporting SDG14

'SDG 14'
- Life below



December 2023

water - is central to IMO.

Because international shipping takes place on the world's oceans, the work of IMO, which is responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships, is integral to most, if not all, of the SDG 14 targets.

To be sustainable, human activities have to be balanced with the oceans' capacity to remain healthy and diverse in the long term. A major part of IMO's role is to ensure that shipping continues to make its contribution to the global economy without upsetting that delicate balance.

IMO covers all aspects of international shipping including ship design, construction, equipment, manning, operation and disposal to ensure that this vital sector remains safe, environmentally sound, energy efficient and secure.

Implementing and enforcing the main conventions and regulations adopted by IMO Member States actively addresses marine pollution, mainly from sea-based sources but also, at least indirectly, from land-based sources.

IMO also supports the targets for managing and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems, not least through the establishment of Special Areas and Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas. Protecting marine biodiversity has been a key theme for IMO for many years, most notably in its work to mitigate the threat of harmful invasive species being carried around the world by ships.

To help protect maritime wildlife, IMO's work includes reduction of underwater noise from ships and adopting measures to avoid collisions between ships and marine mammals. **IMO has also banned the discharge of harmful litter from ships** and is part of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, while the **dumping of wastes at sea is regulated by the 1972 Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution** by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, commonly called the **London Convention**, and its 1996 Protocol.

Structure of IMO

IMO is governed by an assembly of members,

which meets every two years, and a council of 40 members, which is elected by the assembly for a two-year period. The Assembly is the highest Governing Body of the IMO.

The IMO Council, being the executive organ, is responsible for supervising the organization's

work, especially in maritime safety and pollution prevention.

In a continuous service at IMO India has sustained an unbroken record in category B of IMO Council.

NICARAGUA- MAP

Context:

According to the US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), a staggering 96,917 Indians were arrested attempting to enter the US illegally in 2023 alone. This places Indians as the third-largest illegal immigrant community in the US, totalling around 725,00.



CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

Context

India has been unanimously elected as a member representing Asian region in the Executive Committee of Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) during its 46th meeting being held at FAO Headquarters at Rome.

About

Codex Alimentarius Commission is a body established by FAO and WHO to develop food standards under Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program.

Codex Alimentarius Commission meets in regular session once a year alternating between Geneva and Rome.

Codex Alimentarius Commission is based in FAO in Rome, Italy.

Scope: Includes standards for all principal foods, whether processed, semi-processed or raw for distribution to the consumer. Codex texts are voluntary and do not have binding

effect on national food legislation. However, WTO Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) encouraged WTO members to harmonise national regulations with the international standards.

Members of Codex Alimentarius Commission: Currently, Codex Alimentarius has 189 Codex Members and 1 Member Organisation i.e., European Union. Membership to Codex Alimentarius Commission is open to all member nations and associate members of FAO and WHO which are interested in international food standards.

Mandate of Codex Alimentarius

Contribute to safety, quality and fairness of international food trade.

Protection of consumer's health

Promote coordination of all food standards at work.

Executive Committee of Codex Alimentarius

Executive Committee of Codex comprises of Chair, three vice Chairs along 6 regional and 7 elected representatives from various geographical groups of Codex.

Between sessions, Executive Committee acts as the Executive organ of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Executive Committee of Codex Alimentarius contributes substantially in International standard setting process for different food products and is involved in the decision making process. It makes proposals to Codex Alimentarius Commission regarding general orientation, strategic planning and programming of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

India's Proposal for Group Standards on Millets

Codex Alimentarius Commission accepted India's proposal for development of global standards for millets.

Currently, Codex Alimentarius Commission has brought out standards for Sorghum and Pearl Millets.

India put forward a proposal for development of global standards for millets, particularly for Finger millet, Barnyard millet, Proso millet and

Little millet as group standards in case of pulses.

Currently, FSSAI (a statutory regulatory body mandated for food standards) has framed a comprehensive group standard for 15 types of millets specifying 8 quality parameters.

They are:

- Maximum limits for moisture content
- Uric acid content
- Extraneous matter
- Other edible grains
- Defects
- Weevilled grains
- Immature grains
- Shriveled grains.

The group standard for millets developed by FSSAI will act as an important foundation for development of global standards for millets. The existing Codex standards for Sorghum and Pearl millet would also be reviewed while making group standards for millets.

Important standards proposed by India include Standard for Okra, BWG Pepper, Aubergines, Dried and Dehydrated Garlic, Dried or Dehydrated Chilli Pepper and Paprika, Fresh Dates, Mango Chutney, Chili Sauce, Ware Potatoes and labelling requirements for non-retail containers.

KNOW INDIA PROGRAMME

Context

The Flagship programme of the External Affairs Ministry's 'Know India Programme' for the youth diaspora has completed its 20 years.

Know India Programme

It is a flagship programme of Ministry of External Affairs for engagement with Indian origin youth (between 21-35 years) during which the participant will visit Delhi, Agra and a select state in India alongwith visits to places of historical, cultural, religious significance.

The programme has been in existence since 2003.

Objective: To enhance their awareness about India, its cultural heritage, art and to familiarise them with various aspects of contemporary India.

Participants: Open to youth of Indian origin (excluding non-resident Indians) from all over the world with preference to those from Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, South Africa, Jamaica.

Duration: 21 days' programme (excluding international travel).

Qualification: Graduation from a recognized University /Institute or enrolled for

graduation and ability to speak in English.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA – WHO CAN JOIN EU?

Context:

European leaders have decided to open EU membership talks with Ukraine and Moldova and to grant candidate status to Georgia.

About:

The **Treaty on the European Union** states that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the democratic values of the EU and is committed to promoting them.

The first step is for the country to meet the key criteria for accession. These were mainly defined at the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 and are hence referred to as ‘**Copenhagen criteria**’. Countries wishing to join need to have:

Stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;

A **functioning market economy** and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU;

The ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership,

including **adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union**.

The EU also needs to be able to integrate new members.

In the case of the countries of the Western Balkans additional conditions for membership, were set out in the so-called ‘**Stabilisation and Association process**’, mostly relating to regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

Conditions for membership

The EU operates comprehensive approval procedures that ensure new members are admitted only when they can demonstrate they will be able to play their part fully as members, namely by:

Complying with all the EU’s standards and rules

Having the consent of the EU institutions and EU member states

Having the consent of their citizens – as expressed through approval in their national parliaments or by referendum.

GELEPHU SMARTCITY PROJECT

Context:

Bhutan to have 1,000-sq. km. green city along Assam border pitching the project as an “economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India’s northeastern States”.

About:

It is the first India-Bhutan railway line to Gelephu, which would also connect with roadways and border trading and crossing points into Assam and West Bengal, and over time, it gives Bhutan

access to Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Singapore.

It is also known as the ‘Gelephu Smartcity Project’. It is expected to follow environmental standards and sustainability as a goal and will aim to attract “quality investment” from “specially screened” international companies.

Also, Bhutan hopes to popularise about the Gelephu project in future, including “skilling projects”, “digital infrastructure”, and “economic hub”.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

What's Inside?

1. RASHTRIYA BAL SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM
2. PALNA SCHEME
3. NOMA
4. TRANSPLANT GAMES
5. CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

RASHTRIYA BAL SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM

Context:

Update on Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram given by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

About:

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, under the National Health Mission launched the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), which envisages Child Health Screening and Early Intervention Services, a systemic approach of early identification and link to care, support and treatment.

It is one of its kind programs to improve the overall quality of life of children enabling all children achieve their full potential; and also provide comprehensive care to all the children in the community.

This program involves screening of children from birth to 18 years of age for 4 Ds- Defects at birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Development delays, spanning 32 common

health conditions for early detection and free treatment and management, including surgeries at tertiary level.

Children diagnosed with identified selected health conditions are provided early intervention services and follow-up care at the district level. These services are provided free of cost, thus helping their families reduce out of pocket expenditure incurred on the treatment.

To facilitate screening of children, there is a strong convergence with the Ministry of Women and Child Development for screening children the age group 0 – 6 years enrolled at Anganwadi centres and with the Ministry of Human Resource Development for screening the children enrolled in Government and Government aided schools. The newborn is screened for birth defects in health facilities by the doctors at health facilities and during the home visit by ASHA (peripheral health worker).

Categories	Age Group
Babies born at public health facilities and home	Birth to 6 weeks
Preschool children in rural areas and urban slum, Anganwadis	6 weeks to 6 years
School children enrolled in class 1st and 12th in government and government aided schools	6 yrs to 18 yrs

HEALTH CONDITIONS SCREENED UNDER THIS PROGRAM

<p>Defects at Birth</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Neural tube defect 2. Down's Syndrome 3. Cleft Lip & Palate / Cleft palate alone# 4. Talipes (club foot) 5. Developmental dysplasia of the hip 6. Congenital cataract 7. Congenital deafness 8. Congenital heart diseases 9. Retinopathy of Prematurity 	<p>Deficiencies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Anaemia especially Severe anaemia 11. Vitamin A deficiency (Bitot spot) 12. Vitamin D Deficiency, (Rickets) 13. Severe Acute Malnutrition 14. Goiter
<p>Childhood Diseases</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Skin conditions (Scabies, fungal infection and Eczema) 16. Otitis Media 17. Rheumatic heart disease 18. Reactive airway disease 19. Dental caries 20. Convulsive disorders 	<p>Developmental delays</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Vision Impairment 22. Hearing Impairment 23. Neuro-motor Impairment 24. Motor delay 25. Cognitive delay 26. Language delay 27. Behaviour disorder (Autism) 28. Learning disorder 29. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder 30. Congenital Hypothyroidism, Sickle cell anaemia, Beta thalassemia (Optional)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 31. Tuberculosis 32. Leprosy 	

PALNA SCHEME

Context:

The Union Women and Child Development Ministry plans to set up 17,000 creches within

Anganwadi centers across India under the 'Palna' scheme.

In July 2022, the Ministry of Women and

Child Development revamped the National Creche Scheme into the Palna Scheme under 'Mission Shakti.'

The Palna component has been included under Mission Shakti to provide for quality and affordable day-care facilities for the children of working women to encourage women's participation in work force.

This initiative aims to provide safe day-care facilities, enhancing the cognitive, nutritional, and health development of children.

With an increased participation rate of women in the workforce, reaching 37% in 2022, this expansion of creches signifies a concerted effort to support women while nurturing the development of future generations.

This transformation brought about Anganwadi cum Creches and reclassified existing creches from the old scheme as Stand Alone Creches.

Objectives:

To address the urgent need for quality day-care facilities/creches to the children of working women by providing a safe and secure environment for nutritional, health and cognitive development of the children, thereby enabling more women to take up gainful employment amongst all socio-economic groups both in the organized and unorganized sector, irrespective of their employment status.

NOMA

Context:

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently added one of the world's most under-recognized health challenges, noma, to its official list of neglected tropical diseases (NTD).

About:

Noma is also known as cancrum oris or gangrenous stomatitis, it is a severe gangrenous disease of the mouth and face with a mortality rate of approximately 90 per cent. Gangrene is a dangerous and potentially fatal condition that happens when the blood flow to a large area of tissue is cut off.

Noma mainly affects children aged 2-6 years old and is found most commonly among those living in poor communities.

The name of the disease comes from the Greek word "nomē", meaning "to devour", as noma eats away facial tissue and bones if not treated early.

While the disease is not contagious, it prefers to attack when the body's defences are weak. The disease begins with gum inflammation and is thought to be caused

by bacteria found in the mouth. Noma may result from oral contamination by a heavy load of Bacteroidaceae and a consortium of other microorganisms. The NTD often starts as an ulcer on the mucous membrane lining, commonly after a bout of measles or other diseases

The disease was also reported in Europe in concentration camps during World War 2, according to the journal of an Auschwitz survivor. The NTD is frequently seen in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where it occurs almost exclusively among poor children usually aged 3-10 years.

Noma primarily affects children who are malnourished, infected with infectious diseases, living in extreme poverty with poor oral health, or who have weakened immune systems, according to the WHO. Because the disease has a high mortality rate, early detection is critical because therapy is most effective in the early stages of the disease.

Its spread can be slowed significantly with basic hygiene, antibiotics, and nutritional rehabilitation. Early treatment with antibiotics, rehydration, correction of electrolyte

imbalances, and administering nutritional supplements will halt the disease.

Consequences:

The patients who survive face many consequences, like significant facial disfigurement, spasm of the jaw muscles, oral incontinence and speech problems, according to a 2003 study. The disease is also called the 'face of poverty', as effective drugs like sulfonamides and penicillin and adequate surgical treatment for the effects remain inaccessible for many due to extreme poverty.

Way forward:

The recognition of noma as an NTD aims to amplify global awareness, catalyse research, stimulate funding, and boost efforts to control the disease through multisectoral and multi-pronged approaches. Interventions addressing the burden of this devastating disease will

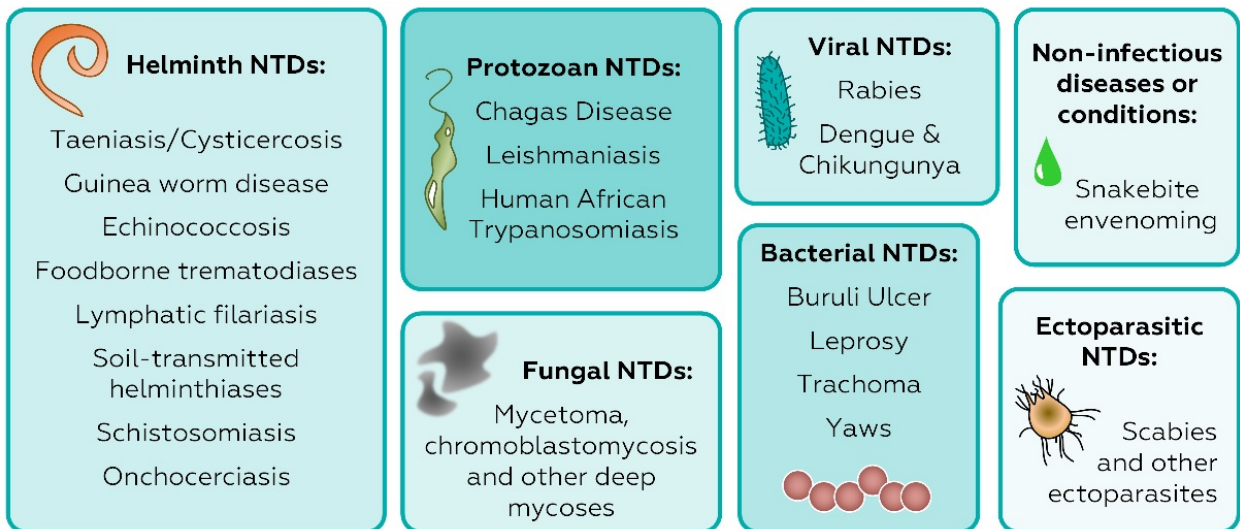
contribute to achieving universal health coverage, as they will specifically target pockets of underserved populations," the WHO said in a press release

About Neglected Tropical disease (NTDs):

NTDs are a diverse group of around 20 conditions that are mainly prevalent in tropical areas, where they mostly affect impoverished communities and disproportionately affect women and children. These diseases cause devastating health, social and economic consequences to more than one billion people.

