



AGRASEN CIVIL SERVICES ACADEMY

Where tradition meets innovation

15 to 21 August

WEEKLY Current Affairs

UPSC / RPSC

and All Other Competitive

EXAMS



- Baal Aadhar Initiative
- All India Football Federation
- UDAN scheme
- Grain Storage
- Global Tax deal
- Har Ghar Jal
- **Rajasthan Special** : Important fort

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Weekly Current Affairs

DigiYatra

Context: The Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), run by GMR, announced the soft launch of the Centre's DigiYatra initiative, rolling out the beta version of its app for Android platforms.

About:

The 'DigiYatra' is a Biometric Enabled Seamless Travel experience (BEST) based on Facial Recognition Technology. It aims to provide a paperless and seamless travel experience to the passengers. "DigiYatra is a unique initiative of the Government of India, coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

DigiYatra envisages that travellers pass through various checkpoints at the airport through paperless and contactless processing, using facial features to establish their identity, which would be linked to the boarding pass.

The DigiYatra Foundation will be the custodian of the passenger ID validation process. It will also define the criteria for compliance and guidelines for the local airport systems.

Nano Urea

Context: India will produce over 6cr bottles of Nano urea and make it available to farmers in 2022-23.

What is nano urea?

Urea is chemical nitrogen fertilizer, white in colour, which artificially provides nitrogen, a major nutrient required by plants.

- Liquid nano urea is essentially urea in the form of a nanoparticle.
- It is a patented chemical nitrogen fertilizer produced by IFFCO.

Nano urea vs imported/urea – Which is better?

- Cost: Nano urea is cheaper (Rs 240 for half litre without subsidy; the International market price of a bag of urea is between Rs 3,500 and Rs 4,000. A bottle of nano urea can effectively replace at least one bag of urea.
- Benefits for the government: Reduces fertilizer subsidy bill of government. India is dependent on imports of the widely used fertilizer.
- The efficiency of Nano urea (nutritional use efficiency) can be as high as 85-90 per cent (Conventional urea has an efficiency of about 25 per cent).
 - As Nano urea has higher surface-mass ratios that help in releasing nutrients to plants in a controlled manner.

Nano urea has a shelf life of a year, and farmers need not be worried about "caking" when it comes in contact with moisture.

Other benefits of Nano urea:



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- Fertilizers in nano form provide a targeted supply of nutrients to crops, as they are absorbed by the stomata, and pores found on the epidermis of leaves.
- Reduces the unbalanced and indiscriminate use of conventional urea.
- Increases crop productivity by 8%
- Reduces soil, water, and air pollution.

Agasthyamalai Elephant Reserve

The central government has notified Agasthyamalai Elephant Reserve (Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli, TN) as India's 31 elephant reserve

- This will be the 5th elephant reserve in the state.

Benefits: The forest department may be eligible for additional financing through the centrally sponsored Project Elephant after notifying the Agasthyamalai Elephant Reserve.

- It will help connect the populations to other areas in the Srivilliputhur Meghamalai tiger reserve and with the Periyar landscapes.

About Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (ABR)

- ABR is situated at the southern-most end of the Western Ghats and spread over two southern states Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- It is named after the Agastya Mala peak that rises up to almost 1868 metres above sea level, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- In March 2016, it was included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of UNESCO.
- It covers Peppara and Shendurney wildlife sanctuaries and parts of the Neyyar sanctuary in Kerala and the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu.
- It is home to the Kanikaran tribe, one of the oldest surviving ancient tribes in the world.

Udarshakti

Context: It is a bilateral air exercise between India and Malaysia at Kuantan (Malaysia)

Other exercises: Joint military exercises "Harimau Shakti" are held annually between the two countries.

Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)

Context: An indigenously developed howitzer gun, ATAG, became part of the 21-gun salute during the Independence Day ceremony for the first time.

The ATAGS is an indigenous 155 mm x 52 calibre howitzer gun developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) with its Pune-based facility Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) being the nodal agency.

Shri Aurobindo Ghosh





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Context: To commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Shri Aurobindo Ghosh, the central government is holding spiritual programmes from August 12 to August 15, 2022, across 75 prisons in India.

About Sri Aurobindo:

- He was a yogi, seer, philosopher, poet, and Indian nationalist who propounded a philosophy of divine life on earth through spiritual evolution.
- In Pondichéry he founded a community of spiritual seekers, which took shape as the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1926.
- Helped establish the [Anushilan Samiti](#) of Calcutta in 1902.
- He and his brother revolutionary Barin Ghose contributed articles to the magazine Jugantar
- He was also a journalist, editing newspapers such as Bande Mataram. In 1914, he started publishing the magazine, Arya.
- In May 1908, Aurobindo was arrested in connection with the Alipore Conspiracy Case.
- He wrote copiously and his greatest literary achievement was 'Savitri', an epic poem with about 24000 lines.
- He developed a kind of Yoga called Integral Yoga.

His theory of Nationalism:

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was considered a prophet of Indian nationalism. Along with Bankimchandra, Tilak and Dayanand, he developed the theory of nationalism in India (based on Vedanta Philosophy)

- He declared that India was in fact Mother India which represented the united power and Shakti of millions of her children. Mother India represented the infinite energy of her people:

Navroz festival (Parsi New Year)

Context: Navroz is celebrated at the time of the vernal equinox (marking the start of spring) in the Northern Hemisphere. It is being celebrated in India on 16th August in India.

About Navroz:

- 'Nav' = new and 'Roz' = day, meaning 'new day' (in the Persian language)
- It is celebrated in March globally (as per the Iranian calendar), Navroz arrives 200 days later in India and is celebrated in the month of August as the Parsis here follow the Shahenshahi calendar which doesn't account for leap years.
 - The Persian king Jamshed is credited with having created the Shahenshahi calendar.
- Navroz is on the list of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of India.

