



ACSA

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8 to 14 August

WEEKLY Current Affairs

For

UPSC / RPSC

and All Other Competitive

EXAMS



- Operation 'Skylight'
- Indian Virtual Herbarium
- World Tribal Day
- SMILE-75 Initiative
- Universal Postal Union
- Chevalier de la Legion of d'Honneur
- Nethanna Bima Scheme
- United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP):
- **Rajasthan Special :- Unification of Rajasthan**



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Weekly Current Affairs

Chevalier de la Legion of d'Honneur

French Government's highest civilian award "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur" was presented to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor. This honour is being conferred to him because he delivered a speech in French in 2021. Shashi Tharoor had also received a similar honour "the 'Encomienda de la Real Order Espanola de Carlos III'", by the Spanish Government in 2010.

- Legion of Honour is a French order of merit.
- Napoleon Bonaparte set up the honour in 1802.
- This honour is conferred for excellent civil or military conduct.

Nethanna Bima

Direction: just go through it once. Not so important

Nethanna Bima Scheme was launched recently by Chief Minister of Telangana K Chandrashekhara Rao, on the occasion of National Handloom Day.

Under the scheme, the government will provide Rs 5 lakh insurance cover to the families of the weaver, in case of the unfortunate death of the eligible beneficiary.

Telangana state department of handlooms and textiles is the nodal agency for its implementation.

To Provide financial assistance, the government launched the following flagship programmes;

- **Chenetha Mithra scheme**– It is input subsidy linked wage compensation scheme
- **Nethannaku Cheyutha**– It is a Handlooms weavers Thrift fund saving and security scheme of Telangana government.
- **Pavala Vaddi scheme**– Under the scheme, government provide 20% subsidy on yarn and marketing support.

Government to enumerate people who clean sewers

Context:

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJ&E) is now preparing to undertake a nationwide survey to enumerate all people engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, an activity that has led to at least 351 deaths since 2017.
- Ministry officials said that the enumeration exercise, soon to be conducted across 500 AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) cities, is part of the Union government's National Action Plan for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)
 - which will streamline the process of rehabilitating sanitation workers and eventually merge with and replace the Self-Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), which was started in 2007.
- The idea is to also link these sanitation workers to the Swachhta Udyami Yojana, through which the workers will be able to own sanitation machines themselves and the government will ensure that at the municipality level, the work keeps coming in," said a senior government official.
- Manual scavenging is a term used mostly for "manually cleaning, carrying, disposing of, or otherwise handling, human excreta in an insanitary latrine or an open drain or sewer or a septic tank or a pit".





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NAMASTE (National Action Plan for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem) Scheme:

- It is a joint venture between;
 - The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
 - The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
 - The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The main objective of the scheme is to ensure:
 - Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India.
 - No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter.
 - All Sewer and Septic tank sanitation workers have access to alternative livelihoods.

Other benefits:

- Capital subsidies of up to ₹5 lakh on sanitation machinery costing up to ₹15 lakh and interest subsidies on loans, where interest rates will be capped between 4-6% for the beneficiaries, with the government taking care of the rest of the interest.
- In addition, the scheme also provides for training the workers in the use of these machines, during which time a stipend of up to ₹3,000 per month will be provided.
- The scheme will also provide for sanitation workers to train for and go into any of the approved list of alternative occupations in sectors like agriculture, services, electronics assembling, handicrafts and so

UNMOGIP

Context:

- N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Rear Admiral Guillermo Pablo Rios of Argentina as the Head of Mission and Chief Military Observer for the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), the office of the U.N. Secretary-General has announced.
- The latest announcement regarding the appointment of the Argentine naval figure to head the UNMOGIP however has come at a time when India and Argentina are warming up official level dialogue.