The epidemiology of NTDs is complex and often related to environmental conditions. Many of them are vector-borne, have animal reservoirs and are associated with complex life cycles. All these factors make their public-health control challenging.

WHO LIST OF NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES



TRANSPLANT GAMES

Context:

For the first time, Kerala to host transplant games

About:

Kerala is organizing Transplant Games, a competitive sporting event for organ

transplant recipients and donors.

It is to showcase the success of organ transplantation in improving the quality of life and spread the message of organ donation.

The World Transplant Games Federation (WTGF) is a non-profit organization based in the United Kingdom with representation from more than 70 countries.

The WTGF organizes the World Transplant Games (WTG), which are international multi-sport events that take place every two years.

About Organ Transplantation in India:

Organ donation involves a voluntary process where individuals can express their consent to donate organs upon their demise by completing a consent form.

The key legislation governing organ transplantation in India is the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, enacted in 1994. This law establishes a framework to regulate the extraction, storage, and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes, aiming to prevent commercial dealings in human organs.

There are two main types of organ donation:

Living Donor Organ Donation: Individuals aged 18 and above can voluntarily donate one kidney, a portion of the pancreas, or a part of the liver during their lifetime. Donors can be family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, or in-laws.

Deceased Donor Organ Donation: After brain-stem or cardiac death, individuals can donate multiple organs and tissues. Consent from a close relative or a person legally in possession of the deceased's body is required for deceased organ donation.

Organ donation has no age limit, and it can commence as early as six weeks, with the primary consideration being the health and condition of the organs.

Transplantation of Human Organs

Act - Implementing Bodies:

At Apex level – National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) :

It is located in New Delhi. NOTTO is set up under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It has two divisions:

1. National Human Organ and Tissue Removal and Storage Network
2. National Biomaterial Centre

The National Organ Transplant Programme is overseen by the Directorate General of Health Services, Government of India, with the following objectives:

- Establishing a system for organ and tissue procurement and distribution for transplantation.
- Encouraging deceased organ and tissue donation.
- Providing necessary training for manpower involved in transplantation.
- Safeguarding vulnerable populations, particularly the economically disadvantaged, from organ trafficking.
- Monitoring organ and tissue transplant services and implementing policy corrections or changes when necessary.

Functions of NOTTO:

At National Level:

- Lay down policy guidelines and protocols for various functions.
- Network with similar regional and state level organizations.
- All registry data from States and regions would be compiled and published.
- Creating awareness, promotion of deceased organ donation and transplantation activities.

- Co-ordination from procurement of organs and tissues to transplantation when organ is allocated outside region.
- Dissemination of information to all concerned organizations, hospitals and individuals.
- Monitoring of transplantation activities in the regions and States and maintaining data-bank in this regard.
- To assist the states in data management, organ transplant surveillance & Organ transplant and Organ Donor registry.
- Consultancy support on the legal and non-legal aspects of donation and transplantation
- Coordinate and Organize trainings for various cadre of workers

At Regional level – Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (ROTTOs)
Five ROTTos have been set up at the following locations:

- Chandigarh,
- Mumbai,
- Chennai,
- Kolkata,
- Guwahati

At State level – State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisations (SOTTos). SOTTos has been established in around twelve States.

Recently, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has modified National Organ Transplantation Guidelines. Highlights of the New National Organ Transplantation Guidelines.

The tweaks in policy

According to officials familiar with the matter, the guidelines are likely to undergo following changes:

UPPER LIMIT CHANGED:

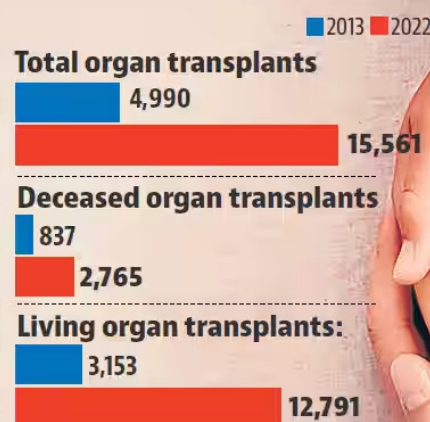
The Centre has removed the upper age limit as life expectancy has increased, and a 65-year-old is no longer considered a very old patient.

NO DOMICILE REQUIREMENT:

A citizen can now register for organ donation in any state; previous requirement of registering in the state of domicile has been removed

NO REGISTRATION FEES:

The Centre has asked state governments to stop taking fees to register a patient for organ transplants



Since health is a state subject, the Centre has begun consultation with states to bring them on board with the changes



CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

About

The crime rate may have declined in 2022 (258.1 per lakh population compared to 268 per lakh population in 2021), but crimes against women rose 4% in 2022 compared to 2021, according to the annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

Key facts

The nature of the majority of crimes against women are

Cruelty by husband or his relatives (31.4%),

Kidnapping and abduction of women (19.2%),

Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (18.7%)

Rape (7.1%)

The NCRB's report reveals that over 4.45 lakh cases of crimes against women were registered in 2022, equivalent to nearly 51 FIRs (first information report) every hour.

The representation of women in the police force (as of 2022) remained at 11.7% of the total state police force. (Ministry of Home Affairs)

Key laws for women's safety

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

Economic Development & Agriculture



What's Inside?

1. NATIONAL WATERWAYS
2. PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL CREDIT SOCIETIES (PACS) CAN NOW
3. OPERATE LPG DISTRIBUTORSHIPS AND PETROL/DIESEL OUTLETS:
4. SOVEREIGN GOLD BOND SCHEME 2023-24 (SERIES III)
5. DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNISING SELF-REGULATORY ORGANISATIONS (SROS)
6. RAMP PROGRAMME
7. RBI RELEASES A DRAFT 'LICENSING FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHORISED PERSONS' UNDER FEMA
8. LEADS REPORT, 2023
9. KASTURI COTTON BHARATH

NATIONAL WATERWAYS

Context:

Government of India declared 111 (including 5 existing and 106 new) National waterways (NWs) to ensure the arrangement of movement through Inland Waterways. These National Waterways are spread over 24 States under the National Waterways Act, 2016. Action plan has been formulated for development of 26 most viable NWs and development for shipping and navigation has been taken up first on 20 NWs in various States including NW 5 Dharma-Paradip via Mangalagadi to Pankapal, which is in Odisha with a length of 233Km

Some important National Waterways

- NW 1 Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River System (Haldia - Allahabad)
- NW 2 Brahmaputra River (Dhubri - Sadiya)
- NW 16 Barak River (Lakhipur -Tuker Gram)
- NW 3 West Coast Canal (Kottapuram - Kollam), Champakara and Udyogmandal Canals
- NW 4 Krishna River (Vijayawada - Muktyala)
- NW 68 Mandovi River (Usgoan bridge to Arabian Sea)
- NW 73 Narmada River (Pandharia to Gulf of Khambhat)
- NW 100 Tapi River (Hatnur Dam to Gulf of Khambhat)

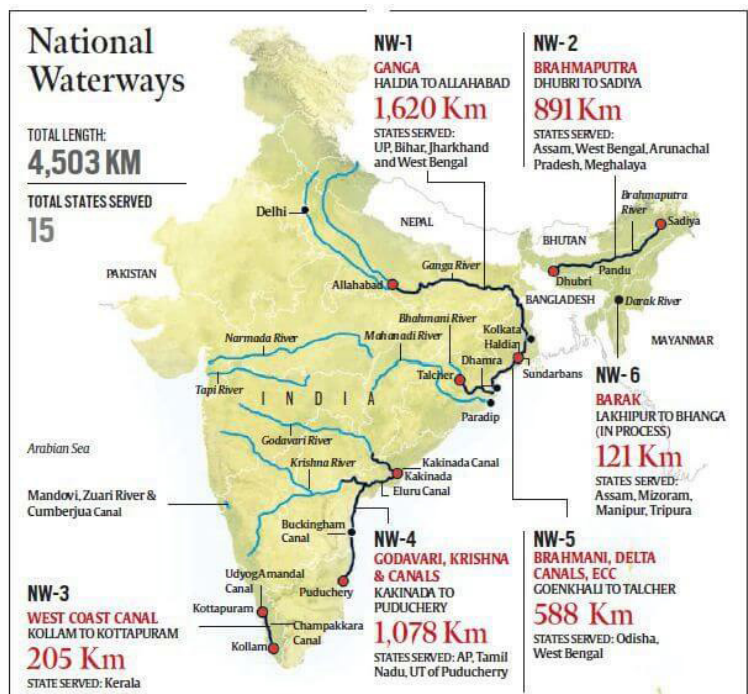
National Waterways Act 2016:

The National Waterways Act aids in the management of the country's waterways. It became effective in the year 2016. In addition to the pre-existing one, the act suggested 106 national waterways and consolidated 5 existing statutes that had designated the 5 national waterways.

Out of the 111 national waterways proclaimed by the National Waterways Act, 13 are active for shipping and navigation and are used by cargo or passenger vessels. The government of India established the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) in accordance with the National Waterways Act to regulate and develop the inland waterways used for navigation and shipping.

Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)

It aims at capacity augmentation of navigation on National Waterway-1 (NW-1), along the river Ganga. It is being implemented at a cost of Rs 5369.18 crore with the technical assistance and investment support of the World Bank. The Project is expected to be completed by March 2023.



PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL CREDIT SOCIETIES (PACS) CAN NOW OPERATE LPG DISTRIBUTORSHIPS AND PETROL/DIESEL OUTLETS

Context:

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has issued revised guidelines for selection of dealers for regular and rural retail outlets, as well as unified guidelines for selection of LPG distributorship.

Further in news:

As per the revised guidelines, PACS have been included under Combined Category 2 for retail petrol/ diesel dealership and Combined Category (CC) for LPG distributorship for which they can apply online as per the advertisements issued by Oil Marketing Companies.

Further, PACS have also been given one-time option to convert their wholesale consumer pumps into retail outlets, for which Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas released detailed guidelines, he added.

“As informed by OMCs, 228 PACS from 24 states and

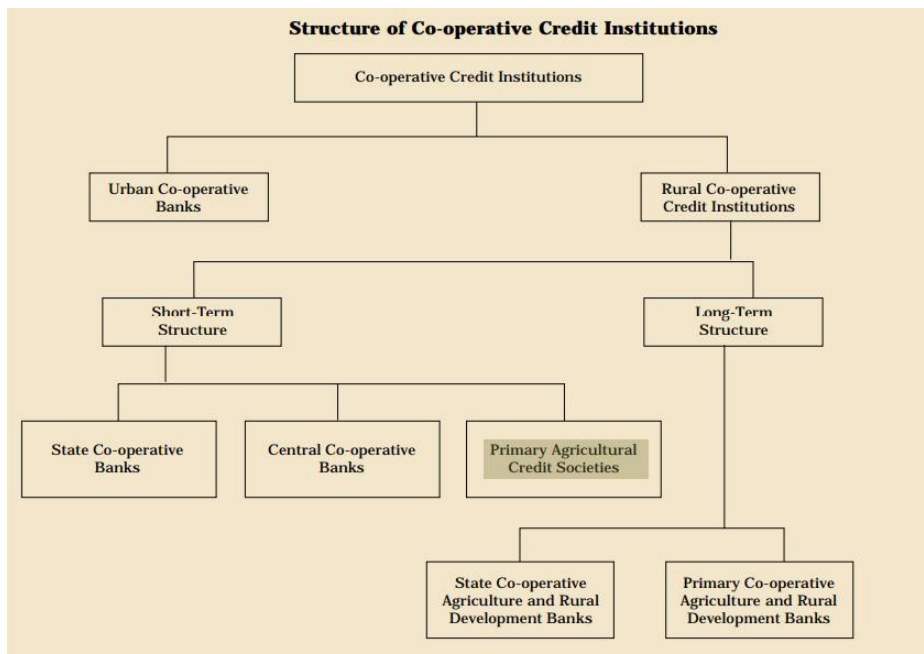
Union Territories have applied online so far for locations advertised by Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) for retail petrol/ diesel dealership”

Further, 109 PACS from five states having wholesale consumer pumps have given consumer pumps have given consent for conversion into retail outlets, out of which 43 PACS have received Letter of Intent (LOI) from the OMCs.

For LPG distributorship, two PACS have applied for the two locations advertised in Jharkhand

About PACS:

Established in 1904, PACS contribute significantly to financial inclusion with minimal paperwork, facilitating timely access to capital for farmers.



UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2020)

1. In terms of short-term credit delivery to the agriculture sector, District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) deliver more credit in comparison to Scheduled Commercial Banks and Regional Rural Banks.
2. One of the most important functions of DCCBs is to provide funds to the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Q2. With reference to 'Urban Cooperative Banks' in India, consider the following statements: (2021)

1. They are supervised and regulated by local boards set up by the State Governments.
2. They can issue equity shares and preference shares.
3. They were brought under the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 through an Amendment in 1966.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

- Co-operative banks are financial entities which belong to its members, who are at the same time the owners and the customers of their bank. They are established by State laws.
- Co-operative banks in India are registered under the Cooperative Societies Act. They are also regulated by the RBI and governed by Banking Regulations Act, 1949 and Banking Laws (Co-operative Societies) Act, 1955.

- Cooperative banks lend as well as accept deposits. They are established with the aim of funding agriculture and allied activities and financing village and cottage industries.
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is the apex body of cooperative banks in India.
- Urban Co-operative Banks (UCB) are regulated and supervised by State Registrars of Co-operative Societies (RCS) in case of single-state co-operative banks and Central Registrar of Co-operative Societies (CRCS) in case of multi-state co-operative banks and by the RBI. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.
- The banking related functions such as issue of license to start new banks/branches, matters relating to interest rates, loan policies, investments and prudential exposure norms are regulated and supervised by the Reserve Bank under the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 after an amendment in 1966. Hence, statement 3 is correct.
- The Reserve Bank of India came out with draft guidelines allowing primary UCBs to augment capital through issuance of equity shares, preference shares and debt instruments.
- The UCBs could raise share capital by issue of equity to persons within their area of operation enrolled as members and also through additional equity shares to the existing members. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. "In the villages itself no form of credit organization will be suitable except the cooperative society." – All India Rural Credit Survey. Discuss this statement in the background of agricultural finance in India. What constraints and challenges do financial institutions supplying agricultural finance face? How can technology be used to better reach and serve rural clients? (2014)

SOVEREIGN GOLD BOND SCHEME 2023-24 (SERIES III)

Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2023-24 (Series III) was opened for subscription during the period December 18-22, 2023.



About Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme:

SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold.

They are substitutes for holding physical gold.

Investors have to pay the issue price in cash and the bonds will be redeemed in cash on maturity.

The Bond is issued by the Reserve Bank on

behalf of the Government of India.

The SGB Scheme was launched by the Government in November 2015, under the Gold Monetization Scheme.

In this scheme, the issues are made open for subscription in tranches by RBI in consultation with GOI.

Features of the scheme:

Sovereign Gold Bonds will be denominated in the multiples of a gram of gold with a minimum unit of 1 gram.

The maximum limit of gold prices which can be subscribed by an individual is 4 kg, 4 kg for a Hindu-Undivided Family and 20 kg for trusts and other similar entities.