Zoroastrianism:

- It is one of the earliest known monotheistic faiths, created over 3,500 years ago in ancient Iran by Prophet Zarathustra
- It was the official religion of Persia from 650 BCE until the emergence of Islam in the 7th century. With the coming of Islam numerous Zoroastrians fled to India (Gujarat) and Pakistan, thus the name Parsis ('Parsi' is Gujarati for Persian).



- India has one of the largest single groups of Parsis (currently about 61000) in India. The world population is estimated at 2.6 million Zoroastrians.
- In India, Parsis are one of the notified minority communities.

Other new year:

- Chaitra Shukla Pratipada (beginning of the new year of the Vedic (Hindu) calendar)
- Gudi Padwa and Ugadi
- Navreh (the lunar new year in Kashmir)
- Sajibu Cheiraoba (celebrated by Meiteis (Manipur))
- Cheti Chand (by Sindhis)
- Losoong (Sikkimese new year)

al Aadhaar Initiative

Context: Over 7.9 million children aged up to five were enrolled under the Unique Identification Authority's Bal Aadhaar initiative from April to July.

About:

- The Bal Aadhaar, a precursor to a standard Aadhaar, is issued in blue colour to children aged up to five. Upon expiration, a regular Aadhaar is issued.
- Benefits: Bal Aadhaar works as a facilitator in availing several welfare benefits, and also works as a digital photo identity for children.
- Difference with regular Aadhaar: Biometrics to establish uniqueness for the Bal Aadhaar is not collected unlike in the case of Aadhaar. A facial image of a child is instead taken for enrolment. Biometric authentication of the parent/guardian and a proof of relationship document, preferably a birth certificate, are collected at the time of enrolment.

CAG criticism of Bal Aadhaar: The audit was also critical of UIDAI's move to issue Aadhaar cards to children and newborns without biometrics under an initiative known as Bal Aadhaar. This needs to be reviewed because anyway after 5 years, a child has to apply for a new regular Aadhaar.

About UIDAI:

- The UIDAI is a statutory authority established on 12th July 2016.
- Parent body: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- Mandate: The UIDAI is mandated to assign a 12-digit unique identification (UID) number (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India.
- Total: As of 31st October 2021, UIDAI had issued 131.68 crore Aadhaar numbers. (99% of the adult population)

Fundamental duties

Context: CJJ of India has said that Fundamental duties (FD) are not just pedantic, they are key to social transformation

- FD is meant to guide citizens to engineer a social transformation.

- While the constitution has granted us inalienable rights, it places upon us certain fundamental duties.
- The fundamental duties serve as a reminder to citizens that while enjoying their rights, they have also to be quite conscious of the duties they owe to their country, their society and to their fellow citizens.

About Fundamental Duties:

- The idea of Fundamental Duties is inspired by the Constitution of Russia.
- These were incorporated in Part IV-A of the Constitution by the 42nd A, 1976 on the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee.
- Originally 10 in number, one more duty was added through the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002.
- All the eleven duties are listed in Article 51-A of the Constitution (the sole Article in Part-IV-A).
- However, like the Directive Principles, the duties are also non-justiciable in nature.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh

Context: The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh has been at the centre of three major wars and multiple clashes for decades. Recently, Azerbaijan claimed that it had captured the territory in Karabakh after an Armenian attack killed one Azerbaijani soldier.

The conflict:

- The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an ethnic and territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, inhabited mostly by ethnic Armenians, but located within the boundaries of Azerbaijan.
- Years of clashes followed between Azerbaijan forces and Armenian separatists ended in 1994 when Russia brokered a ceasefire, by which time ethnic Armenians had taken control of the region.
- While the area remains in Azerbaijan, it is today governed by separatist Armenians who have declared it a republic called the “Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast”

Kerala Cabinet clears Bill to curtail Chancellor’s power in VC selection

Context: The Kerala State Cabinet has approved a Bill that could effectively curtail the Governor’s influence in the selection of Vice Chancellors to State universities.

Significance: The issue highlights the conflict between democratically elected CM and centre-appointed Governor.

Powers of Governor for state Universities:

- ex-officio chancellor of the universities in that state.
- The difference in interpretation of laws:
 - In Kerala’s case, the Governor’s official portal asserts that “as Chancellor governor acts independently of the Council of Ministers and takes his own decisions on all University matters”.
 - Rajasthan’s Raj Bhawan states that the “Governor appoints the Vice-Chancellor on the advice/ in consultation with the State Government”

For Central Universities: President appoints chancellors.

Child mortality has dipped to 35 per 1,000 live births

Context: Child mortality in India has reduced since 2014 from 45 per 1,000 live births to 35 per 1,000 live births in 2019.

‘Paalan 1000’: National Campaign and Parenting App at the Early Childhood Development

- It focuses on the cognitive development of children in the first two years of their life.
- The programme is aligned with the mission of the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), emphasizing responsive care and focused interventions during the first 1,000 days.

Significance of first 1,000 days: The period establishes a solid platform for a child’s physical, mental, emotional, cognitive and social health. during this period, the child needs the right nutrition, stimulation, love and support.

NeVA

Context: ‘One Nation-One Application’ is being implemented using the National eVidhan Application (NeVA)

NeVA is a portal to bring all the legislatures of the country together, on one platform.

Key Benefits:

- Paperless Assembly
- Automation of the entire law-making process
- Cloud technology (Meghraj) allows data to be accessed anywhere at any time.
- Himachal Pradesh is the first Digital Legislature in the country.

NeVA (previously known as e-Vidhan) is a Mission Mode Project (MMP) under the Digital India Programme, under the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA).

ROSHINI

Context: The Union Minister unveiled the first-of-its-kind lantern named ‘Roshni’ during a visit to SAGAR ANVESHKA, a Coastal Research Vessel, operated and used by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)

About Roshini:

It is India’s 1st saline water LED lantern. It uses salty sea water as an electrolyte to power LED lamps

Developed by: National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai

Thucydides Trap

Thucydides Trap, or Thucydides’ Trap, is a term popularized by American political scientist Graham T. Allison to describe an apparent tendency towards war when an emerging power threatens to displace an existing great power as a regional or international hegemon. It was coined and is primarily used to describe a potential conflict between the United States and the People’s Republic of China.