United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP):

- UNMOGIP emerged from N. Security Council Resolution 39 of January 1948 that set up the U.N. Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP).
- The Karachi Agreement of July 1949 firmed up the role of UN-level military observers and permitted supervision of the Cease Fire Line established in Jammu and Kashmir.
- India officially maintains that the UNMOGIP's role was "overtaken" by the Simla Agreement of 1972 that established the Line of Control or the LoC which with "minor deviations" followed the earlier Cease Fire Line.
- Pakistan however did not accept the Indian argument and continued to seek cooperation from the UNMOGIP.
 - As a result of these divergent policies, Pakistan continues to lodge complaints with the UNMOGIP against alleged Indian ceasefire violations.
 - India has not officially gone to the UNMOGIP since 1972 with complaints against Pakistan.
- In view of the difference of opinion between the two contesting sides – India and Pakistan – the U.N. has maintained that the UNMOGIP could be dissolved only with a decision from the U.N. Security Council.

Regulating Digital Lending

Direction: Go through it once





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Context: RBI has released guidelines to regulate digital lending based on the recommendation of the working group on 'digital lending' (2021)

Definition: Digital Lending involves lending through web platforms or mobile apps, utilizing technology for authentication and credit evaluation.

Benefits of digital lending:

- **Ease of doing lending:** Digital lenders disburse loans and collect repayments remotely through digital channels, such as bank accounts, e-commerce accounts, or mobile wallets integrated with a partner (or) third party integration.
- **Transparency:** These cashless channels improve operational efficiency and reduce fraud by providing a clear audit trail.

Need for regulation: There have been instances of breach of data, unfair business practices, frauds, widespread defaults, digital unawareness and high-handed loan recovery practices by digital lenders.

Guidelines:

- **No third party:** All loan disbursements will be between the bank account of the borrower and RBI regulated digital lender. Any charge payable to the third party (such as lending service providers) will be paid by the lender (such as a bank) and not the borrower.
- Only need-based data collection
- Only permitted entities by RBI or under other laws are allowed to lend.
- In any digital loan, a standardized key fact statement (KFS) must be provided to the borrower.
- Regulated entities and the LSPs working with them must also have a nodal grievance redress officer
- The borrower must have the "right to forget" of collected data.

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

Direction: Government 'core' schemes are important

Context: As per the Ministry of Finance's new direction, all income-tax payers will not be eligible to join APY from October 1.

About APY

Launched in 2015, it aimed at creating a universal social security system for all Indians (esp. focused on the poor, under-privileged and workers in the unorganized sector). It has over 2 crore subscribers

- **Eligibility:** bank account holder in the age group of 18 to 40 years
- **Benefits:** Minimum monthly pension of Rs 1000 to 5000 per month after the age of 60 years. In case of death, the spouse will get a guaranteed pension for a lifetime.
- **Nodal agency:** Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) (Statutory authority to administer the National Pension System (NPS), under the Ministry of Finance)
- NPS is a government-sponsored pension scheme (launched in 2004) for government employees as well as any individual citizen of India (both resident and non-resident) in the age group of 18-65.

Rice Fortification

Direction: Already covered it a few months back. Just read it once.





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Context: The government has been supplying fortified rice for one year.

Background: Government last year announced Fortified Rice would be used in every scheme of the Government of India throughout the country by 2024 in a phased manner.

Definition: Rice fortification is the process of adding fortified rice kernels (FRK) containing micronutrients such as – Iron, Vitamin B12 and Folic Acid- in the ratio of 1:100 (i.e. 1 part micronutrients and 100 parts rice) at the time of milling.

- As per FSSAI norms: 1 kg fortified rice will contain iron (28 mg-42.5 mg), folic acid (75-125 microgram) and Vitamin B-12 (0.75-1.25 microgram).

Benefits: fortification of rice is a cost-effective and complementary strategy to increase vitamin and mineral content in diets. This will help in fighting high levels of malnutrition in the country.

Issues: Evidence of benefits of fortification are inconclusive; it could lead to 'hypervitaminosis' (high level of vitamins); dietary diversity is a much better alternative to fortification.

National Intellectual Property Awareness Mission (NIPAM)

Context: NIPAM has till now imparted IP awareness training to over 1 million students.

About NIPAM

It is aimed at imparting IP awareness and basic training for students (class 8 to 12) to inculcate the spirit of creativity and innovations. It was launched in 2021 as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

Definition: Intellectual property rights (IPR) are the rights given to persons over the creations of their minds: inventions, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names and images used in commerce.