The interest for the gold bonds will be 2.50% per annum which is payable semi-annually on the nominal value.

The tenure of the bond will be for a period of 8 years with an exit option available in the 5th, 6th and 7th year on the dates of interest payment.

DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNISING SELF-REGULATORY ORGANISATIONS (SROS)

Context

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently placed on its website, a 'Draft Omnibus Framework for recognising Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) for its Regulated Entities (REs)'.

The move is in pursuance of developing better industry standards for self-regulation and seeking comments from stakeholders.

About the Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs):

An SRO is a non-governmental organisation

that sets and enforces rules and standards relating to the conduct of entities in the industry (members) with the aim of protecting the customer and promoting ethics, equality, and professionalism.

Their self-regulatory processes are administered through impartial mechanisms such that members operate in a disciplined environment and accept penal actions by the SRO.

An SRO is expected to address concerns beyond the narrow self-interests of the industry, such as to protect workers, customers or other participants in the ecosystem.

Regulations, standards and dispute resolution by an SRO do not replace but supplement existing laws or regulations.

The recognised SRO serves as a two-way communication channel between its members and the RBI.

Those entities who are interested in being recognised as SROs will have to apply to the RBI, which issues a letter of recognition.

About the Regulated Entities (REs)

REs means all Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs)/ Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)/ Local Area Banks (LABs)/ All Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs) /State and Central Co-operative Banks (StCBs / CCBs) and any other entity which has been licenced under Section 22 of Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

They as a group shall be referred as 'banks', All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs), All Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs), Miscellaneous Non-Banking Companies (MNBCs) and Residuary Non-Banking Companies (RNBCs).

Highlights of the draft

The draft omnibus framework contains broad parameters applicable to any Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO).

It includes objectives, responsibilities, eligibility criteria, governance standards, application process and other basic conditions for grant of recognition to the SRO.

The existing SROs already recognized by the Reserve Bank would continue to be governed by the terms and conditions under which they were recognised, unless this framework is specifically extended to such SROs.

Significance of the framework

The rapid growth of the REs in terms of number as well as scale of operations, and an increase in the adoption of innovative technologies and enhanced customer outreach, thus making it difficult for the RBI to regulate the sector effectively.

RAMP PROGRAMME

Context

Recently, the Union Minister for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched three sub-schemes under the aegis of the RAMP programme.

About the RAMP Programme:

The Raising & Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) programme is assisted by the World Bank.

It aims to improve the performance of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in India. It was launched in 2022.

Objectives:

- Improving access to market and credit for MSMEs
- Strengthening institutions and governance at the central and state levels

- Improving centre-state linkages and partnerships
- Addressing issues of delayed payments
- Greening of MSMEs

The National MSME Council has been set up by the Ministry to work as an administrative and functional body of the RAMP Programme.

Sub schemes under RAMP:

MSME GIFT Scheme: MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme intends to help MSMEs adopt green technology with interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

MSE SPICE Scheme: The MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy aims to support circular economy projects which will be done through credit subsidy and will lead

to realising the dream of MSME sector towards zero emissions by 2070.

MSE ODR Scheme: The MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments is a first of its kind scheme to synergise legal support with modern IT tools and Artificial Intelligence to address the incidences of delayed payments

for Micro and Small Enterprises.

Implementing agencies of the sub schemes are, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) for MSME GIFT and MSME SPICE schemes and National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (for NICSI) for MSE ODR scheme.

RBI RELEASES A DRAFT 'LICENSING FRAMEWORK FOR AUTHORISED PERSONS' UNDER FEMA

Context

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently released a draft 'Licensing Framework for Authorised Persons (APs)' under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.

About FEMA:

FEMA came in 1999 as a successor to the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, or FERA, of 1973, with changing economic conditions in post-liberalisation India.

The main objective of FEMA is to facilitate external trade and payments and promote the orderly development and maintenance of the foreign exchange market in India.

FEMA deals with provisions relating to procedures, formalities, dealings, etc. of foreign exchange transactions in India.

The FEMA regulates various aspects of foreign exchange transactions, including the acquisition and holding of foreign exchange, the payment and settlement of foreign exchange transactions, the export and import of currency, and other related activities.

The act also empowers the RBI to make rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of the act.

Violations of the provisions of FEMA can result in penalties and fines.

FEMA's head office is known as the Enforcement Directorate and is situated in Delhi.

It is applicable to the whole of India and equally applicable to the agencies and offices

located outside India (which are owned or managed by an Indian Citizen).

FEMA is applicable to the following entities and transactions:

- Foreign exchange.
- Foreign security.
- Exportation of any commodity and/or service from India to a country outside India.
- Importation of any commodity and/or service from outside India.
- Securities as defined under the Public Debt Act 1994.
- Purchase, sale, and exchange of any kind (i.e. Transfer).
- Banking, financial, and insurance
- Any overseas company owned by an NRI (Non-Resident Indian) and the owner is 60% or more.
- Any citizen of India, residing in the country or outside (NRI).

Who are Authorised Persons (APs) under FEMA?

Section 2(c) of the FEMA states that 'authorised person' means an authorised dealer, money changer, off-shore banking unit, or any other person authorised under section 10 (1) to deal in foreign exchange and foreign securities.

These are authorised by the RBI to deal in foreign exchange or in foreign securities.

LEADS REPORT, 2023

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has released the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report 2023.

LEADS REPORT:

The LEADS is an indigenous data-driven index to assess logistics infrastructure, services, and human resources across all States and UTs.

LEADS continue to act as a guiding & bridging mechanism for the identification of interventions enhancing logistics efficiency at State/UTs.

The first logistics report was released in 2018.

While the LPI relies entirely on perception-based surveys, LEADS incorporate both perception as well as objectivity thereby enhancing the robustness and comprehensiveness of this exercise.

LEADS REPORT, 2023:

This report is based on a pan-India primary survey.

Logistics sector will be a cornerstone in our endeavour to take India to a 10-fold growth from a USD 3.5 trillion to USD 35 trillion by 2047.

Key pillars – Logistics Infrastructure, Logistics Services and Operating and Regulatory Environment.

23 States/UTs have notified their State Logistics Policies to align with the National Logistics Policy.

Further, 16 States/UTs have given industry status to logistics.

Digital reform such as PM Gati Shakti, Logistics Data Bank, Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP), GST are propelling India's improved ranking at global level.

Performance Highlights from LEADS 2023:

Coastal Group

Achievers: Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu

Fast Movers: Kerala, Maharashtra

Aspirers: Goa, Odisha, West Bengal

Landlocked Group

Achievers: Haryana, Punjab, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh

Fast Movers: Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand

Aspirers: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand

North-East Group

Achievers: Assam, Sikkim, Tripura

Fast Movers: Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland

Aspirers: Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram

Union Territories

Achievers: Chandigarh, Delhi

Fast Movers: Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Puducherry

Aspirers: Daman & Diu/ Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh

KASTURI COTTON BHARATH

Context:

Kasturi Cotton Bharat is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India; the Cotton Corporation of India and TEXPROCIL.

This approach seeks to position Indian cotton as a premium and trusted product in international

markets.

Cotton:

Cotton – the world's most versatile fibre – is regarded as 'white gold with a green heart'.

India has the largest area under cotton cultivation and is also the largest producer and

second largest consumer of cotton.

India is one of the earliest countries to have domesticated this most preferred fibre and used it to manufacture yarn, fabrics, home textiles, garments and more.

In order to give a distinct identity to the Indian Cotton, empower farmers and benefit the stakeholders, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India has recently launched the “Kasturi Cotton”.

Kasturi cotton Bharath:

On the eve of World Cotton Day on 7th October, Ministry of Textiles announced the

TEXPROCIL: Established in 1954, this apex body under the Ministry of Textiles has spearheaded the export of Indian cotton textile products, serving over 150 countries globally.

“Kasturi Cotton Bharat” brand of cotton by which Indian cotton has been endowed with a brand and a logo that represents Whiteness, Softness, Purity, Lustre and Indianness.

Kasturi Cotton is not merely a product, it is a symbol of our commitment to ‘5F Principles’: Farm to fibre; fibre to factory; factory to fashion; fashion to foreign.

Kasturi Cotton Bharat website: A digital platform for necessary information and updates on this initiative. The website highlights the registration process for ginners to produce the Kasturi Cotton Bharat brand and its processes that make the branded Indian cotton unique.

Other initiatives of India:

India has launched PM MITRA - a Central government scheme to set up mega textile parks and promote the entire value chain.

National Technical Textiles Mission promotes research and development in technical textiles.

The Indian textile industry is working towards achieving \$250 billion by 2030, including \$100 billion exports.

GEOGRAPHY,

ENVIRONMENT,

BIODIVERSITY AND

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

What's Inside?

1. ARSENIC CONTAMINATION
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ARSENIC CONTAMINATION

Context:

Arsenic found in groundwater in 25 states, fluoride in 27 states

About

Arsenic has been detected in groundwater in parts of 230 districts in 25 states and fluoride in 469 districts in 27 states. The groundwater contamination reported by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) is mostly geogenic in nature and does not show significant change over the years.

Arsenic has been reported in parts of 230 districts in 25 states and Fluoride has been reported in 469 districts in 27 states.

Arsenic:

It is an odourless and tasteless metalloid widely distributed in the earth's crust. It is naturally present at high levels in the earth crust and groundwater of a number of countries. Arsenic has been recognized as a toxic element and is considered a human health hazard.

Effect of Arsenic on human health

Long-term intake of arsenic contaminated water leads to arsenic poisoning or arsenicosis, with cancer of skin, bladder, kidney or lung or diseases of skin (colour changes, and hard patches on palms and soles), or blood vessels of legs and feet. Fresh evidence indicates possible association between intake of contaminated water to onset of diabetes, hypertension and reproductive disorders.

Absorption of arsenic through the skin is minimal and thus hand-washing, bathing, laundry, etc. with water containing arsenic do not pose human health risks.

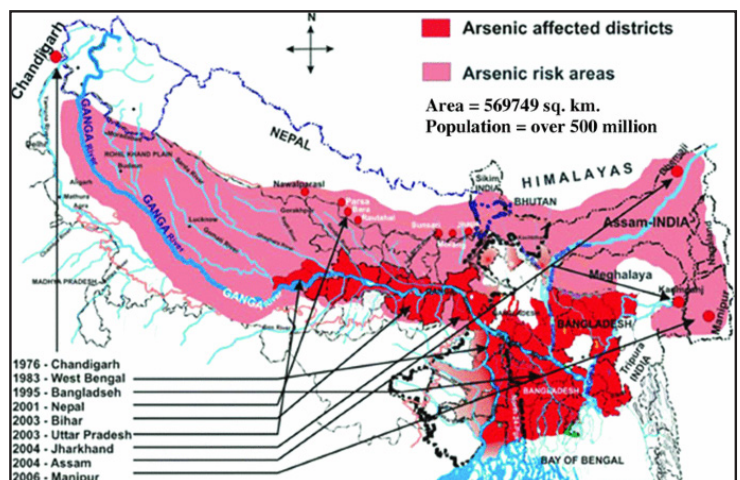
World Health Organisation's provisional guideline value for arsenic in drinking water - 0.01 mg/l (10 µg/l).

Permissible limit of arsenic in India in absence of an alternative source - 0.05 mg/l (50 µg/l).

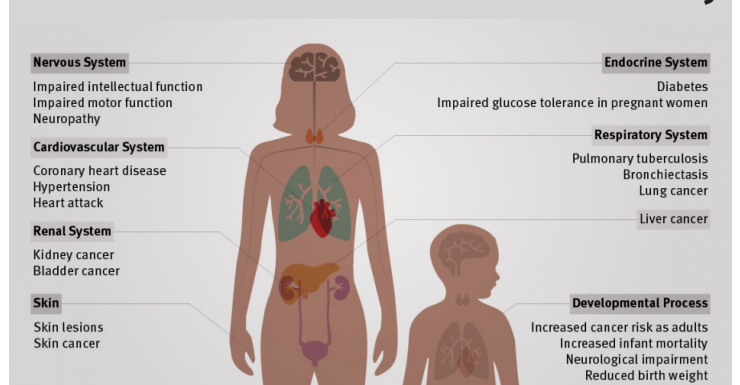
Arsenic impact on behaviour

The study found that individuals exposed to arsenic had reduced grey matter and weaker connections within key regions of the brain associated with cognitive functions.

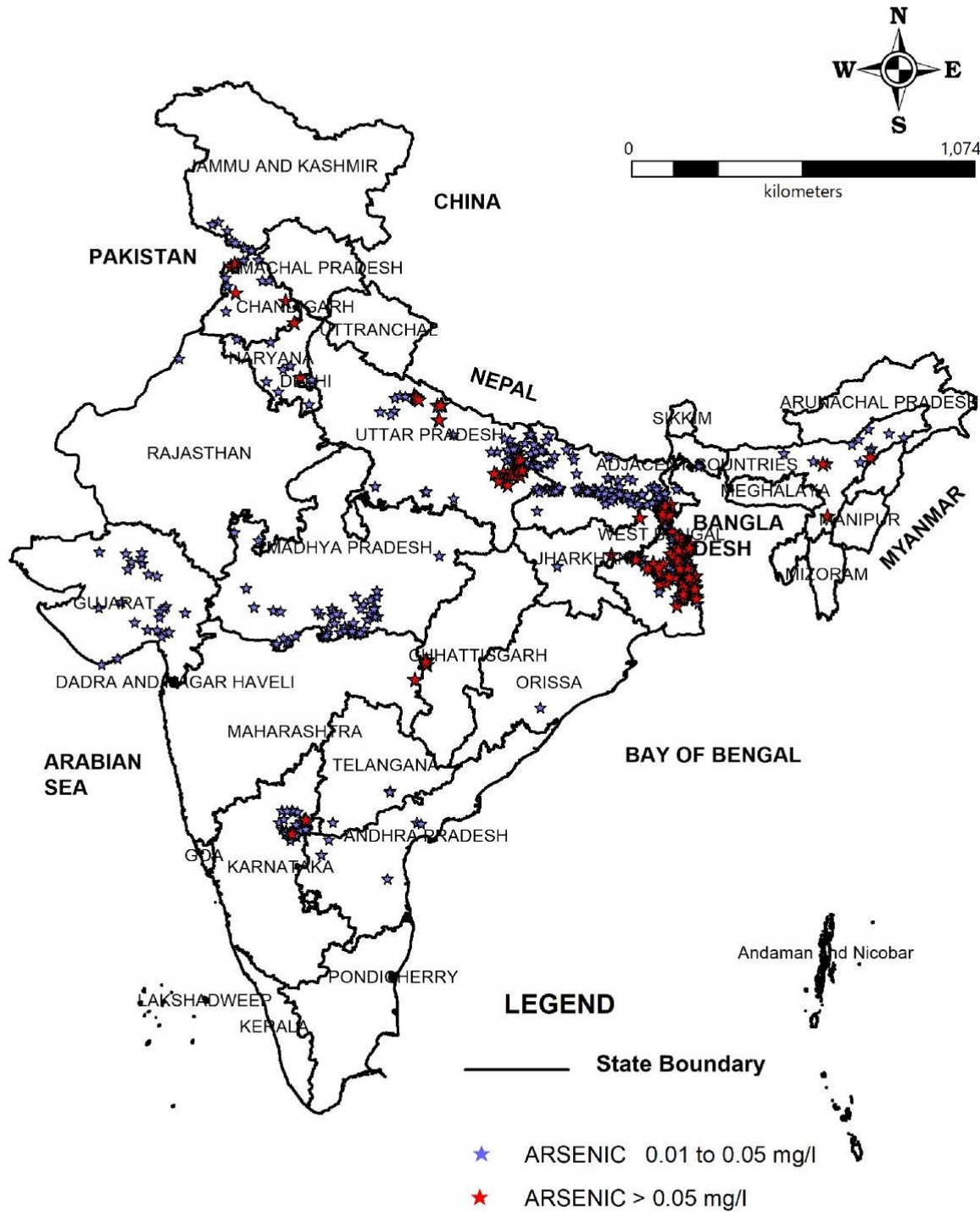
Chronic exposure to arsenic could have significant consequences at a population level, leading to increased school failures, diminished economic productivity, and higher risks of criminal and antisocial behaviour.