All India Football Federation (AIFF)

Context: FIFA has suspended AIFF due to undue legal and political interference in the federation.

Background of the issue:

- In May this year, India's Supreme Court disbanded the AIFF (due to issues of mismanagement) and appointed a three-member committee to govern the sport. (Similar to the steps taken for BCCI, after Lodha committee recommendations)
- However, Fifa's rules say its member federations must be free from legal and political interference.

Impact: U-17 women's world cup (scheduled to be played in October in India) may not be held. Also, Indian national team will not be allowed to play other national football teams.

Success in women's football: Gokulam Kerala FC – a professional football team based in Kerala state – became the first Indian club to play in the prestigious Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Women's Club Championship.

Quantum Key Distribution (QKD)

Direction: Basic terminologies about Quantum computing are important (but do not need to go into unnecessary details)

Context: Under the Innovation for Defense Excellence (iDEX), a startup QNu labs have developed QKD.

QKD is a secure communication technology that allows two parties to generate a shared secret key which can be used to encrypt and decrypt messages.

Working: Quantum computing takes advantage of the strange ability of subatomic particles to exist in more than one state at any time. Due to the way the tiniest of particles behave, operations can be done much more quickly and use less energy than classical computers.

About iDEX:

- It is an initiative by the government (launched in 2018) to contribute to the modernization of the Defense Industry.
- It aims to promote innovation and technology development in Defense and Aerospace by engaging with Industries, MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes & academia
- It will be funded by the Defense Innovation Organization (DIO) (under the Ministry of Defence).

Tackling stubble burning

Context: With an aim to cut pollution caused by stubble burning in Haryana, Delhi region, a new 2nd generation (2G) ethanol plant (based on indigenous technology) was recently opened on world biofuel day (August 10).

About:

- Built by the Indian Oil Corporation
- Located close to the Panipat refinery.



- It aims to utilise about 2 lakh tonnes of rice straw (crop-residue) annually to generate around 3 crore litres of ethanol annually.

Benefits:

- The biofuel plant will be able to get rid of stubble without burning it
- Empower farmers and provide an additional income generation opportunity

Other initiatives for residue crop management:

- Haryana has set up 64.3 MW biomass power projects that consume 2.37 lakh MT of paddy straw, while another 2.41 lakh MT of paddy straw is being used by other industries.
- Villages are being categorized into red, yellow and green zones in terms of incidences of crop residue burning
- Haryana is providing a subsidy on Crop Residue Management (CRM) machines.
- Use of Happy Seeders Machine

Corneas bioengineered from pig collagen can restore sight

Context: For the first time, researchers in Sweden have been able to create a successful alternative — bioengineered cornea implants made of collagen derived from pig skin.

The implant was used to successfully restore the vision of 20 people in India and Iran, most of whom were blind due to keratoconus, a disease that leads to thinning of the cornea.

Nipun mines, the Landing Craft Assault (LCA) and the F-INSAS system

Context: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh handed over several new defence systems, including the F-INSAS, the Nipun mines, and the Landing Craft Assault (LCA), to the Army.

F-INSAS system

F-INSAS stands for Future Infantry Soldier As A System, a programme for infantry modernisation aimed at increasing the operational capability of the soldier. As part of the project, soldiers are being equipped with modern systems that are lightweight, all-weather-all-terrain, cost-effective and low maintenance.

Nipun mines

Nipun mines are indigenously designed and developed anti-personnel mines, termed by the DRDO as 'soft target blast munition'. These mines are meant to act as the first line of defence against infiltrators and enemy infantry. They have been developed with the efforts of the Armament Research and Development Establishment.

landing Craft Assault

The Landing Craft Assault (LCA) is meant to serve as a replacement for the boats with limited capabilities currently in use in the Pangong Tso lake. The LCA, which has been indigenously developed by Goa-based Aquarius Shipyard Limited, is said to have better launch, speed and capacity to operate across water obstacles in eastern Ladakh.



UDAN scheme

Context: The Ministry of Civil Aviation's flagship program Regional Connectivity Scheme UDAN (UdeDeshkaAamNagrik) has completed 5 years of success (launched in 2016) since the launch of its first flight by the Prime Minister on 27th April 2017.

Aim: It seeks to improve regional air connectivity to tier-2 and tier-3 cities (mostly underserved or unserved regions) through the revival of unused and underused airports.

Features:

- Benefits for citizens: Under the scheme, nearly half of the seats in Udan flights are offered at subsidized fares, and the participating carriers are provided with a certain amount of viability gap funding (VGF).
- It is operational for 10 years period.
- Funding: The scheme will be jointly funded by the central government and state governments.

Phases:

- UDAN 1.0 (5 airlines),
- UDAN 2.0 (helipads connected),
- UDAN 3.0 (inclusion of tourism, seaplane route),
- UDAN 4.0 (further expansion to 78 new routes),
- UDAN 4.1 (Sagarmala Seaplane service),
- KRISHI UDAN (transporting agri-products),
- International UDAN (smaller cities to international destination)

Talaq-e-Hasan

Context: SC commented that the practice of 'Talaq-e-Hasan' is not so improper

Previously:

- PIL was filed to make the prescribed Islamic way of divorce, Talaq-e-Hasan unconstitutional as it is violative of Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25 of the Constitution.
- Instant Triple Talaq (Talaq-e-biddat) was banned by the government in 2019

Modes of Talaq:

- Talaq-e-Ahsan: a single revocable divorce is made (unlike multiple pronouncements under triple talaq). Next, a woman has to go through iddator a waiting period of three months.
- Talaq-e-Hasan: A Muslim man can divorce his wife by uttering Talaq once every month (for 3 months).
 - It enjoys legal validity in almost all Muslim countries.