Nodal Agency: Intellectual Property Office (under Ministry of Commerce and Industry)

National IPR Policy (adopted in 2016): It gave an institutional mechanism for the implementation of IPR. CIPAM (cell for IPR promotion and management) is the implementation agency for National IPR Policy.

Elephant

Direction: It is important for prelims. Do keep a note of the features of prominent animals.

Context: World Elephant Day on August 12 to raise awareness about the plight of elephants and the need to protect them.

- **History:** World Elephant Day was co-founded by Patricia Sims, a Canadian film-maker, with the Elephant Reintroduction Foundation of Thailand, an initiative of HM Queen Sirikit in 2012.
- **Numbers:** As per the 2017 count there are nearly 30000 elephants in India (an increase from the 2012 count)
- **Nature:** The animals are highly intelligent creatures, similar to apes and dolphins, and are capable of showing emotions such as empathy, grief, and compassion.
- Among Asian elephants, the Indian elephant is the most widespread, Sri Lankan is the largest and Sumatran is the smallest.
- **Concerns:** Escalation of poaching, Habitat loss, Human-elephant conflict (1,578 people died of elephant attacks in India between 2019-20 and 2021-22), Mistreatment in captivity.

Steps Taken:





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- **New Elephant Reserves:** E.g. Mysuru and Dandeli elephant reserves in Karnataka.
- **Allowing grass for elephants to grow:** By cleaning areas from invasive species such as lantana and eupatorium
- **Gaj Yatra:** Awareness campaign to protect elephants.
- **MIKE programme** (The Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme, 2003): It is an international collaboration for elephant protection.
- **Project Elephant** (centrally sponsored scheme, 1992): To protect elephants and their habitats.
- **SC:** Animal have rights of passage and it asked for closure of nearby resorts on the Nilgiris Elephant Corridors.
- India houses about 60% of all Asian elephants. The number of elephant reserves has risen in the last 8 years.

Ongole Breed of Cattle

Direction: Just go through it once. Not so important

Context: High price of Petro/Diesel have led to farmers preferring native breed for draught.

Ongole breed of cattle had remained indispensable native breed for all farm operations for centuries in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh in view of their draught power.

- **Health benefits:** Ongole 'A2 cow milk' fetches a premium price of over ₹150 per litre as it enables consumers to build immunity against viral and other diseases. The continuing incidence of coronavirus has also led to a spurt in demand for A2 cow milk
- **High International Demand:** The Ongole breed of cattle is much in demand in Brazil and other countries with a significant pastoral economy as the animals have qualities of heat tolerance, resistance to diseases and ability to survive under extreme climatic conditions.

Extremely aged remnant of galaxies

Direction: Understand the process of evolution of the earth.

Context: A team of Indian astronomers from Pune have discovered extremely aged remnant fossil 'lobes' of a radio galaxy that had become active about 260 million years ago.

Radio Galaxies: A radio galaxy is a galaxy with giant regions of radio emission extending well beyond its visible structure. These energetic radio lobes are powered by jets from their active galactic nucleus.

Phenomena: Each massive galaxy of stars contained a supermassive black hole in its core, which produces jets of charged particles in two opposite directions, once it is active. This relativistic plasma blows huge volumes into the surrounding space, called 'lobes', having emerged from the tip of the jet.

- Such radio fossils can still be detected with large radio telescopes like the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT), from distances of billions of light years.

Significance: Studying such relics or fossil lobes reveal how much energy was pumped into these fossil lobes. The study of such radio galaxies and their giant fossil lobes help us find the evolutionary history of the universe.

Super Garuda Shield exercises

Direction: Glance through it once. Don't overthink such exercises.

Context: The United States, Indonesia, Australia, Japan and Singaporean militaries have begun annual joint combat exercises on Indonesia's Sumatra Island.





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Concerns: The expanded drills are seen by China as a threat. Chinese state media have accused the U.S. of building an Indo-Pacific alliance, similar to NATO, as a means to intentionally provoke conflict.