Arsenic's effects on the human body



LOCATIONS OF ARSENIC IN GROUND WATER



Management of Arsenic contamination in groundwater:

Some of the management options include

- Uses of surface water sources
- Exploring and harnessing alternate arsenic free aquifer
- Removal of arsenic from groundwater using arsenic treatment plants/filters

- Adopting rainwater harvesting/ watershed management practices.

Possible solutions:

Various treatment methods have been adopted to remove arsenic from drinking water. These methods include 1) adsorption-coprecipitation using iron and aluminum salts, 2) adsorption on activated alumina, activated carbon, and activated bauxite, 3) reverse osmosis, 4) ion exchange and 5) oxidation followed by filtration.

NAMDAPHA FLYING SQUIRREL

Context:

Missing for 42 years, Namdapha flying squirrel resurfaces in Arunachal Pradesh.

About:

The Namdapha flying squirrel (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*) was last described in 1981 based on a single individual found in the 1,985 sq. km. Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district.

The failure of zoologists to locate the arboreal mammal during several expeditions thereafter generated two theories — that it could have been mistaken for the very similar red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) sharing the same ecosystem or worse, become history.

The team members said they are designing a study to collect DNA samples of the squirrel in the field for comparing the genetic material with the DNA of the individual collected in

1981, stored at the Zoological Survey of India in Kolkata

About Namdapha Flying squirrel:

It is a rare nocturnal flying squirrel species found in the Namdapha Tiger Reserve endemic to Arunachal Pradesh, India.

It is distinct from the red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*), another species in the same ecosystem, primarily due to the prominent tuft of hair on its ears.

These squirrels are not capable of flight like birds or bats; instead, they glide between trees.

They inhabit tall *Mesua ferrea* jungles, often on hill slopes in the catchment area of the Dihing River (particularly on the western slope of the Patkai range) in northeastern India.

They are herbivores (frugivores, granivores). They eat various fruits, nuts, seeds, fungi, flowers, and tree sap.



Conservation status:

IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: schedule II

About Namdapha Tiger Reserve:

Namdapha Tiger Reserve is located in the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Namdapha is the name of a river which originates from Daphabum and meets the

Noa-Dehing river.

This river flows right across in a North-South direction of the National Park and hence the name Namdapha has been given.

This protected area is wedged between the

Dapha Bum ridge of Mishmi Hills, of North Eastern Himalayas and the Patkai Ranges.

Types of forest: Evergreen Forests, Moist deciduous forests, sub-tropical forests, Temperate Forests and Alpine.

'CHANNA BARCA' FISH

Context:

500 Channa Barca fishes worth Rs 4.5 cr seized at Dibrugarh Airport

About Channa Barca

It is also known as the Barca Snakehead, is a primitive predatory fish and member of the family Channidae. "Pipli Cheng" or "Cheng Garaka" is the local name for Channa Barca.

It is endemic to the upper Brahmaputra river basin in northeastern India and Bangladesh. In India, it is restricted to the states of Assam and Nagaland in northeastern India but is scarce and never collected in numbers.

It inhabits vertical burrows around the margins of wetlands, which typically become dry during the winter months. The fish use them as refuges during the dry winter months, emerging to hunt and breed while the habitat is flooded.

Since it is a rare, ornamental fish, it is in high demand in the international market and is susceptible to illegal trade.

Conservation Status:

Overall, it has been assessed as data deficient by the IUCN, and in 2014, it was assessed by the IUCN as critically endangered due to habitat loss.

Channa Barca' fish, listed in Schedule 2 of



the Wildlife Protection Act.

EURASIAN OTTER

Context:

A team of researchers have discovered Eurasian otters in the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary in Idukki, a first in Kerala.

About

Eurasian Otter is a semi-aquatic carnivorous mammal. Scientific Name: *Lutra lutra*

They are shy and nocturnal. The Eurasian

otter lives in a wide variety of aquatic habitats including highland and lowland lakes, rivers, streams, marshes, swamp forests and coastal areas independent of their size, origin or latitude.

The species holds a conservation status of “Near Threatened” on the IUCN list.

It is classified under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 and falls under Appendix I of the CITES.



There are three species of otters found in Kerala, including Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Smooth-coated Otter and Small-clawed Otter.

About Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is a prominent chunk of the block of protected forests growing in the Annamalai hills in the Idukki District, Kerala-TamilNadu border.

- The sanctuary’s landscape is characterized by rocky terrains, hillocks, and valleys.
- Vegetation - Dry Deciduous Forests, Wet Grasslands, High Sholas, Dry Thorny Scrub Forests, and Riparian Forests
- Rivers- Chinnar and Pambar are the major rivers flowing through it.
- Flora - Among the 1000 species of flowering plants, some of the rarely found species include *Elaeocarpus recurvatus*, *Arabica*, *Acacia leucophloea*, *Santalum album*, *Neelakurinji*, etc.
- Fauna - The Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary provides a home to endangered species such as Grizzled Giant Squirrel, Gaur, Rusty-Spotted Cat, Sambar, Nilgiri Tahr, Bonnet Macaques, Tufted Grey Langur, Spotted Deer, etc.
- It is also famous for preserving a diverse range of birds such as Black Eagle, Yellow-throated Bulbuls, Grey Heron, Serpent Eagle, Little Egret, etc.
- The sanctuary also houses 156 species of butterflies, 42 species of fishes and several other reptiles along with some notable insects.
- It is the only rehabilitation centre for the Indian Star Tortoise in India.

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME

Context:

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched an Alternative Livelihood Programme under the Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme-2023 in Sultanpur National Park, a Ramsar Site in Haryana.

About

Under this initiative, Indian Institute of

Amrit Dharohar

- The Amrit Dharohar initiative, part of the 2023-24 budget announcement, was launched by MoEF&CC during June 2023.
- This is a scheme that will be implemented over the next three years to encourage optimal use of wetlands, and enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
- Amrit Dharohar will emphasize on the importance of wetlands and their preservation, with an outlook that is inclusive of local communities as caretakers of the ecosystem.

Tourism & Travel Management (IITTM), an autonomous body under MoT, in collaboration with MoEFCC will build the capacity of local community members around different Ramsar sites in order to strengthen nature tourism at these sites and provide alternative livelihood to the local community.

With the help of the State Forest Department, a total of 30 participants have been identified from the local communities located around Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary to impart this training and subsequently certify them as nature-guides.

The Nature-tourism and Wet component of this initiative is being implemented jointly by MoT and MoEFCC with an aim to enhance livelihood opportunities for local communities through harnessing the nature-tourism potential of the Ramsar Sites across the country.

Sultanpur (Haryana) is one of the five priority Ramsar Sites besides Bhitarkanika and Chilika in Odisha and Yashwant Sagar and Sirpur in Madhya Pradesh identified in first phase by MoT and MoEFCC for taking up training programmes for local communities under the Alternative Livelihood Programme (ALP).

About Sultanpur National Park

Sultanpur National Park, formerly known as Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, is located in the

Gurgaon district in Haryana.

This national park is a major habitat for aquatic birds, including migratory and resident birds.

The status of the park was upgraded to National Park under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in July 1991.

It was notified as a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance, in 2021.

Vegetation: Tropical and dry deciduous.

Flora: Grasses, dhok, khair, tendu, ber, jamun, banyan tree, neem, berberis, Acacia nilotica and Acacia tortilis.

Fauna:

More than 320 species of birds have been recorded from the Park. This is a very important wintering ground for waterfowl.

Some of the resident and migratory species of birds found in the area are the Common hoopoe, Purple sunbird, Black francolin, Little cormorant, Indian Cormorant, Siberian Crane, Greater Flamingo, Common Teal, Common Greenshank, Ruff, etc.

Mammals: Blackbuck, Nilgai, Hog deer, Sambar, Leopard

Other National Park in Haryana: Kalesar National Park located in District Yamunanagar

NEW SPECIES OF MARINE AMPHIPOD FOUND

Context

Researchers at Berhampur University, Odisha have discovered a new species of marine amphipod a shrimp-like crustacea of genus *Demaorchestia*— in the state's Chilika lake on the east coast of India.

The new species was named *Demaorchestia alanensis* after global expert professor Alan Myers of University College Cork, Ireland, who has made a significant contribution to global marine amphipod studies.

The present contribution has added one more

species to the genus *Demaorchestia*, raising the global species number in the group to six.

The study has revealed that the new species is white in colour and less than 15 millimetres in length. It has 13 pairs of legs. While three pairs are used for swimming in the water, eight pairs are used for walking on land. The other two pairs are used for capturing prey and feeding.

Amphipods are a significant group in the marine ecosystem and play a vital role in the marine food chain. They also serve as

indicators for studying the impact of climate change and health of coastal ecosystems. Further research will delve deeper into understanding the specific ecological roles of amphipods in coastal and marine environments.

The family Talitridae was considered one of the oldest groups of amphipods, and it was believed to have been on the planet since the Jurassic age. It is divided into four

subfamilies: Talitrinae, Floresorchestiinae, Pseudorchestoideinae and Platorchestiinae. In the Indian context, the family Talitridae is represented by only Talitrinae and Floresorchestiinae.

Earlier, Patro and Bhoi discovered another two marine amphipods *Quadrivisio Chilikensis* from the seaweeds near Nalaban, the bird sanctuary area of the lagoon and *Talorchestia buensis* from the West Bengal coastal area.

ETHANOL PRODUCTION

Context:

Government directs sugar mills to not use sugarcane juice for ethanol production to keep prices in check.

However, the government has allowed use of 'B-molasses' for ethanol production in 2023-24, a move which sugar industry bodies welcomed.

Ethanol:

Ethanol is a liquid alcohol.

It can be used like gasoline in vehicles with internal combustion engines.

Internal combustion engines capture that energy to power the vehicle.

Ethanol is known as a first-generation biofuel. This type of fuel is made from sources such as starches, sugars, and vegetable oils.

Ethanol production plants are considered biorefineries.

Ways of Production of ethanol:

Through sugarcane: Through sugarcane sugar route. The major source of ethanol production in the country is via sugarcane-sugar-molasses route. This provides better economy by sale of sugar; molasses becomes the byproduct of the sugar. Average sugar cane productivity in India is about 70 MT per hectare and ethanol produced from one MT of sugarcane is 70 liters.

Through sugar beet: In European countries sugar beet is preferred. Sugar beet has certain

advantages over sugarcane. Low requirement of water, lower maturity time and lower power requirement for crushing.

Starch-based alcohol production: Alcohols are produced from a large number of different starch crops as barley, wheat, corn, potato, sorghum, etc. Corn oil is edible and its use in India for production of ethanol is not economically feasible.

Ethanol made from cellulosic biomass: In the coming years it is believed that cellulosic biomass will be the largest source of bioethanol. The crops residues such as rice straw, bagasse, etc.

India's targets in ethanol blending:

The target of achieving average 10 per cent blending was achieved in June, 2022, much ahead.

The government advanced the target of 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol from earlier 2030 to 2025.

Advantages of ethanol as fuel:

- Provides high quality high octane for exceptional engine performance
- Reduced emissions.

Disadvantages of ethanol:

- Less efficient than gasoline.
- Expensive to produce
- Fermentation is more complicated than simple distillation.

IUCN UPDATED RED LIST

Context:

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List underwent an update, featuring thousands of new species assessments and reassessments.

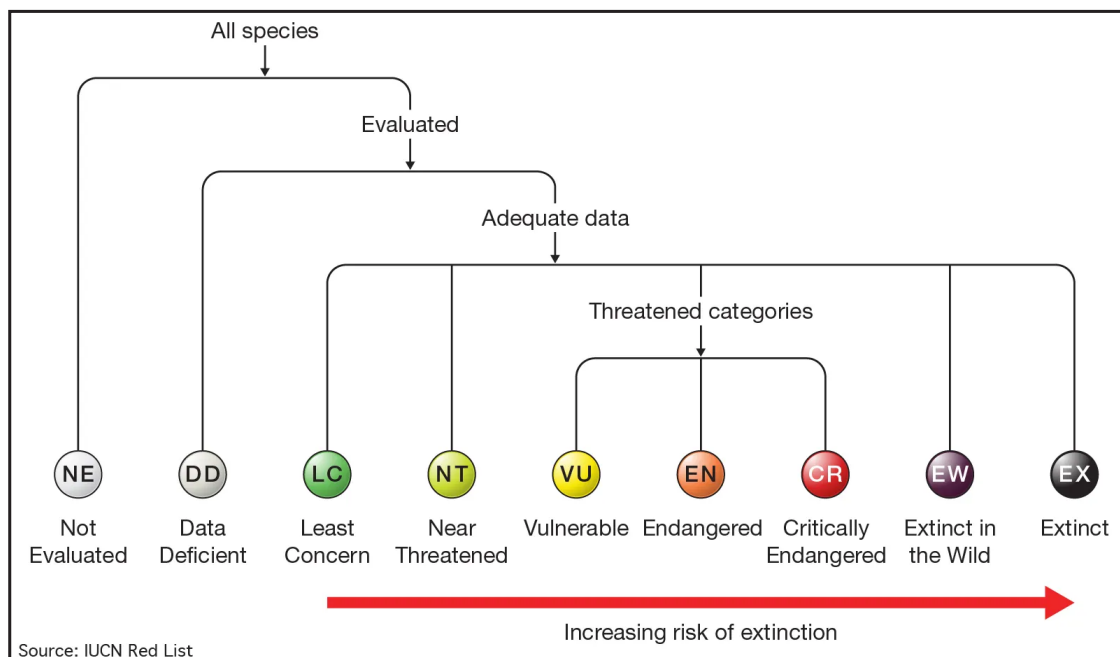
The IUCN Red List now includes 157,190 species, of which 44,016 are threatened with extinction.