Manthan Portal

Direction: 'Manthan' is not so important. Have some knowledge about STIAC



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Context: It has been launched by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser for promoting collaboration between industry and the Scientific research and development ecosystem to meet India's sustainability goals.

- Programmes: Knowledge Transfer, Interactive sessions, exhibitions on new innovations
- Platform is powered by NSEIT (a 100% subsidiary of the National Stock Exchange of India)

Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA): He is the chief advisor to the government on matters related to scientific policy and holds a secretary-level position.

- 'Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser', through the PM's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) helps scientific cross-sectoral synergy across ministries, institutions and the industry.
- 1st PSA was P. J. Abdul Kalam (1999-2002)

Similar Name: Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), in coordination with the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), launched an online hackathon "Manthan 2021" (for a technical solution to challenges faced by intelligence agencies)

Arth Ganga

Direction: Although new initiatives are not so important, NGP is.

Context: Jal Shakti Ministry unveiled a new initiative under Arth Ganga (under Namami Gange Programme)

Arth Ganga aims to promote economic activities along the Ganga River bank

The new initiatives are:

- Jalaj initiative (Skill enhancement along with Ganga Conservation)
- Sahakar Bharati (sustainable economic development by public participation)
- ImAvatar (promotes livelihood opportunities)
- New course 'River Champ' on CLAP
 - The continuous learning and activity portal (CLAP) is an online platform for raising awareness, actions and debates around river conservation in India.

About Namami Gange Programme

- It was launched in 2014 with twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of the National River Ganga. (Under Ministry of Jal Shakti and supported by World Bank)
- Implementation: National Ganga Council (headed by the PM) is a decision-making body. Implementation is done by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
- Funding: centrally-funded, non-lapsable corpus.
- Main Pillars of NGP: Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure, River-Surface Cleaning, Afforestation, Industrial Effluent Monitoring, River-Front Development, Bio-Diversity, Public Awareness, Ganga Gram

About the Ganges:

- The Ganges is the longest river (2525 Km) and also the largest river in India followed by Godavari (1465 km).



- States covered: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- Ganga is the third largest river in the world by discharge.
- The mouth of River Ganga forms the world's largest delta, known as Sunderbans, and was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997.

Grain Storage

Direction: This is old News. PM Samapada Scheme is important.

Context: A new model for the development of Grain Silos (tall tower or pit on a farm used to store grain) under PPP mode at over 80 locations have been proposed

- Grain Silos have been declared as Sub-Mandi Yard (easing procurement and logistics costs for farmers)

PPP model selected: design, build, fund, own and transfer (DBFOT) (land is owned by FCI) and design, build, fund, own and operate (DBFOO) (land belongs to private entities)

Government steps for storage of grains:

- PEG Scheme: Under the Private Entrepreneurs Guarantee, new Godowns are constructed by FC through the private sector.
- Cold Chain, Value addition and Preservation Infrastructure (under PM Sampada Scheme)
- Gramin Bhandaran Yojana: For construction and renovation of godowns in rural areas using capital investment subsidy

Pesticides

Context: PAN (Pesticide Action Network) has reported that several states are using above the recommended amount of certain pesticides

Reported Pesticides are:

- Chlorpyrifos (to control soil-borne insect pests)- It is known to cause brain damage and is banned in many countries.
- Fipronil (to control ants, beetles, and fleas)
- Atrazine (to control grasses and weeds before they emerge)
- Paraquat (a herbicide to control grasses and weeds)

Previously

- On recommendations of the Anupam Verma Committee report the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare had notified Pesticides (Prohibition) Order, 2018 under which the use of 18 pesticides was banned.

About PAN

Pesticide Action Network is "an international coalition of around 600 NGOs, citizens' groups, and individuals in about 60 countries." which opposes pesticide use, and advocates what it proposes as more ecologically sound alternatives.

Compostable Plastic

Direction: Do keep a short list of alternatives to SUP.

Context: S&T ministry will encourage startups (through a loan) to manufacture and commercialize “compostable” plastic to mitigate the usage of Single Use plastics (SUP)

Programme is supported by NIDHI-PRAYAS Scheme, Niti Aayog and UNIDO

- NIDHI (National Initiative for developing and harnessing innovations): for setting up incubators, seed funds, accelerators and ‘Proof of concept’.
- PRAYAS (Promoting and Accelerating Young and Aspiring innovators and Startups): (Under the NIDHI scheme) for supporting innovators and entrepreneurs with PRAYAS grants, to develop prototypes.

SUP has been banned from July 2022 in India.

Compostable plastic: Instead of using plastic made from petrochemicals and fossil fuels, compostable plastics are derived from renewable materials like corn, potato, tapioca starches, cellulose, soy protein, and lactic acid.

Petcoke

Context: India buys discounted Venezuelan petroleum coke to replace coal (due to high prices of coal)

Petroleum coke (or pet coke) is a final carbon-rich solid material that derives from oil refining

- Characteristics: A tonne of petcoke is more expensive than coal, but produces more energy when burnt. It is generally not used as fuel because of toxic emissions, but is widely used by the cement industry – its largest consumer, as sulphur dioxide emissions, are absorbed by limestone.
- Uses: As fuel in Industries- Cement, Lime, Alumina etc.