About Super Garuda Shield

- Began in 2009
- Aim: It is designed to strengthen interoperability, capability, trust and cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Garuda Shakti Exercise: Garuda Shakti is a bilateral exercise between the special forces of the armies of India and Indonesia.

Chit Fund

Direction: Go through it once.

Context: Recently, rates of GST on the chit funds have been raised from the earlier 12% to 18%. This may raise the borrowing cost and benefits out of the chit fund.

About Chit Fund

- A chit fund is a close-ended group lending scheme. It is called 'Chit Fund' as a piece of paper is used for writing a bid amount, known as a chit.
- Status: It doesn't fall under the jurisdiction of the RBI but is a legal entity, registered with and regulated by, the state governments under the Chit Funds Act of 1982.
- Functioning: Each member contributes their share to the pool (fixed sum) and the lump-sum amount is given to the one-two win's the bid or who is in need (but has to pay extra).
- Chit funds are the Indian versions of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations found across the globe.

Benefits:

- Closed groups and known members make default highly unlikely.
- A chit fund is a unique hybrid instrument that makes an individual a saver/lender instead of a borrower.
- Provide cheaper money in case of need or emergency.
- Credit for informal workers: Professional chit funds have served a segment of the Indian population that do not have stable income streams, proof of regular income, or collateral.

Ponzi Scheme:

- A Ponzi scheme is a form of fraud that lures investors and pays profits to earlier investors with funds from more recent investors.
- The scheme leads victims to believe that profits are coming from product sales or other means, and they remain unaware that other investors are the source of funds.

Unregulated Deposit Schemes Act 2019: It bans unregulated deposit schemes, other than deposits taken in the ordinary course of business, and protects the interest of depositors.

State-level OBC groups must be included in the central list

Direction: Go through it once. Understand the issues concerned.





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Context: Currently, for each state, there are two OBC lists, i.e., one for the state and the Centre. So, a caste included in the OBC list of a state enjoys the reservation benefits in state government jobs and educational institutions, but not with respect to central government jobs or educational institutions.

- However, for SC/ST, there is only one list and one status (identified as per the state or UT)

Central Government argument: In Ram Singh and Ors vs Union of India Case (2015), the Central government argued that the inclusion of classes or groups in state OBC lists is a strong and compelling reason for the inclusion of such classes in the central lists. The Supreme Court judgment validated this argument.

Constitutional Provisions: Articles 15(4) and 16(4) make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes of citizens (SEBCs, popularly known as OBCs), the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Historical development of the OBCs reservation:

- First Backward Classes Commission (1955) recommended the inclusion of 2,399 castes as OBCs. But, the then central government did not implement it.
- Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission, 1980), the central government implemented it much later.
 - The central government introduced a reservation of 27% for OBCs in government jobs, in 1990. The constitutional validity of the reservation was upheld in the Indira Sawhney case. Pursuant to judgment, the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 was enacted.

Related News:

- The Justice Rohini Commission was constituted to ensure equitable distribution of reservation benefits among the OBC castes through sub-categorization. It has recently been given the 10th extension in five years
- Why the need for sub-categorization: It arises from the perception that a few dominant castes among the OBCs have cornered a disproportionate amount of the benefits from the reservation, thus leading to injustice.

Supreme Court not in favour of derecognising political parties over freebies

Context: The Supreme Court refused to consider the question of derecognising political parties that resort to freebies.

SC observations:

The apex court was considering the question of reining in the practice of political parties offering “irrational freebies” to the electorate if they are voted to power, especially in states which are already drowning in debt.

- The court said ‘freebies’ are different from the welfare schemes of the government.

Legal Status:

- Part-IV-A of the Representation of the People Act contains, Section 29A deals with the registration of associations and bodies as political parties.
- Part-IV-A does not provide any section for the de-registration of political parties. Representation of the People Act, 1951 does not provide any mechanism for de-registration of a political party

Karnataka HC sets aside the creation of ACB

Direction: Go through it once. Can be used as an example (for Mains) and provisions of the Lokayukta act is important (for Prelims)





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Context: High Court of Karnataka set aside the constitution of a separate Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), under the direct control of the Chief Minister, in 2016 by withdrawing the powers vested with the Karnataka Lokayukta police wing to probe all cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against public servants.