Updated list:

Species	Past list	Updated
Finless porpoise	VU	EN
Blue tailed skink		EW
Kikuzato's Stream Snake		CR
Irrawady dolphin	VU	EN
Okarito kiwi and northern brown kiwi	EN	VU
Western ringtail possum	VU	CR
Lister's gecko		EW
Pillar corals	VU	CR

Red List categories:

Category	Criteria
Extinct (EX)	Species in which the last individual has died or where systematic and time-appropriate surveys have been unable to log even a single individual
Extinct in the Wild (EW)	Species whose members survive only in captivity or as artificially supported populations far outside their historical geographic range
Critically Endangered (CR)	Species that possess an extremely high risk of extinction as a result of rapid population declines of 80 to more than 90 percent over the previous 10 years (or three generations), a current population size of fewer than 50 individuals, or other factors
Endangered (EN)	Species that possess a very high risk of extinction as a result of rapid population declines of 50 to more than 70 percent over the previous 10 years (or three generations), a current population size of fewer than 250 individuals, or other factors
Vulnerable (VU)	Species that possess a very high risk of extinction as a result of rapid population declines of 30 to more than 50 percent over the previous 10 years (or three generations), a current population size of fewer than 1,000 individuals, or other factors
Near Threatened (NT)	Species that are close to becoming threatened or may meet the criteria for threatened status in the near future
Least Concern (LC)	Species that are pervasive and abundant after careful assessment
Data Deficient (DD)	Species in which the amount of available data related to its risk of extinction is lacking in some way. Consequently, a complete assessment cannot be performed.
Not Evaluated (NE)	A category used to include any of the nearly 1.9 million species described by science but not assessed by the IUCN



INDIAN FOREST & WOOD CERTIFICATION SCHEME

Context:

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has launched the Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme.

Regulation:

It is an integral part of the National Working Plan Code 2023.

It will be overseen by the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council, which will act as a multi-stakeholder advisory body.

Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal will act as the scheme operating agency and will be responsible for overall management of the Scheme.

The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies will accredit the certification bodies which will carry out independent audits and assess adherence of various entities on the standards prescribed under the scheme.

Certification standards:

1. IFWCS would offer certification for sustainable forest management, sustainable management of trees outside forests like those in plantations, and chain of custody which is a sort of guarantee of the traceability of a forest product throughout its supply chain, from the

origins to the market.

2. Amid rising international concerns on deforestation and illicit trade in timber, the government has launched its own “national” forest certification scheme to validate entities that adhere to sustainable practices in management of forests and its products.
3. IFWCS will offer an alternative to the private foreign certification agencies that have been operating in the Indian market for the last two decades.
4. A separate Trees Outside Forests Standard is now introduced as a part of the Scheme.
5. Getting certification is not mandatory, but adhering to the government standards is compulsory.
6. The markets have been tightening the rules for import of forest products because of greater sensitivity around deforestation on climate change concerns.
7. Certification may be of use to forest management units, corporations, or wood-based industries, tree growers, timber or NTFP (Non-Timber Forest Produce) traders, saw millers, exporters or importers of wood-based and NTFP-based products, and other end-user industries.

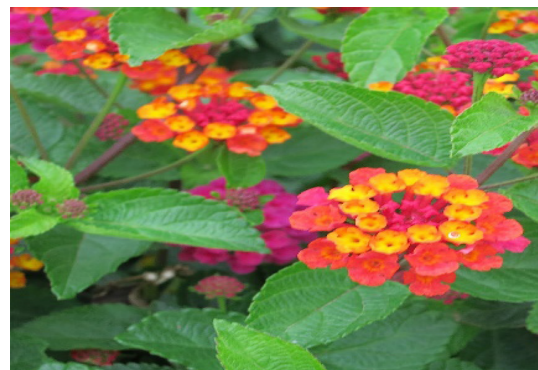
LANTANA CAMARA – INVASIVE SPECIES

Context

A decade-long initiative in Madhya Pradesh to reclaim land overrun by lantana helps residents restart agriculture and restore native biodiversity.

Lantana camara, also known as lantana, is an invasive weed species of flowering plant within the verbena family.

It is native to the American tropics and is a



very adaptable species that can inhabit a wide variety of ecosystems.

Lantana is not native to India, and was introduced in the country as an ornamental plant by the British in the 1800s, and has since spread over 574,186 sq km, covering 50% of the country's 'natural areas'.

It has invaded more than 40% of India's tiger habitats, threatening them by reducing the tiger's prey base.

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) revealed that *Lantana camara* has invaded 154,000 square kilometres, nearly the size of Odisha.

In Karnataka, nearly half of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve is covered with *Lantana camara* and other invasive species.

The Shivalik hills, Central India, and Southern

Western Ghats are the worst hit.

Concern

Eradicating lantana is difficult because of its rapid spread, intensity of infestation, allelopathy (chemicals released to discourage growth of native plants), opportunistic growth behaviour, reproductivity biology traits, and tenacious resistance to cutting and burning.

It competes with native plants for space and resources and also alters the nutrient cycle in the soil.

This invasion has resulted in the scarcity of native forage plants for wild herbivores. If eaten, the leaves can induce allergies on the muzzles of animals. In some cases, extensive feeding on lantana has led to diarrhoea, liver failure and even the animal's death.

NATIONAL TRANSIT PASS SYSTEM [NTPS]

Context:

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Labour and Employment launched the National Transit Pass System (NTPS) pan-India to facilitate the seamless transit of timber, bamboo, and other forest produce across the country.

Objectives:

The NTPS is envisioned as a "One Nation-One Pass" regime, which will enable seamless transit across the country.

This initiative will streamline the issuance of timber transit permits by providing a unified, online mode for tree growers and farmers involved in agroforestry across the country, contributing to the ease of doing business.

Launched to streamline the transit of timber and other forest products, it is expected to enhance the ease of doing business in this sector.

Presently, 25 States and Union Territories have embraced the unified permit system, streamlining interstate business operations for producers, farmers, and transporters.

Story so far:

Prior to the introduction of NTPS, obtaining transit permits from different states along the route was a time-consuming process.

Each state has its own transit regulations which meant that in order to transport timber or forest produce across states, one was required to get a separate transit pass issued in each state.

NTPS offers seamless transit permits, managing records for both inter-state and intra-state transportation.

Advantages of NTPS:

1. NTPS is designed for user convenience, featuring desktop and mobile applications for easy registration and permit applications. Transit permits will be issued for tree species which are regulated, while the users can self-generate No Objection Certificates for exempted species.
2. Its impact extends beyond merely encouraging agroforestry and tree farming; it also promises to incentivize the entire value chain.

3. This initiative is poised to facilitate the seamless transportation of timber and various forest products across the country.
4. This move is expected to provide a significant impetus to the agroforestry sector.

ICELAND VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS

Context:

Iceland is one of the most volcanically active regions on the planet. It witnesses an eruption every four to five years. However, since 2021, the frequency has spiked to almost one eruption per year.

The volcano, which is known as Fagradalsfjall and located on the Reykjanes peninsula in southwest Iceland.

Iceland is one of the most volcanically active regions on the planet.



Volcanoes:

Volcanoes are openings, or vents where lava, tephra (small rocks), and steam erupt onto the Earth’s surface.

Volcanoes can be on land and in the ocean.

The material could be liquid rock (known as “magma”, when it’s underground and “lava” when it breaks through the surface), ash, and/or gases.

The rise of magma can take place in three different ways.

- When tectonic plates move away from each other.
- When the plates move towards each other.
- As magma gets warmer, it becomes less dense, leading to its rise.

Types of volcanoes:

- Stratovolcanoes have steep sides and are more cone-shaped.
- Shield volcanoes have a low profile and resemble a shield lying on the ground.

Why is Iceland so volcanically active?

Iceland sits on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge (part of the longest mountain range in the world) in the North Atlantic Ocean, where the Eurasian and North American plates are moving apart a few centimetres every year.

The island sits over a hot zone (or hotspot), which leads to enhanced volcanic activity in the region.

MOUNT MERAPI

Context

Indonesian rescuers discovered the bodies of 11 hikers following the Mount Merapi volcano eruption in West Sumatra.

About Mount Merapi

Mount Merapi, at 2,891 metres, is called the Fire Mountain in Indonesia and Java. Located on the border between the Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces, it is considered the most active volcano in Indonesia and has erupted regularly since 1548.

The Indonesian archipelago, situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire, experiences heightened



volcanic and seismic activity due to the convergence of continental plates.

PLIOSAUR FOSSIL

Context:

The skull of a colossal sea monster has been extracted from the cliffs of Dorset's Jurassic Coast.

About:

It belongs to a pliosaur, a ferocious marine reptile that terrorised the oceans about 150 million years ago.

Pliosaur, a group of large carnivorous marine reptiles characterized by massive heads, short necks, and streamlined tear-shaped bodies.

Pliosaurus have been found as fossils from the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods (about 200 million to 65.5 million years ago).

They are classified in the order Plesiosauria, along with their long-necked relatives, the



plesiosaurs. Pliosaurus possessed powerful jaws and large teeth, and they used four large fins to swim through Mesozoic seas.

SMOOTH-COATED OTTER

Context:

Kawal Tiger Reserve in Telangana is turning into a haven for smooth-coated otters.

Characteristics

Smooth-coated otter is characterized by a very smooth, sleek pelage. Their eyes and ears are small, the tail is flattened, limbs are



short, strong, and the fore and hind paws are large and well-webbed.

These otters have generally been described as fish specialist.

They are strong swimmers and hunt in groups. When fishing they travel in a V-formation going upstream. Most foraging activity occurs in water and small fish are swallowed whole, but large fish are taken to shore.

Males are polygamous, mating with up to four females. The females often dig their own breeding dens and maintain small

family groups of a mated pair with up to four offspring.

Conservation Issues

Their numbers are said to be declining with few breeding populations reported from Corbett and Dudhwa Tiger Reserves and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in the north, Kaziranga National Park in the northeast, Sunderbans, Bhitarkanika and Coringa in the eastern coast; and Periyar Tiger Reserve and the Nagarhole National Park in the south.

POLAR STRATOSPHERIC CLOUDS

Context:

Skies in the Arctic have been lit up by extremely rare “rainbow clouds”, also known as polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs) were spotted in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Alaska, and even as far as Scotland.

About

The Polar stratospheric clouds, also known as nacreous clouds, are among the rarest and most stunning atmospheric phenomena.

How they are formed?

The Earth’s stratosphere is typically devoid of moisture, making it an unlikely place for cloud formation. However, under the extreme conditions of the Arctic winter, when temperatures plummet to around -85°C, sparse water vapour can condense into ice particles.

They are seen mostly during winter at high latitudes like Scandinavia, Iceland, Alaska and Northern Canada. Sometimes, however, they occur as far south as the UK.



Role of PSCs

These particles scatter high-altitude sunlight, producing a brilliant display of iridescent colours that can be seen even when the sun is below the horizon.

PSCs provide a surface for chemical reactions where benign forms of chlorine are converted into reactive, ozone-destroying forms. They also remove nitrogen compounds that would otherwise moderate the destructive impact of chlorine on the ozone layer.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

What's Inside?

1. INDIAN PHARMACOPOEIA COMMISSION (IPC)
2. ELECTRIC EEL
3. INDIA-KOREA ELECTRONIC ORIGIN DATA EXCHANGE SYSTEM (EODES)
4. GLOBAL INITIATIVE OF ACADEMIC NETWORKS (GIAN) SCHEME
5. OLA'S KRUTRIM
6. CUSTOMISED MRNA
7. BREAKTHROUGH PRIZES
8. JT-60SA
9. ANTHRAX OUTBREAK IN AFRICA
10. AKTOCYTE TABLETS
11. POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS
12. AMMONIA GAS

INDIAN PHARMACOPOEIA COMMISSION (IPC)

Context:

Recently, the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) has issued a drug safety alert about Meftal, the common painkiller, saying its constituent, mefenamic acid, triggers severe allergic reactions like the DRESS syndrome, which affects internal organs.

DRESS Syndrome:

DRESS syndrome (Drug Rash with Eosinophilia and Systemic Symptoms) is a severe allergic reaction affecting around 10% of individuals, potentially deadly and caused by certain medications.

It is also known as Drug-Induced Hypersensitivity Syndrome (DIHS).

It is characterized by skin rash, high fever, swollen lymph nodes and complications in internal organs.

Meftal

Meftal is an over-the-counter medication used to treat pain and inflammation.

It contains the active ingredient mefenamic acid, which belongs to a class of drugs known as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

It is often prescribed for conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, menstrual pain, dental pain, inflammation, fever, etc.

Other commonly used NSAIDs include ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin

Uses of Meftal:

Meftal is commonly used as non-steroidal

anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID).

It is widely used in India for multiple purposes, including relieving menstrual pains, headaches, muscle and joint pain, and is even prevalent among children for high fever.

Associated Side Effects:

Prolonged use of drugs like Meftal may increase the risk of stomach ulcers, bleeding and related complications.

Meftal has been associated with potential adverse effects on the cardiovascular system.

Some experts have flagged renal complications as a potential side effect of Meftal.

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) is an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

IPC is created to set standards of drugs in the country. Its basic function is to regularly update the standards of drugs commonly required for treatment of diseases prevailing in this region.

It publishes official documents for improving Quality of Medicines by way of adding new and updating existing monographs in the form of Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP).

It further promotes rational use of generic medicines by publishing National Formulary of India.

It also provides IP Reference Substances (IPRS) which act as a fingerprint for identification of an article under test and its purity as prescribed in IP.

ELECTRIC EEL

Context:

Recently, a research group from Nagoya University in Japan found electric eels can release enough electricity to genetically modify small fish larvae.

Key Findings:

Researchers found that electric eels can release enough electricity to genetically modify small fish larvae (PeerJ —Life and Environment). This adds to what we know about electroporation, a gene delivery technique.

Electroporation uses an electric field to create temporary pores in the cell membrane. This lets molecules, like DNA or proteins, enter the target cell.

Researchers realized that electric eels in the Amazon River could well act as a power source, organisms living in the surrounding area could act as recipient cells, and environmental DNA fragments released into the water would become foreign genes, causing genetic recombination in the surrounding organisms because of electric discharge.

The researchers discovered that 5% of the larvae had markers showing gene transfer. This indicates that the discharge from the electric eel promoted gene transfer to the cells, even though eels have different shapes of pulse and unstable voltage compared to machines usually used in

electroporation.

About Electric eels:

Electric eels (*Electrophorus Electricus*) which only live in freshwater areas can release up to 860 volts, which is enough to run a machine. They emit a weak electric signal, which they use like radar to navigate, to find a mate, and to find prey.

It can deliver a shock because its nervous system contains a number of disc-shaped electrogenic (electricity-producing) cells called electrocytes. They dwell mainly on the muddy bottoms of rivers and occasionally swamps, preferring deeply shaded areas. Its range spans across Brazil, the Guianas, Suriname, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

Conservation status: IUCN: Least concern

INDIA-KOREA ELECTRONIC ORIGIN DATA EXCHANGE SYSTEM (EODES)

The India-Korea Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES) was launched for swift clearance of goods under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

It aims to facilitate the smooth implementation of the India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEPA) by exchanging electronic information on the origin of goods sold under the CEPA between the two customs.

The data fields of the Certificate of Origin (CoO) must be electronically shared with the import customs immediately after the certificate is issued by the export customs office.

This would speed up customs clearance of imported goods.

The success of the EODES project is a global model of international customs cooperation.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE OF ACADEMIC NETWORKS (GIAN) SCHEME

Context

The Ministry of Education is gearing up to restart the fourth phase of the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN).

It is a project to rope in eminent scholars from across the world to teach at Indian universities.