Previously Supreme Court had banned the use of Petcoke in NCR areas (Delhi)

1st shipment: India, which counts the United States and Saudi Arabia as major petcoke suppliers, received its first-ever cargo from Venezuela at the beginning of 2022

PM 2.5 pollution

Context: Delhi, Kolkata first, second globally in PM2.5 pollution as per the report titled Air Quality and Health in Cities (by US-based research organization Health Effects Institute’s (HEI) State of Global Air Initiative)

Findings:

- Delhi has had an ‘annual exposure level’ of 110 micrograms per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) of PM2.5 (WHO recommendation: annual average concentrations of PM5 should not exceed $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)
- Kolkata came second with $84 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ of PM2.5
- Shanghai led the list of cities most polluted due to NO2
- The trend of exposure:

- 5: The report found that exposure to PM2.5 pollution tended to be higher in cities located in low- and middle-income countries
- NO2: Exposure to NO2 was found to be higher across cities in high-income as well as low- and middle-income
 - Reason: NO2 is produced mainly from the burning of fuels mostly in older vehicles, power plants, industrial facilities and residential cooking and heating.
 - As city residents tend to live closer to busy roads with dense traffic, they are often exposed to higher NO2 pollution than residents of rural areas.
- Impact: In 2019, 7 million deaths linked to PM2.5 exposure occurred

'Medicine from The Sky' Project

In Arunachal Pradesh, the pilot project of using drones in healthcare, agriculture and disaster management including the "Medicine from the Sky project" is being undertaken in association with the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The first flight of drone service was carried from Seppa to Chayang Tajo in the East Kameng district. This project is inspired by the Prime Minister's vision of transforming India into the world's drone hub.

Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)

Context: Access to TKDL has been widened to users (previously it was limited to 14 Patent offices for search and examination)

Traditional Knowledge: Traditional knowledge refers to the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples. Developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment.

- Government enacted the Biological Diversity Act 2002 (to preserve and maintain TK and for equitable sharing of its benefits). India is also a signatory to Convention on Biological Diversity and Nagoya Protocol.

About TKDL

- The TKDL contains documentation of publicly available traditional knowledge (TK) that relates to Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Yoga. is in digitized format. is available in five languages: English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.
- It was established in 2001 by CSIR and the Ministry of AYUSH.
- Aim of TKDL: It seeks to prevent the misappropriation of the country's traditional medicinal knowledge through patenting worldwide or against bio-piracy.

Megalodon

Context: Using fossil evidence to create a three-dimensional model, researchers have found new evidence about the life of one of the biggest predatory animals of all time — the Megalodon.

Megalodons roamed the oceans an estimated 23 million to 2.6 million years ago.

Megalodon could "completely ingest, and in as few as five bites," a prey as big as the killer whale. According to the study, the Megalodon was bigger than a school bus at around 50 feet from nose to tail. In comparison, the great white

sharks of the present can grow to a maximum length of around 15 feet. Using their digital model, the researchers have suggested that the giant transoceanic predator would have weighed around 70 tonnes — or as much as 10 elephants.

Resurrecting the extinct Tasmanian Tiger

Context: Scientists in the US and Australia have embarked on a \$15-million project to resurrect the thylacine or Tasmanian Tiger, a marsupial that went extinct in the 1930s, using gene-editing technology.

- Tasmanian Tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*), the only animal in the Thylacinidae family to survive in modern times, was a marsupial mammal that raises young ones in a pouch.
- They were slow-paced carnivorous that usually hunted alone or in pairs at night. The sharply clawed animal had a dog-like head and ate kangaroos, other marsupials, small rodents, and birds.
- The animal was at the top of the food chain, and hence played a significant role in balancing the ecosystem of its habitat by removing the weak animals and maintaining species diversity. As the thylacine was the only apex predator in its ecosystem, its absence impacted the Tasmanian Devil, which was almost wiped out by a facial tumour disease.

Pandemic Treaty

Context: WHO had established an intergovernmental negotiating body to draft and negotiate a Pandemic treaty. WHO says it will be ready in the next 18 months and help prevent future global health disasters.

About Pandemic Treaty

In December 2021, the Health Assembly adopted a decision titled “The World Together” at its second special session since it was founded in 1948.

- Under the decision, the health organisation established an intergovernmental negotiating body (INB) to draft and negotiate the contents of the pandemic treaty in compliance with Article 19 of the WHO Constitution.
- The pandemic treaty is expected to cover aspects like data sharing and genome sequencing of emerging viruses and equitable distribution of vaccines and drugs and related research throughout the world.

Need for:

- Solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic have seen an inequitable distribution of vaccines so far, with poorer countries at the mercy of others to receive preventive medication.
- Most countries have followed the “me-first” approach which is not an effective way to deal with a global pandemic.

Modified Interest Subvention scheme (MISS)

Context: Government will provide interest subventions (kind of subsidy) to all financial institutions (Banks) for short-term agriculture loans given to farmers. This will be valid for FY22 to FY24 (2 years) and up to 1.5% interest subvention.

What is interest subvention:

- It is a form of waiver of some percentage of interest from the total interest that one has to pay on a loan taken from financial institutions.
- g., If banks provide loans on 8.5% interest rate to farmers. And if the government provides interest subvention of 1.5%. Then farmers have to pay only 7% interest rate to bank. The difference will be paid by government as subsidy.

About MISS

- Under this, bank provides short term loans upto 3 lakh for all agriculture and allied activities at 7% per annum.
- For prompt repayment of loans: Farmers repaying loans before due date are given extra 3% subventions (i.e., they will have to pay just 4% interest rate)
- Funding: 100% by centre
- Nodal agency: NABARD and RBI

Other schemes for interest subvention: Kisan Credit Card, Agri Market Infrastructure Fund (provide subsidized loans to state and UT) and PM Fasal Bima Yojana.

Global Tax deal

Context: India and other countries (of the G24 grouping) have objected to the proposal that they can't levy any future digital service tax (similar to an equalization levy)

Background:

In order to streamline the global governance of digital companies such as Google, and Facebook, a global tax deal under OECD's two-pillar plan was agreed upon in 2021 (including by India)

- Two pillars:
 - Under pillar 1: All multinational enterprises (with turnover over 20bn Euro and profit of over 10%) will have to relocate part of their profit to the place where they sell their products.
 - Under Pillar 2: All enterprises (with revenue over EUR 750mn) will have to give a minimum corporation tax of 15%. It will bring in 'global minimum corporation tax' to be implemented from 2023.

What is Equalization Levy?

Equalization Levy is a direct tax (of 6%), introduced in India in 2016 to tax foreign firms (such as Google, and Facebook) with now permanent establishments in India but profits from it. It was reaffirmed in Finance Act 2020 and expanded to include non-resident e-commerce operators (such as Amazon), by a new levy of 2% (digital service tax)

What is the digital tax scheme?

Government in Finance Bill of 2020-21, imposed a 2% digital service tax on trade and services of foreign e-commerce companies such as Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart and others having an annual turnover of ₹2 crores or more.

Group of 24: It was established in 1971 as a chapter of the Group of 77 of developing countries in order to coordinate on monetary and developmental issues.

NIDAAN

Context: National Integrated Database on Arrested narco-offender (NIDAAN) gets operationalized

About NIDAAN

It is 1st of its kind database for data on all arrested narcotics-related offenders.

Developed by: Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

The portal will source its data from the Inter-operable criminal justice system (ICJS), e-Prison and CCTNS (when integrated). Earlier it was part of the NCORD Portal (Narcotics Coordination Mechanism)

Development Action Plan for Scheduled Castes (DAPSC)

Direction: Although not the flagship scheme of government, you can use it as an example in your mains answer. For prelims: know the % of SC population (16.6% (SC) and 8.6% (ST) as per 2011 census); also know about the National Commission of Scheduled Castes (constitutional body under Art 338) and e-utthaan portal.

Context: Ministry of finance will reallocate unspent SC welfare funds from DAPSC under 8 ministries to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)

MoSJE will use this fund for infrastructure development and income-generating schemes of SC such as:

- Dr Ambedkar Ustasv Dham (for community hall construction in villages);
- PM Amrit Jaladhaara (assistance to SC landowner for developing irrigation facilities);
- PM young Entrepreneurs Schemes (PM-YES) (for improving logistics such as tractors, harvesters in villages);
- BLISS (support to SC entrepreneurs engaged in service activities)

About DAPSC: It is an umbrella programme consisting of many schemes run by different ministries for promoting the social and financial inclusion of SCs.

International Transport Forum (ITF)

Context: Cabinet nod to India-France contract to support ITF activities in the Indian transport sector.

The International Transport Forum at the OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with 64 member countries. It acts as a think tank for transport policy and organises the Annual Summit of transport ministers. ITF is the only global body that covers all transport modes. The ITF is administratively integrated with the OECD, yet politically autonomous.

UPI continues global expansion, now entering the UK market

Direction: UPI is an important technology. Learn about how the system works.

Context: Continuing its expansion outside India, the indigenously developed real-time payments solution UPI will now enter the UK market starting with QR code-based transactions.



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The UK will be the eighth country where UPI-based services will be made available. UAE, Japan, the US, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal and France are already accepting UPI-based payment services.

The NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL) has forged a partnership with payments solutions provider PayXpert to internationalise the acceptance of its payment solutions in the UK.

Guidelines by SEBI

Direction: Generally in economics, be clear of basic terms such as AIFs, and VCFs, and know about SEBI (statutory body est. in 1992 under SEBI Act, 1992). What are securities? Avoid in-depth technical details such as sections of SEBI etc.

Context: SEBI has issued guidelines to protect the interest of investors and promote the development of the securities market.

SEBI will now allow investment (of AIFs, VCFs etc.) in global companies that are:

- Signatories to IOSCO or
- A signatory to bilateral MoU with SEBI

Exceptions: Countries under FATF are barred and transfer or sale of investment in overseas companies can only be made to entities eligible under FEMA 1999.

Background: previously investments were allowed only in those global companies having some connection to India or have a back-office in India.

Basics:

- IOSCO (International Organization of Securities Commission): It is an international body for securities regulators (e.g. SEBI in India) and set standards for them. Currently from India, SEBI is an ordinary member, the International Financial Services centre authority (IFSCA) is an associate member and NSE, BSE, and Multi-commodity exchange of India are affiliate members.
- AIFs (Alternative investment fund): It is a privately pooled investment vehicle which collects funds from sophisticated investors, whether Indian or foreign for investment purposes. It must be incorporated or established in India.
- VCFs (Venture Capital Fund): It is a type of AIF but here major investment is in Startups or SMEs (which have greater growth potential, but more risks)
- Securities are fungible (interchangeable) and tradable financial instruments used to raise capital in public and private markets. Types:
 - Equity—which provides ownership rights to holders
 - Debt—essentially loans repaid with periodic payments
 - Hybrids—combine aspects of debt and equity.

POSOCO

Direction: Be clear about the issues of DISCOMs, remember a few provisions of UDAY schemes (its success and failures)





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Context: Power system operation corporation (POSOCO) (under the Ministry of Power) has debarred 13 state DISCOMs from buying and selling electricity from the spot market.

Reason: Not clearing of the timely bill by DISCOMs to power generators.

POSOCO invoked (for 1st time) Electricity (Late payment surcharge and related matters) Rules 2022 to debar DISCOMs

- Issues with DISCOMs: Political interference, no periodic revision of the tariff, delay in subsidy allotment by the state government, issues with the recovery of dues (esp. from rural areas)
- Issue of Generation Companies (Gencos): Delayed payment by DISCOMs leads to a debt trap as they have to borrow money to keep up their operation.

Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana is the financial turnaround and revival package for electricity distribution companies of India.

Government announced UDAY 2.0 (which aims at the installation of smart prepaid metres, prompt payment by DISCOMs, making coal available for the short term and reviving gas-based plants)

Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme(series II)

Context: Sovereign Gold Bonds(SGB) 2022-23 (Series II) will be opened for subscription during the period August 22-26, 2022 with a Settlement date of August 30, 2022.