The Central government has spent at least ₹126 crore in payment to support foreign faculty's travel and honorarium since the inception of GIAN.

Global Initiative of Academic Networks

Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) in Higher Education was launched in 2015 aimed at tapping the talent pool of scientists and entrepreneurs, internationally to encourage their engagement with the institutes of Higher Education in India so as to augment the country's existing academic resources, accelerate the pace of quality reform, and elevate India's scientific and

technological capacity to global excellence. It is a program of the Ministry of Education.

Objectives of the Scheme

To increase the footfalls of reputed international faculty in the Indian academic institutes.

Provide opportunity to our faculty to learn and share knowledge and teaching skills in cutting edge areas.

To provide opportunity to our students to seek knowledge and experience from reputed international faculty.

To create avenue for possible collaborative research with the international faculty

To increase participation and presence of international students in the academic Institutes.

Opportunity for the students of different Institutes/Universities to interact and learn subjects in niche areas through collaborative learning process.

Provide opportunity for the technical persons from Indian Industry to improve understandings and update their knowledge in relevant areas.

Motivate the best international experts in the world to work on problems related to India.

Develop high quality course material in niche areas, both through video and print that can be used by a larger body of students and teachers.

To document and develop new pedagogic methods in emerging topics of national and international interest.

OLA'S KRUTRIM

Context

Indian ride-hailing firm Ola has unveiled its own homegrown large language model called Krutrim that's aimed at dominating the local market.

Ola's AI models come in two versions – Krutrim and Krutrim Pro. The base Krutrim model comprehends 22 Indian languages and can form responses in 10 languages. It apparently scores higher than models like GPT-4 and Llama on

benchmarks for Indian-language understanding. It can also use voice as input and respond in voice as well, much like the latest versions of ChatGPT.

Meanwhile, Krutrim Pro is being touted as a more powerful, multi-modal model for enterprise use, which Ola plans to launch next quarter.

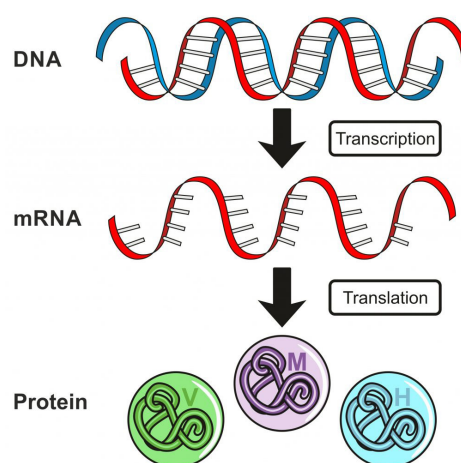
Krutrim has been created from scratch using an India-first approach – high local relevance at budget pricing.

CUSTOMISED MRNA

Context

While mRNA has always been present in the body, it took decades of research for scientists to understand how cells recognise mRNA and use it to make protein. But it eventually became clear that mRNA could be a powerful medical tool.

The understanding of how mRNA functions at the cellular level laid the groundwork for the development of mRNA medicines, such as COVID-19 vaccines.



Function of mRNA in Cells

DNA contains the genes for making proteins and cells create mRNA copies of these genes, acting as messengers with instructions for protein synthesis.

The mRNA language consists of four building blocks (nucleotides), and mutations in DNA can lead to disease-causing errors in critical proteins.

Benefits of mRNA as Medicine

The mRNA can be manipulated to create medicines for various cellular issues.

Scientists can easily generate genes for different proteins; edit them to meet patient needs, and produce scalable amounts of mRNA in the lab.

mRNA Vaccines for COVID-19

The COVID-19 vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech are the first mRNA-based medicines to gain FDA approval.

These mRNA vaccines demonstrate the flexibility of mRNA-based therapies.

They work by instructing cells to produce the spike protein of the virus, training the immune system to recognize and combat it.

Booster shots can be adapted to address new viral variants.

Beyond Vaccines: mRNA Treatments

The potential for mRNA-based medicine extends beyond vaccines to prevent infectious disease. One example is the use of mRNA to treat cancer.

Some mRNA cancer treatments work like vaccines by training our immune system to specifically target cancer cells. As cancer cells grow, they rapidly gain mutations in many genes.

Cancer vaccines contain mRNA recipes based on mutations commonly found in certain types of tumours. When injected into the body, the mRNAs from the vaccines allow normal cells to make those mutated proteins and broadcast them to the immune system, ramping up production of antibodies. These antibodies bind to cancer cells and mark them for immune attack.

Finding the correct protein target for a given cancer is essential. Ideally, the target is unique to the cancer cell so the immune system doesn't attack healthy cells. The target protein should also be easy for the immune system to sense, making surface proteins good targets.

Cancer vaccines, like BioNTech's BNT-111 for melanoma, target the most common cancer mutations in the hope of helping many patients. But patients won't benefit from the treatment if their cancer cells don't have those particular mutations.

Because it is so easy to change the mRNA recipes, cancer vaccines can be part of a personalised medicine plan where doctors sample a patient's tumour, sequence key genes and adjust the mRNA treatment to include recipes specific to that patient's cancer. Clinical trials using this personalised approach for pancreatic cancer are underway.

Future Applications

Researchers are investigating mRNA's potential to treat various diseases, including heart disease, neurodegenerative conditions, and bone loss.

The adaptability of mRNA allows for customized therapies with fewer side effects, offering hope for diverse applications in protein replacement therapies.

BREAKTHROUGH PRIZES

Context

The 2024 Breakthrough prizes in the Life Sciences category recognised groundbreaking research set to change the lives of those suffering

from three debilitating diseases: Parkinson's disease, cystic fibrosis, and cancer.

Breakthrough prizes

In 2010, Mark Zuckerberg and Sergey Brin,

along with some other Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, established the Breakthrough Prizes, which are often referred to as the “Oscars of Science.”

The government recognizes the top scientists in the field of math, physics, and biology.

The prizes which are given to individuals every year since 2012 have a cash appreciation of 3 million dollars and the reward is much greater than the one provided by Nobel laureates which is 1 million dollars.

Moreover, there are rewards for researchers who start early in their career and those who make significant advancements in Physics and Mathematics.

What are Rare Diseases?

Rare Diseases, commonly known as Orphan Diseases, present certain obstacles due to the fact that they're not typical among the general population.

Rare diseases are chronic illnesses that occur

very occasionally in the population.

As per the World Health Organization, a disease is defined as rare when it impacts one or zero people in every one thousand individuals.

So in India, an illness is categorised as scarce if it influences not more than one hundred patients per 100 thousand people.

Rare Diseases in India

About 450 rare disorders have been found, with the majority of patients being impacted by around 350 of them.

Approximately 80 to 96 million cases in India per year.

Almost all of the defects that are unusual are caused by genetic abnormalities, and without symptoms for most of the time.

In India, very few rare diseases have treatments available.

JT-60SA

Context

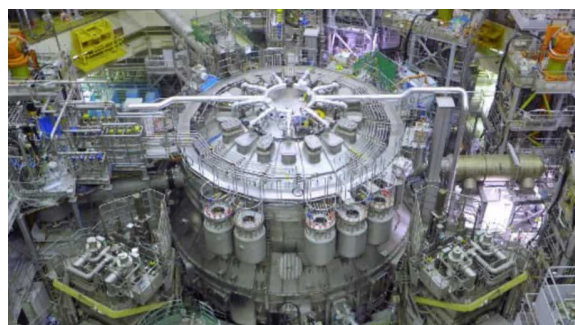
JT-60SA, the world's largest and most advanced nuclear fusion reactor started its official operations in Japan's Ibaraki Prefecture in December.

About

1. JT-60SA is the largest tokamak in operation, designed and built jointly by Japan and Europe.
2. Its unique properties include the capability to produce long-pulse, high-beta and highly shaped plasmas.
3. It comprises a doughnut-shaped “tokamak” vessel set to contain swirling plasma heated up to 200 million degrees Celsius.

Similar to ITER

JT-60SA is a forerunner for its big brother



in France, the under-construction International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).

JT-60SA and ITER both are to coax hydrogen nuclei inside to fuse into one heavier element, helium, releasing energy in the form of light and heat.

On one side, JT-60SA has started operations, but researchers at ITER are behind schedule and facing major technical problems.

ANTHRAX OUTBREAK IN AFRICA

Context:

Five African countries are battling outbreaks of anthrax, with nearly 1,200 people affected so far and 20 deaths, according to the World Health Organization.

About:

Anthrax is a disease caused by a spore-forming bacteria called *Bacillus anthracis*. It is a zoonosis (disease transmissible from animals to humans) that affects ruminants (such as cows, sheep, and goats). Anthrax does not typically spread from animal to animal or human to human. When anthrax spores are ingested from contaminated animal products, inhaled, or enter the body through skin abrasions or cuts, they can germinate, multiply and produce toxins.

Types:

Cutaneous or skin anthrax is the most common presenting with an itchy bump in the exposed area that rapidly develops into a black

sore. Some people then develop headaches, muscle aches, fever, and vomiting.

Gastrointestinal anthrax causes initial symptoms similar to food poisoning, but can worsen to produce severe abdominal pain, vomiting of blood and severe diarrhoea.

Pulmonary anthrax, the most severe presentation, has initial symptomatology of a common cold but can rapidly progress to severe breathing difficulties and shock.

Treatment:

Hospitalization is required for all human cases identified. Individuals exposed may receive prophylactic treatment. Antibiotics, particularly penicillin, are effective against this disease. Prompt treatment can reduce case-fatality rate to <1%.

Vaccines are also available for livestock and humans in limited supply. Human vaccines are limited to those with possible occupational exposure.

AKTOCYTE TABLETS

Context:

Scientists from the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Bengaluru-based IDRS Labs have joined hands to develop Aktocyte tablets for treating pelvic cancer.

About:

AKTOCYTE tablets, designed as an adjuvant

to cancer radiotherapy, regenerative nutraceutical, immunomodulator, and has an antioxidant property.

The tablets have received approval from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), operating under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India.

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS

Context

Bayer Monsanto, Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) maker ordered to pay \$857m for toxic leaks and is already facing a large legal bill over its glyphosate-based weed killer roundup.

What are polychlorinated biphenyls?

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are a group

of manmade chemicals. They are oily liquids or solids, clear to yellow, with no smell or taste. PCBs are very stable mixtures that are resistant to extreme temperature and pressure.

In 1979, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) banned the use of PCBs after finding potential links with cancers; however, PCBs are still present in many pre-1979 products.

PCBs were used widely in,

- Transformers and capacitors
- Electrical equipment including voltage regulators, switches, re-closers, bushings, and electromagnets
- Oil used in motors and hydraulic systems
- Fluorescent light ballasts
- Cable insulation
- Thermal insulation material including fiberglass, felt, foam, and cork
- Adhesives and tapes
- Oil-based paint
- Caulking
- Plastics
- Carbonless copy paper
- Floor finish

AMMONIA GAS

Context:

At least 25 people were hospitalised after they complained of uneasiness following an incident of ammonia gas leak at a fertiliser manufacturing unit in north Chennai's Ennore.

About:

Ammonia is a colorless, poisonous gas with a familiar noxious odour and is highly soluble in water. It occurs in nature, primarily produced by the anaerobic decay of plant and animal matter; and it also has been detected in outer space. Once exposed to open air, liquid ammonia quickly turns back into a gas.

Some plants, mainly legumes, in combination with rhizobia bacteria, "fix" atmospheric nitrogen to produce ammonia.

Ammonia is produced commercially via the catalytic reaction of nitrogen and hydrogen at high temperature and pressure. The process was developed in 1909 by German chemists Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch.

People may be exposed to ammonia indoors while using household products that contain ammonia such as cleaning solutions, window cleaners, floor waxes and smelling salts.

Can ammonia be poisonous?

Ammonia has a very strong odor. If ammonia cannot be smelled, it is probably not enough to be harmful. If you can smell ammonia, then health effects are possible with eye, nose or throat irritation being the most common effects.



SECURITY

What's Inside?

1. INS IMPHAL

INS IMPHAL

Context:

Recently, INS (Indian Naval Ship) Imphal (Pennant D68) has been commissioned into the Indian Navy.

Initiation of Indigenous Destroyer Program:

India's indigenous destroyer construction program began in the late 1990s with the three Delhi class (P-15 class) warships. This was followed by three Kolkata class (P-15A) destroyers commissioned a decade later.

Project 15B:

A contract for Project 15B was signed in January 2011. The objective is to enhance capabilities from earlier ships and incorporate technological advancements, improvements in weaponry, electronics, and other systems.

Project 15B is the next phase after the success of Project 15A. Project 15B aims to build advanced variants of Kolkata class destroyers and it is named after its lead ship, INS Visakhapatnam. A total of four Visakhapatnam class destroyers are planned under Project 15B: Visakhapatnam, Mormugao, Imphal, and Surat.

- INS Visakhapatnam (Pennant No D66) is the lead ship commissioned in November 2021.
- INS Mormugao (D67) is the second ship commissioned in December 2022.
- INS Imphal (Pennant D68) was commissioned into the Indian Navy in December 2023.
- The last of the class, INS Surat, is expected to be commissioned in 2024.

Design and Construction:

The ships are designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau.

Construction is undertaken by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL) in Mumbai under the 'Make in India' initiative.

INS IMPHAL:

INS Imphal is among "the most technologically advanced guided missile destroyers in the world. It was launched and "christened" as 'Imphal' on 20th April, 2019.

The ship measures 163m in length, and 17m in breadth with a displacement of 7,400 tonnes and is amongst the most potent warships built in India. It is propelled by four powerful Gas Turbines, in a Combined Gas and Gas configuration, and is capable of speeds in excess of 30 knots.

It is capable of launching the BrahMos cruise missile, the world's fastest supersonic cruise missile. The ship is also equipped to fight under Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare conditions.

It is armed with sophisticated state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, including Surface-to-Surface Missiles, Surface-to-Air Missiles, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) rocket launchers and Torpedo launchers, ASW helicopters, radars, sonar and Electronic Warfare systems.

Significance of INS IMPHAL:

- INS Imphal is a symbol of India's growing maritime power and it will strengthen it further.
- The ship reinforces the principle of "Jalmev Yasya, Balmev Tasya," signifying that controlling the seas grants immense power. In the Indo-Pacific region, where multiple powers vie for influence, INS Imphal contributes to India's efforts to establish itself as a significant maritime player.
- India heavily relies on sea routes for international trade due to geographical barriers like the Himalayas and challenges from neighboring countries.
- INS Imphal aids in securing these crucial sea lanes, ensuring safe passage for trade vessels and thereby safeguarding India's economic interests



HISTORY



ART & CULTURE



What's Inside?

1. GURU TEG BAHADUR
2. GURU GOBIND SINGH
3. VEER BAL DIWAS
4. UNESCO ASIA-PACIFIC AWARDS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION
5. HINDENBURG DISASTER
6. THEYYAM

GURU TEG BAHADUR

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur (1621-1675) on Sunday (December 17), calling the ninth Sikh Guru a beacon of courage and strength.

“His unparalleled sacrifice for freedom and human dignity echoes through time, inspiring humanity to live with integrity and compassion. His teachings, emphasising unity and righteousness, light our way in the pursuit of brotherhood and peace,” the PM posted on X.