SGB scheme:

- It was launched in November 2015 with an objective to reduce the demand for physical gold and shift a part of the domestic savings – used for the purchase of gold – into financial savings.
- Issuance: The Gold Bonds are issued as Government of India Stock under the Government Securities (GS) Act, 2006.
 - These are issued by the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) on behalf of the Government of India.
- Minimum and Maximum limit: The minimum permissible investment limit will be 1 gram of gold, while the maximum limit will be 4 kg for individuals, 4 kg for Hindu Undivided families and 20 kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal (April-March) notified by the government from time to time.
- Stock exchange: Bonds are sold through Commercial banks, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices and recognised stock exchanges viz National Stock Exchange of India Limited and Bombay Stock Exchange, either directly or through agents.
- Eligibility: The bonds are restricted for sale to resident individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- Term: The gold bonds come with a maturity period of eight years, with an option to exit the investment after the first five years
- Collateral: Bonds can be used as collateral for loans. The loan-to-value (LTV) ratio is to be set equal to ordinary gold loans mandated by the Reserve Bank from time to time.



Har Ghar Jal

Direction: JJM is important, both for Mains and Prelims. Do remember its important aspects (e.g. JJM shifted focus from habitation to household; emphasis on community ownership, women, children and weaker sections; Integrated water management; use of technology such as geo-tagging, dashboard-based monitoring etc.)

Context: Goa became 1st state to be certified with 'Har Ghar Jal' in the country.

Process followed: After every household in the village is connected with tap water, Gram Sabha passes a resolution that not a single household is left out. Only after every village certifies its, State can be declared 'Har Ghar Jal'

About Har Ghar Jal

- It aims to encourage the state to ensure tap water connection to every household by 2024
- Under Jal Jeevan Mission (Ministry of Jal Shakti)
- Status: Above 52% of the rural households are now connected with tap water (in 2019 it was only 17%)

Tilapia Fish

Direction: Know a few facts about Tilapia. Know about Aquaculture, PMMSY and Blue Revolution. Also, remember a few basic facts (e.g. India is the 2nd largest fish-producing country in the world accounting for 7.56 per cent of global production)

Context: Technology Development Board(TDB) (a statutory body under the DST) is funding its first ever 'Aquaculture' project using 'state of the art' Israeli technology for the production of Tilapia Fish".

Impact: It will help support Blue Revolution in India

What is Tilapia Fish?

- 'Tilapia' (also called "aquatic chicken" due to its quick growth and low maintenance) is one of the most productive and internationally traded food fish in the world.
- It belongs to the family Cichlidae, native to Africa and the Middle East
- It can adapt to a wide variety of conditions and has omnivorous food habits
- It has also turned 'invasive' in some parts of India.

Under the project, Tilapia will be grown from the imported parent broodstock 'Hermon' from Israel.

- Hermon is a hybrid of two selected strains of Tilapia, namely Oreochromis Niloticus (Male) and Oreochromis Aureus (Female), and shows:
- high growth rate
- resistance to low temperature
- all hybrid fry progeny of males only



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Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana: It aims to Adopt 'Cluster or Area-based Approaches' and create fisheries clusters through backward and forward linkages. It further aims to double the export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore from the fisheries sector by 2024-25.

Blue Revolution: It refers to the time of intense growth of the worldwide aquaculture industry from the mid-1960s to the present day.

AK-203 rifles

Direction: Don't overthink on these news (unless you are an arms enthusiast), go through it once. Know the names of a few items jointly being produced by India and Russia and know a few basic facts (e.g. India is still the largest importer of arms (2017-21 period).

Context: Manufacture of the AK-203 assault rifles by the Indo-Russian joint venture at Amethi (UP) will begin by year-end (after a delay due to the Russia-Ukraine war)

About AK 203 assault rifles:

- It is the latest and most advanced version of the AK-47 rifle.
- It is expected to replace the Indian Small Arms System (INSAS) assault rifle (presently being used by Army, Navy and the Air Force)
- These rifles are a type of Kalashnikov rifle, which can work under extreme climatic conditions and are effective even in sand, soil and water.
- Issues with INSAS Rifles: It is not suitable for use at high altitudes. Several other issues with these rifles include gun jamming, oil leakage etc.

Background:

- India and Russia signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) in February 2019 for the production of AK 203 assault rifles.
- As per contractual terms, the first 70,000 AK-203 rifles will be produced in India with a phased increase in the extent of localisation from 5% to 70%. The remaining rifles (of 6 lakh planned) will be produced with 100% localisation.

Other India-Russia bilateral projects:

- Indigenous production of T-90 tanks
- Su-30-MKI aircraft
- Supply of MiG-29-K aircraft
- Kamov-31 and Mi-17 helicopters
- Upgrade of MiG-29 aircraft
- Supply of Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher Smerch.
- Supersonic BrahMos cruise missiles

Expenditure on purchase: the expenditure on defence procurement from foreign sources has reduced from 46% to 36%, thereby reducing the import burden, in the last 3 (three) years i.e. from 2018-19 to 2020-21.



Rajasthan Special

Important fort of Rajasthan

Amer Fort

- Amber Fort Jaipur, 11 km from Jaipur city in Amer, a suburb of Rajasthan. It is situated far away.
- Construction: 1592
- Creator: Raja Mansingh I, then Sawai Jai Singh made many contributions and reforms
- Construction Materials: Red Sandstone Stone & Marble
- It is a mixed and unique specimen of Mughal and Hindu architecture.

Chittorgarh Fort

- Chittorgarh Fort is the largest fort in India.
- This fort was built by the Maurya dynasty king Chitrangad in the seventh century and named it as Chitrakoot.
- In 738, Guhilvanshi King Bappa Rawal defeated Manmori, the last ruler of the Maurya dynasty who ruled Rajputana, and took this fort in his possession.
- The Parmara king of Malwa, Munj snatched it from the Guhilvanshis and annexed it to his kingdom. Thus in the 9-10th century it was ruled by the Paramaras.
- It is said about Chittorgarh Fort "Gadh then Chittorgarh and all Gadhaiya"

Mehrangarh Fort

- Mehrangarh Fort is located in Jodhpur.
- Rao Jodha laid the foundation of the fort on this hill on May 12, 1459, it was completed by Maharaj Jaswant Singh (1638-78).
- Basically the fort has seven gates (pols) (the eighth gate is secret). The first gate has sharp nails to protect it from the attack of elephants.
- This huge fort of fifteenth century, is situated on a rocky rock hill (Chidiya Tonk), 125 meters above the plain.

Kumbhalgarh Fort

- This fort is located 70 km from Udaipur in Kumbhalgarh, Rajsamand district.
- This fort was built by Maharana Kumbha. This fort was called 'Ajeyagarh' because it was a difficult task to conquer this fort.



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- The construction of this fort was completed after 15 years in 1458, starting from 1443 on the ruins of the fort built by Samprati, the second son of Emperor Ashoka.
- In this fort built according to the rules of Vastu Shastra, entrance gates, ramparts, reservoirs, emergency gates to go out, palaces, temples, residential buildings, yagya altars, pillars, chhatris etc. have been made.
- Mad singers often sing songs in praise of this fort.

Ranthambore Fort, Sawai Madhopur

- Ranthambore fort is built at a height of 481 meters above sea level between the hills named Ran and Thamb, 13 km from the Sawai Madhopur railway station of the Delhi-Mumbai rail route, in a circumference of 12 km.
- According to historians, this fort is believed to be built by Chauhan king Ranthamban Dev in 944, most of the construction work of this fort has been done during the reign of Chauhan kings.
- The attacks on Ranthambore fort also have a long story, which started with Qutubuddin Aibak of Delhi and continued till the Mughal emperor Akbar.
- There is a natural moat in all the three hills of the fort, which strengthens the defense of this fort and makes it invincible.

Junagadh Fort Bikaner

- Junagadh Fort is located in the city of Bikaner in the state of Rajasthan.
- Junagadh Fort was built between 1588 and 1593.
- This fort was established in 1593 by Raja Rai Singh, a general of Akbar's army, but it was given its modern form by Maharaja Ganga Singh.
- It has many attractive palaces, palace courtyards made of red sand and marble stone, balconies, chhatris and windows which are spread over all the buildings.
- Around this fort there are 37 security posts with a wall about 986 meters long.
- The fort has two main gates, which are called Daulatpol and Surajpol. Dolatpol has handprints of satiating Rajput women.
- There are also many beautiful palaces inside this fort. Of these, Anoop Mahal, Diwan-i-Khas, Hawa Mahal, Badal Mahal, Chandra Mahal, Phool Mahal, Rang Mahal, Dungar Mahal and Ganga Mahal etc. are prominent.

City Palace Jaipur

- The City Palace was built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II between 1729 and 1732 AD.
- This royal residence of the Maharaja built in Rajput and Mughal architecture became famous as Chandra Mahal.
- City Palace is one of the most famous historical and tourist places of Jaipur, Rajasthan. It is a palace complex.





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- The building style of the City Palace is an incomparable blend of Rajput, Mughal and European styles.
- These buildings are made of red and pink sandstone, the fine cutting done on the stone and the paintings done on the walls are mesmerizing.

City Palace Udaipur

- City Palace Complex is considered to be the most attractive tourist destination of the beautiful city of Udaipur in the state of Rajasthan.
- The establishment of the City Palace in Udaipur began in the 16th century.
- The idea of establishing City Palace was given by a saint to Rana Udai Singh. Thus this complex is a group of buildings built over 400 years.
- It is a grand complex. 22 kings contributed towards its construction.
- As soon as you enter the City Palace complex, you will see the grand 'Tripolia Gate'.
- There is also a Jagdish temple in this complex.

Lohagarh Fort, Bharatpur

- This fort was built by the Jat king Surajmal in the eighteenth century.
- Lohagarh fort of Bharatpur is also such a fort, which protected the Jat rulers of Rajasthan for years.
- This fort was besieged six times, but in the end the enemy had to retreat after defeating it. Due to the strength of iron, this fort is called 'Lohagarh'.
- To further strengthen the security, water was filled by digging a deep ditch around Lohagarh. Even today there is a ditch and water around this fort.
- This fort was protected on two sides by earthen walls. Cannon balls and bullets did not affect these mud walls and the fort hidden inside them was safe.
- Due to such a strong protection from mud walls, a proverb went from house to house that "Jats find ways to protect even from mud."

Rajasthan Forts - Important Facts:

6 forts of Rajasthan have been included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage in June 2013.

6 UNESCO World Heritage Forts: Jaipur's Amer Fort, Chittorgarh Fort, Kumbhalgarh Fort, Ranthambore Fort, Gagron Fort and Jaisalmer Fort

Other Important Forts

- Achalgarh Fort, Sirohi = Built by Parmar ruler (900 AD)





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- Ahichhatragarh Fort, Nagaur = 4th century
- Jalore fort, Jalore = built by the Parmar king
- Jaigarh Fort, Jaipur = built by Sawai Jai Singh (1726)
- Khimsar Fort, Sirohi = Built by Karam Singh (sixteenth century)
- Neemrana Fort, Alwar = Built by Chauhan ruler (14th century)
- Vijay Palace, Alwar = Built by Vijay Singh (1918)
- Sawan Bhado Mahal = Shahbad Fort, Baran
- Phulwadi Mahal = Vaira, Bharatpur
- Gopal Mahal = Bharatpur
- Sukh Mahal = on the banks of Jaitsagar Lake in Bundi
- Udemy Bhawan Palace (Chhitar Palace), Jodhpur = Maharaja
Built by Umaid Singh as a famine relief work (1928-1940)
- Hawa Mahal, Jaipur = Sawai Pratap Singh (1799)
- Sisodia Rani's Palace, Jaipur = Sawai Jai Singh (1730)
- Sajjangarh Palace, Udaipur = Situated on Bansdara Hill
- Rai Ka Bagh Palace, Jodhpur = Built by Jaswant Singh-I (1663)
- The palace of Abli Meeni, Kota = built by Mukund Singh Hada

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