About

Guru Tegh Bahadur is the 9th of 10 Sikh Gurus (1664–75).

Guru Tegh Bahadur is preceded by Guru Har Krishan Sahib and succeeded by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was second Sikh martyr, Guru Arjan being the first Sikh martyr.

Early life –

- The Guru was born in Amritsar in 1621 to Mata Nanki and Guru Hargobind, the 6th Sikh guru.
- Tyag Mal - Tegh Bahadur was originally named Tyag Mal but was later renamed Tegh Bahadur after his gallantry and bravery in the wars against the Mughal forces.
- The Guru was also a great poet, and his hymns are part of Guru Granth Sahib.

- The founder of the City Anandpur Sahib, which was geographically well-suited to defend against a big army, Guru
- At the age of 13, his heroic swordsmanship in a battle against a Mughal chieftain earned him the name, Tegh Bahadur (Tegh means sword in Punjabi)
- He became the 9th Sikh guru after Har Krishan, who has the shortest tenure among all the Sikh Gurus, passed away in Delhi in 1664.
- Nirbhau & Nirvair - He questioned the tradition of worshipping at the graves of pirs and faqirs and urged his followers to be Nirbhau (fearless) and Nirvair (without envy).
- Wider audience - His sermons, delivered in a mix of Sadukhri and Braj languages, were widely understood from Sindh to Bengal.
- Concept of One God - He often alluded to Panchali (Draupadi) and Ganika in his preaching and declared that Hindustan could regain its piety if it took refuge in one God.
- Execution - Aurangzeb ordered the public execution of the Guru on November 11, 1675 after the Guru refused to embrace Islam.
- Gurdwara Sis Ganj - On the site of his execution, Gurdwara Sis Ganj was built in 1783.

GURU GOBIND SINGH

The last of the ten Sikh Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh was born on 22nd December, 1666 in Patna, Bihar.

His birth anniversary is based on the Nanakshahi calendar according to which it will fall on January 20 in 2021 while for the last year, it was celebrated on January 2.

He became the Sikh guru at the age of nine, following the demise of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru.

He was assassinated in 1708.``

He also founded the principles of Khalsa or the Five 'K's.

The Five K's are kesh (uncut hair), kanga

(wooden comb), kara (iron or steel bracelet), kirpan (dagger) and kachera (short breeches).

He also laid down many other rules for the Khalsa warriors to follow like abstaining from tobacco, alcohol, halal meat, etc. The Khalsa warrior was also duty-bound to protect innocent people from persecution.

He fought against the Mughals in the battle of Muktsar in 1705.

In the Battle of Anandpur (1704), the Guru lost his mother and two minor sons who were executed. His eldest son also died in battle.

VEER BAL DIWAS

Veer Bal Diwas is observed on 26th December every year to commemorate the martyrdom of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh the tenth and last Sikh guru.

The four sons were named Zorawar Singh, Fateh Singh, Jai Singh and Kulwant Singh who fought against the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and his army.

Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were captured by the Mughals at the age of six and nine respectively after they had defended their fort of Anandpur Sahib from a siege.

They were taken to Sirhind, where they refused to convert to Islam and were sentenced to death by being bricked alive in 1705.

Jai Singh and Kulwant Singh were also captured at Anandpur Sahib, but they managed to escape from Sirhind with the help of some loyal followers. They joined their father in his final battle at Sirhind, where he was wounded by a musket shot.

Guru Gobind Singh's sons sacrificed their lives for the cause of Sikhism and their courage inspired generations of Sikhs.

UNESCO ASIA-PACIFIC AWARDS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Context

Three heritage projects from Punjab and Haryana, namely the Rambagh Gate & Ramparts in Amritsar, Pipal Haveli in Gurdaspur, and Church of Epiphany in Gurugram, have secured prestigious spots among the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

Among the recognised sites, five are from China, six from India, and one from Nepal.

Pipal Haveli, a heritage rural homestay nestled in the Nawan Pind Sardaran village of Gurdaspur district in Punjab, was honoured for its sustainable development. Interestingly, Pipal Haveli belongs to the Sangha family, who diligently restored and conserved their ancestral property. Moreover, the village received the "Best Tourism Village" award from Punjab's Ministry of Tourism in September of this year.

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation programme

Every year, since 2000, the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation programme has been recognizing the efforts of private individuals and organizations in restoring, conserving, and transforming structures and buildings of heritage value in the region.

By acknowledging private efforts to restore and adapt historic properties, the Awards programme encourages others to undertake conservation projects within their own communities, whether independently or through public-private partnerships (PPPs).

UNESCO introduced the new category, 'Special Recognition for Sustainable Development', in 2020, together with an updated set of Awards

Criteria to acknowledge the role and contribution of cultural heritage to sustainable development within the broader framework of the UN 2030 Agenda.

The awarded projects serve as a testament to how cultural heritage can be successfully preserved whilst at the same time mobilized to be integrated into various local development strategies.

Award of Excellence

With people, heritage and creativity at its core, the resilient urban revitalization of the Rambagh Gate and Ramparts in Punjab, India, has garnered the highest honour, 'Award of Excellence', in this year's UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

Award of Distinction

1. Fanling Golf Course in Hong Kong SAR, China
2. Dongguan Garden Residences in Yangzhou, China
3. Karnikara Mandapam at Kunnamangalam Bhagawati Temple, Kerala, India,

Award of Merit

1. Nan Yuan, at Peking University, Beijing, China

2. Pan Family Residence, in Suzhou, China
3. Church of Epiphany, in Haryana, India
4. David Sassoon Library and Reading Room, in Mumbai, India
5. Bikaner House, in New Delhi, India.

Special recognition for Sustainable Development

The Karnikara Mandapam at Kunnamangalam Bhagawati Temple in Kerala; Pipal Haveli in Punjab; and Sikami Chhen in Kathmandu, Nepal, were accorded Special Recognition for Sustainable Development, acknowledging their transformative heritage practices contributing to broader principles of sustainable development.



HINDENBURG DISASTER

Context :

Recently, Hindenburg Research has grabbed the limelight over its report on the Adani Group's alleged corporate fraud. The company has been named after the famous Zeppelin disaster which took place in 1937.

Hindenburg/ Zeppelin disaster

The Hindenburg disaster was an airship accident that occurred on May 6, 1937, in Manchester Township, New Jersey, United States.

The German passenger airship LZ 129 Hindenburg caught fire and was destroyed during

its attempt to dock with its mooring mast at Naval Air Station Lakehurst.

The accident caused 35 fatalities (13 passengers and 22 crewmen) from the 97 people on board (36 passengers and 61 crewmen), and an additional fatality on the ground.

A variety of theories have been put forward for both the cause of ignition and the initial fuel for the ensuing fire.

The publicity shattered public confidence in the giant, passenger-carrying rigid airship and marked the abrupt end of the airship era.

THEYYAM



Context

Thousands are drawn to ‘Theyyam’ and ‘Thira’ performances during the Theyyam season from December to April, a testament to the extent of hero worship in the folklore heartland.

About

Theyyam, a ritual art form takes place in the southern state of Kerala and parts of neighbouring Karnataka. Meaning “God” or the “incarnation of God”, theyyam is an ancient folk ritual combining theatre, mime and worship that predates Hinduism but incorporates Hindu mythology.

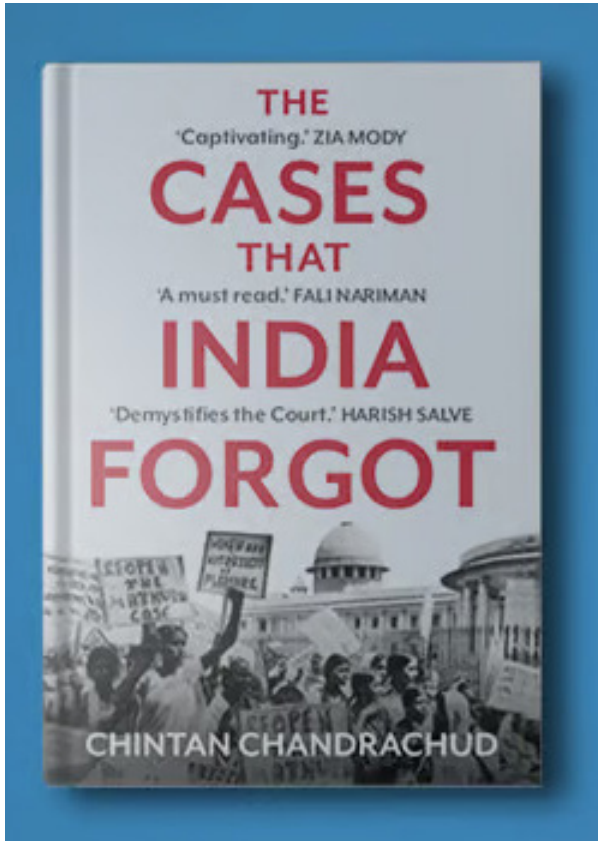
Only natural materials are used to make the traditional dyes.

Rice paste is used to make white, turmeric for yellow. The dominant colour in theyyam performances is red, which signifies action and energy but also anger, and is achieved with a mixture of turmeric and limestone.

Black is produced with rice paddy husk burned and mixed with coconut oil.

CASES THAT INDIA FORGOT

- CHINTAN CHANDRACHUD



About the Author and this book:

Dr. Chintan Chandrachud joined Quinn Emanuel in 2016 and works as an associate in the firm's London office. He handles cases in advanced commercial litigation, international arbitration, and tax litigation. He holds a PhD from Cambridge University, where he studied judicial review in the UK and India. He holds postgraduate degrees from Yale and Oxford universities. In addition, he wrote a book titled *Balanced Constitutionalism: Courts and Legislatures in India and the UK*.

Chintan Chandrachud was born into a family of lawyers with a legacy to uphold. He is the grandson of Yeshwant Vishnu Chandrachud, the 16th Chief Justice of India. He is the son of Dhananjaya Chandrachud, who is currently Chief Justice.

The author began writing op-eds for newspapers to engage with those outside their

profession. They received criticism for their writing being “legalistic” and difficult to understand, which is a common complaint against lawyers and legal scholars. The author aimed to address this issue by writing a book about the Supreme Court and high courts in India, which are at the center of public life and make decisions on various political, economic, religious, and historical issues. The author has analysed the cases through different lenses, and they are segregated as per those four themes. They are – Politics, Gender, Religion and National Security.

Politics

The Keshav Singh case

In 1964, a pamphlet distributed by Keshav Singh, a worker of the Socialist Party in Uttar Pradesh, caused a constitutional crisis in India. The pamphlet, titled ‘Exposing the Misdeeds of Narsingh Narain Pandey’, alleged that Pandey was corrupt and was distributed in Gorakhpur and near the legislative assembly in Lucknow. Singh and his colleagues were ordered to appear before the assembly in Lucknow, but Singh failed due to lack of funds. The assembly forced the acquisition of the pamphlet and Singh was arrested. The assembly passed a resolution for Singh to be imprisoned for seven days, with some members advocating for a stricter punishment. Singh was taken to prison for his week-long sentence.

The dispute escalated on 18 March when an advocate filed a petition for Singh's immediate release, arguing that his imprisonment was illegal and that the assembly lacked the authority to commit him to prison. The high court ordered Singh to be released on bail, subject to conditions that Singh attend court at every future hearing. The assembly passed a resolution requiring Singh to remain in prison and be brought back to the assembly to answer for the petition filed in the high court. The skirmish between Singh and the assembly transformed into a serious battle among constitutional institutions, with strategic and prudential considerations in play.

Justices Beg and Sehgal, who were not notified

of a resolution passed by the assembly, filed petitions in the Allahabad High Court claiming it violated Article 211 of the Constitution. They requested that the implementation of the resolution against them be suspended while the case remained pending before the court.

Chief Justice Desai returned to Allahabad, and a bench of twenty-eight judges was allocated to hear the case. The assembly partially retreated from its original position, passing a resolution requiring the presence of Keshav Singh, Solomon, and the two judges to explain their position to the house. However, the warrants for the arrest of Solomon and Justices Beg and Sehgal were withdrawn on the grounds that the assembly's intention was to ascertain the facts from them. The episode in Uttar Pradesh was being discussed in the corridors of power in Delhi, leading to a presidential reference made to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court in India faced a case involving matters of principle that extended beyond the state of Uttar Pradesh. The outcome would be shaped by how the court interpreted two significant provisions of the Constitution: Article 194(3), which stated that the powers, privileges, and immunities of state legislatures should be defined by law, and Article 211, which imposed an absolute prohibition on discussion of the conduct of judges of the Supreme Court or high courts in state legislatures. The assembly resolution requiring their appearance to provide an explanation for their conduct violated this provision, and the Supreme Court agreed that it was an affront to the independence of the judiciary.

In the majority opinion, Chief Justice Gajendragadkar decisively in favour of the high court, holding that it was within the authority of the high court to consider Keshav Singh's petition and release him on bail until it arrived at a decision. Justice Sarkar disagreed with the majority's opinion, preferring one constitutional provision to the exclusion of the other. Critics criticized the Supreme Court's decision for its lack of nuanced analysis and refusal to acknowledge the assembly's role in interpreting its privileges.

The Supreme Court's decision was not well

received by Parliament and state legislative assemblies across India, leading to a series of mistakes and errors of judgement. This case highlights the difficulty of constitutional institutions turning against each other and the importance of statesmanship over brinksmanship in solving difficult problems.

Minerva Mills v. Union of India

Indira Gandhi was not pleased with the Supreme Court's attempt to insulate the Constitution from root-and-branch transformation due its judgement in Keshavananda Bharathi case. She responded by punishing the judges who curtailed government power, attempting judicial reversal of the Kesavananda case, and trying legislative reversal. The 42nd Amendment to the Constitution, enacted in 1976, was less an amendment and more an effort to radically transform the nature of the Constitution.

The Minerva Mills case, established in 1977, involved the government's nationalization powers and the right to property. Nani Palkhivala, India's foremost constitutional litigator, was appointed ambassador to the United States by the Janata government. He used the case as a vehicle to challenge constitutional amendments passed during Indira Gandhi's tenure as prime minister, challenging the Congress government's amendments to the Constitution rather than the Janata amendments. The Minerva Mills case focused on whether the amendments to the Constitution adding two new clauses to Article 368 were valid, which would nullify the Kesavananda judgement.

The amendments to Article 368 in the Indian Constitution presented a significant challenge to the Kesavananda judgement, as seven of the thirteen judges held that Parliament lacked the power to alter the basic structure of the Constitution. Palkhivala formulated three powerful arguments to convince the Supreme Court to dislodge the amendments: first, the donee of a limited power cannot convert the limited power into an unlimited one; second, the limited amending power is itself a basic feature of the Constitution; and third, by stating that no court would have the power to

pronounce upon the validity of a constitutional amendment, the amendment damaged the balance of power between the judiciary and Parliament.

Palkhivala used the *Minerva Mills* case as a platform to challenge another Emergency-era amendment to the Constitution, which protected from the scrutiny of two fundamental rights (the rights to equality and freedom) all laws that gave effect to any of the directive principles under the Constitution. They argued that Article 31C embodied the “quintessence of authoritarianism” and that it reinforced rather than undermined the basic structure of the Constitution.

The hearing took place before a bench of five judges, headed by Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud, who noted that both amendments were beyond the amending power of Parliament and violated the basic structure of the Constitution. Justice Bhagwati preferred to defer his own decision until the reopening of the court after summer, arguing that questions of “grave and momentous consequence” were better left to a fully “reasoned judgment.”

The Supreme Court of India delivered two judgments following the reopening of the court after the summer vacation. Chief Justice Chandrachud delivered the majority judgement on behalf of all judges except Justice Bhagwati, who wrote a separate opinion. He struck down both amendments to the Constitution, striking down the amendment to Parliament’s power to amend the Constitution (Article 368) and the amendment to Article 368.

The majority opinion disturbed the balance between fundamental rights and directive principles, as the amendments deprived citizens of the right to petition the Supreme Court in respect of a violation of fundamental rights. The court apprehended that Parliament could use Article 31C as a conduit to protect a large number of laws from full judicial scrutiny.

Justice Bhagwati agreed with the majority’s decision striking down Parliament’s amendment of Article 368 but disagreed with the decision striking down the amendment to Article 31C. He was persuaded by Palkhivala’s argument that Parliament could not transform a limited amending power into an unlimited one and offered a strong rebuttal to the other judges, noting that the amendment to Article 31C did not damage the basic structure of the Constitution but strengthened and reinforced it.

The Congress government was predictably displeased with the majority decision in the *Minerva Mills* case, as it struck down the Congress government’s amendments to the Constitution while the Janata government’s amendments remained unaffected. Several political parties offered suggestions and questioned the government on how it would react to the decision, including organizing a popular referendum on constitutional amendment and converting the houses of Parliament into an interim Constituent Assembly with the power to amend any provision of the Constitution, including its basic structure. The government filed a review petition at the Supreme Court seeking a reconsideration of the *Minerva Mills* judgement, arguing that the judgement was not a decision of the court but only consisted of the opinions of individual judges.

Palkhivala criticized the government’s attempt to review the *Minerva Mills* judgement as a “shocking exhibition of the arrogance of power.” He argued that the Supreme Court’s willingness to consider the petition in an oral hearing was due to the government’s filing. The hearing was adjourned due to Justice Kailasam’s retirement, and the review petition died a natural death. The *Minerva Mills* judgement was unpopular within the government and had its share of critics on the bench. However, no further efforts were made to overturn the judgement. The *Minerva Mills* judgement became as significant for the endurance of the basic structure doctrine as the *Kesavananda* judgement, which enabled courts to review not just ordinary legislation but also amendments to the Constitution.

Rameshwar Prasad v. Union of India

In February 2005, the state assembly elections in Bihar were held, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Janata Dal United (JDU), part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), and the Congress securing significant seats. However, the election resulted in a hung assembly, with no party or alliance within striking distance of the magic number. The governor of a state assumes heightened responsibility in such situations, as he has the authority to invite those most likely to cobble a majority to form the government.

Bihar’s governor, Buta Singh, became crucial following the election results, as he had aligned

with different political forces over the years. Singh wrote to the President of India recommending that President's rule be imposed in Bihar, keeping the assembly in suspended animation to allow for discussions and political realignments. The President accepted this recommendation, resulting in Bihar being administered by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in New Delhi.

The process of political realignments began when the group of seventeen independent MLAs declared support for the NDA, followed by three other parties. Rumors circulated that over a dozen LJP MLAs were being induced to pledge their support to the NDA. Singh sent two further reports to the President, warning that the BJP and JDU were making concerted efforts to win over MLAs from the LJP through various means. The UPA government accepted Singh's report and forwarded it to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam for his assent. Kalam chose option of giving assent, despite the misgivings about whether it was appropriate to dissolve the assembly in the circumstances.

The Bihar Assembly was dissolved within hours, leading to a pandemic and the expulsion of seven members of the LJP. The BJP organized dharnas and road blockades in the state, accusing the dissolution of the assembly as a "fraud on the Constitution and murder of democracy." Senior leaders from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) demanded early elections and filed four writ petitions in the Supreme Court, arguing that the President's proclamation dissolving the assembly was unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court concluded the hearing by 29 September 2005, but political parties were left in suspense on the last day of the hearing. The court issued a brief order one week later, holding that the President's proclamation dissolving the Bihar Assembly was unconstitutional. However, the court chose not to reinstate the assembly since election preparations were already underway.

The NDA demanded the removal or resignation of Governor Buta Singh following the court's decision. Singh traveled to Delhi four days after the court's decision, but media reports suggested that he met with leaders from the UPA government

and the Congress party to consider an appropriate response. However, it was determined that Singh would not be asked to resign and would continue in office until the Supreme Court issued the detailed reasons for its decision. This decision was seen as a rebuke to the governor and the UPA government, which would have a negative impact on the party's fortunes in the forthcoming elections in Bihar.

In the October-November 2005 election in Bihar, the JDU and BJP gained 51 additional seats, giving the NDA a comfortable majority in the assembly. Governor Singh had to invite the NDA to form the government, and Nitish Kumar was sworn in as chief minister. The Supreme Court's reasoned decision on 24 January 2006, two days before Republic Day, rejected the argument that the President could never dissolve a legislative assembly before its first meeting. The court held that the decision to dissolve the assembly was unconstitutional, based solely on Governor Buta Singh's reports. The court also made damning remarks about the governor's role, stating that the governor misled the council of ministers and had ulterior motives.

The Supreme Court's decision was not unanimous, with two of the five judges on the panel dissenting from the majority view. Justice Pasayat argued that the governor was not obliged to remain a silent spectator in the face of attempts to form a government through dishonest means. Justice Balakrishnan (who would later become chief justice) believed that a government formed by foul means could hardly be described as a democratically elected government.

The Supreme Court's decision provoked serious deliberations within the Congress party and the UPA government, leading to widespread expectations that Buta Singh would either resign or be removed by the government. Singh remained obdurate in the initial moments following the decision, indicating that he would take the Republic Day salute in Patna.

While the Supreme Court did not directly censure President Kalam, there were murmurs as to whether he would accept moral responsibility for the judgement striking down his proclamation dissolving the Bihar Assembly.

Part-II of this book will be uploaded for the next month.

**By,
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FACT SHEET

GENERAL STUDIES – I

SOCIETY

- ✦ According to the Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) 2022 report by NCRB, India has reported a total of over 1.7 lakh suicides in 2022, nearly one-third of whom were daily wage earners, agricultural labourers, and farmers.

Crime against women

- ✦ According to the annual report of the NCRB, Delhi is reported to be the most unsafe metropolitan city for women in India, recording an average of 3 rape cases daily.
- ✦ The Crime in India Report for 2022 shows Delhi recorded 14,158 incidents of crime against women, the highest among 19 metropolitan cities for the third consecutive year.
- ✦ The reported crimes include rape cases, incidents of kidnapping or abduction of women, cases of dowry deaths and incidents of cruelty by husbands or their relatives.
- ✦ Many incidents of rape and assault involve individuals who are known to each other, making it challenging for the police to prevent such incidents directly.

GENERAL STUDIES – II

SOCIAL ISSUES

“Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023: Road fatalities rise in India, despite global drop” - released by WHO.

- ✦ Between 2010 and 2021, road traffic deaths worldwide dropped by 5% to 1.2 million annually.
- ✦ Around 108 UN member countries reported a decrease in road traffic deaths. 10 countries achieved above 50% reduction in deaths.
- ✦ India, on the other hand, saw a 15% increase in road traffic fatalities in 2021.
- ✦ Road crashes remain a major cause of death among youth (5-29 years) and the 12th leading cause of death among all age groups.
- ✦ 9 in 10 deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries which is disproportionately higher when set against the number of vehicles and roads they have.

Health

- ◆ According to the Health Ministry, women account for approximately 49% of the 28.5 crore Ayushman cards created and approximately 48% of total authorised hospital admissions.
- ◆ Ayushman cards are made under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri-Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), which is the largest publicly funded health assurance scheme in the world and provides an annual health cover of ₹5 lakh for a family for secondary- and tertiary-care hospitalisation.

Food and Nutrition

- ◆ According to the “Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and Trends” report by FAO, 74% of Indians were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021.

GENERAL STUDIES – III

ECONOMY

- ◆ India’s forex reserves rose by USD 58 billion cumulatively in 2023.
- ◆ Education loans registered a record year-on-year growth of nearly 20% at in the current financial year, as per the RBI.
- ◆ India is aiming to increase the exports of bananas to \$1 billion in the next five years. Despite being the world’s largest banana producer, India’s global export share is just 1%, though the country accounts for 26.5% of the world’s production.

India Skills Report, 2024

- ◆ The overall young employability in India has shown improvement, reaching 51.25%.
- ◆ States like Haryana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and Telangana demonstrate a high concentration of highly employable youth.

ENVIRONMENT

“The Global Climate 2011-2020: A Decade of Acceleration” by WMO

- ◆ The 2011-2020 decade was the first since 1950 when there was not a single short-term event with 10,000 deaths or more. Though it is the warmest ever decade recorded in history, it saw the lowest number of deaths from extreme events.
- ◆ It is due to an improvement in the “early warning system” driven by improvements in forecasting and better disaster management by greater preparedness and evacuation.
- ◆ Glaciers that were measured around the world thinned by approximately 1 metre per year on average between 2011 and 2020.
- ◆ Greenland and Antarctica lost 38% more ice during the period than during the 2001-2010 period.
- ◆ The 2021 Uttarakhand rock avalanche was triggered by a breach in the Nanda Devi glacier in the Himalayas.

- ◆ Heatwaves were responsible for the highest number of human casualties, while tropical cyclones caused the most economic damage.
- ◆ Public and private climate finance almost doubled during the period. However, it needed to increase at least 7 times by the end of this decade to achieve climate objectives.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- ◆ As per WHO, around 66% of malaria cases in Southeast Asia were from India in 2022.
- ◆ Almost 46% of all cases in the region were due to Plasmodium vivax, which is a protozoal parasite and a human pathogen.

1. Tamil Nadu has been recognised as the top performer in the 'Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2023' rankings. The top spot reflects steps taken to improve the logistics ecosystem in the State, such as enhancement of first-last mile connectivity and development of infrastructure.
2. The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has launched '4E Wave Movement' recently. It is a student-led national movement for energy conservation in Jammu & Kashmir. It aims to promote sustainable practices and instil a sense of responsibility in individuals and communities to save energy. 4 key elements are Eco-friendliness, Economy, Education and Empowerment.
3. The Indian Navy has appointed the first woman commanding officer in a naval ship in line with the Navy's philosophy of "All roles - All ranks" to deploy women in the service. The officer (Shaliza Dhami), a Lieutenant Commander, would be commanding INS Trinkat, a fast attack craft based in the western seaboard.
4. Dr. Mohini Giri, an icon of the women's rights movement, dies at 86. She was the former Chair of the National Commission for Women (NCW) (1995–1998) and the Central Social Welfare Board. She provided advocacy for women's and children's rights to education, employment, and financial security. She founded the War Widows Association in 1972. For her efforts in the field of women's rights, she was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2007.
5. Dragon Snakehead Fish (*Aenigmachanna gollum*) which has been included in the IUCN Red List as 'Vulnerable' for serious conservation challenges. The use of pesticides and insecticides in the paddy fields and the deterioration or quality of groundwater as other factors impacting the survival of the species. It is considered as a 'living fossil' and named after the character in 'Lord of the Rings'.
6. USA and EU imposed countervailing duties (CVDs) on four Indian products in retaliation for the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme. The RoDTEP scheme went into effect on January 1, 2021, and replaced the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS). The RoDTEP scheme ensures that exporters receive refunds on taxes and duties that were previously unrecoverable.
7. The IMF has cleared the second tranche of about \$337 million of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) to Sri Lanka, based on the debt treatment plan drawn up by the crisis-battered island nation and its bilateral creditors. The EFF is a four-year facility, and the total disbursements is \$670 million. The funds will support economic policies and reforms.
8. Argentina devalues its currency 'Peso' by 50% in a 'shock' measure against hyperinflation. The official exchange rate will go to 800 pesos against the dollar, up from 391. The move aims at reviving the crumbling economy and tackling triple-digit inflation.
9. Based on genomic analyses, researchers reveal illegal pangolin trafficking routes from origins in Africa to markets in Asia. The approach offers new opportunities to monitor pangolin poaching in near real-time, allowing for targeted and more effective anti-trafficking measures. Pangolins are in high demand in Asia because their scales are believed, without scientific support, to have medicinal

properties in traditional medicines, particularly in China. The white-bellied pangolin is the world's most trafficked mammal.

10. Gujarat's traditional dance form, "Garba," has been added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, becoming the 15th cultural element from India to receive this recognition. The UNESCO statement describes Garba as a ritualistic and devotional dance performed during the nine-day Navaratri festival, dedicated to the worship of feminine energy or Shakti.
11. Recently, the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award has been presented to the sportspersons who have excelled in their sports over four years. Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award is the highest sporting honour of India, named after the hockey wizard Major Dhyan Chand. The award is conferred annually by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.
12. The Sahitya Akademi Awards for 2023 was announced, recently. The Sahitya Akademi Award is a literary honour given annually by India's National Academy of Letters. The award is given to writers of the most outstanding books published in any of the 24 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, including English.
13. A novel vaccine aimed at reducing "bad" cholesterol has been created. It produced a strong antibody response that controlled cholesterol levels. The vaccination demonstrated encouraging effects in animal testing, lowering cholesterol levels by as much as 30%, which was correlated with a lower risk of heart disease.
14. The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Reliance Retail's JioMart to enhance the outreach of products from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAYNRLM). The collaboration allows SHGs to be sellers on JioMart, widening their market and visibility. This initiative aligns with MoRD's SARAS collection, providing benefits and guidance to SHG sellers for online business growth.
15. Senior Indian Police Service officer Nina Singh took charge as Director General of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) recently. She became the first woman to head the specialized security organization and the 30th CISF Director General.

TERMS IN NEWS

1. **Constitutional Monism:** In a parliamentary federal democracy, constitutional monism is a concept that pertains to the relationship between law at the centre and law enacted by states within a particular legal system. In its purest form, monism dictates that national law that contradicts international law is null and void, even if it post-dates international law, and even if it is constitutional.
2. **Vision Viksit Bharat@2047:** An initiative aimed at building a developed India by 2047.
3. **Nematocysts =>** are organelles found in the tentacles of cnidarians, such as jellyfish, hydras, and sea anemones that serve as potent weapons to hunt prey and fend off predators. It is a specialised cell which helps the animals to defend themselves, like a cellular weapon.

QUOTES/POEMS (FOR ESSAY & GS)

1. **Democracy:** “In a democracy, the majority will have its way; but the minority must have its say” – Chandrachud, Chief Justice of India.
2. **Growth vs Development:** “GDP measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile” - Robert F. Kennedy.
3. **Human Relation:** “A friend to all is a friend to none” – Aristotle.
4. **Moral struggle:** “Some of the greatest battles will be fought within the silent chambers of your own soul” - Ezra Taft Benson.

5. **An Ideal society:**

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

Where words come out from the depth of truth

Where the mind is led forward by thee

Into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.”

- Rabindranath Tagore.