Why the court gave this order: The executive used its power arbitrarily under Article 162 and no convincing reason was given by the government for the creation of a separate ACB. Also, it was not clear who will act against the case against CM, Ministers and other officials. ACB could also be used for political vendetta against rivals.

Court recommendation: If really the government intended to curb corruption, favouritism and indiscipline in the administrative machinery the ACB should have been allowed to work under the control of Lokayukta instead of the Chief Minister.

SMILE-75 Initiative

Direction: Keep a note of it to be used as an example (in Mains) or as facts (for prelims)

Context: The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has launched the "SMILE-75 Initiative".

About SMILE-75 initiative

- SMILE (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise Scheme) is aimed at making cities/towns and municipal areas begging-free and comprehensive rehabilitation of the persons engaged in the act of begging.
- Under the initiative, seventy-five (75) Municipal Corporations in collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders will cover several comprehensive welfare measures for persons who are engaged in the act of begging.

Measures taken: rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, awareness, education, skill development, economic linkages and convergence with other Government welfare programmes etc.

Beggars In India:

- According to the Census 2011 total number of beggars in India is over 4 lakhs.
- West Bengal tops the chart followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- Legal Status: Though there is no central law on begging, some states have adopted the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, which penalises beggary.

UN Sanction: JeM deputy chief

Context: China has thwarted a joint India-U.S. bid to list Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) deputy chief Rauf Asghar as a UN Security Council-designated 'Global Terrorist' by placing a "technical hold" on the process.

Who is Rauf Asghar: He is the brother of JeM leader Masood Azhar, and is accused of masterminding a number of terror attacks from the IC-814 hijacking in 1999, the Parliament attack in 2001, as well as a number of attacks on security forces personnel from 2014-2019, including the strikes on the Air Force base in Pathankot, Army camps in Kathua, Nagrota, Sanjwan and other locations.

- He is arrested in Pakistan and convicted of terror financing charges.
- Mohammad (also called the Jaish-i-Mohammad) along with Rauf Asghar, Omar Saeed was convicted for the killing of American journalist Danny Pearl.

What does 'technical hold' mean?



- Beijing's "technical hold", which means the proposal cannot come up for another six months.
 - China's double standards: Its technical hold shows China is having "double standards" on terrorism and related activities.

Resolution 1267:

- Resolution 1267 provides for sanctions against individuals and entities that support or finance the acts or activities of ISIL, Al-Qaida, associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.
 - LeT, JuD, Hafiz Saeed, Jaish-e-Mohammed and its head Masood Azhar are listed under 1267.

Previously, the UN designated Jaish-e-Mohammad as a terrorist organisation in 2001 and Masood Azhar was only designated in 2019 as a 'global terrorist'.

- Also, India and the US proposal to designate Abdul Rehman Makki (brother-in-law of Hafiz Saeed, founder of Lashkar-e-Toiba) under the UN Security Council Resolution 1267 were put on 'technical hold' by China.

Universal Postal Union

Direction: Amendments are not so important. Just read about UPU once.

Context: Cabinet has approved the ratification of amendments to the Constitution of the Universal Postal Union (UPU).

About UPU:

- It is a UN specialized agency, established in 1874 by the Treaty of Bern (UPU Hq: Bern, Switzerland)
- Aim: For cooperation between postal sector in different countries.
- Members: Currently 192 members (India became its member in 1876)
 - Any member or non of the United Nations may become a member of the UPU, provided a non-members' request is approved by at least two-thirds of the member countries of the UPU.

Trans-Himalayan network

Context: China and Nepal have agreed to build the so-called Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, The network, under China's Belt and Road initiative, will involve the building of railways and communication networks.

Other networks: The BCIM economic corridor aims to connect Kolkata with Kunming, the capital of the Yunnan province through Myanmar and Bangladesh. It envisages the formation of a thriving economic belt, focusing on cross-border transport, energy and telecommunication networks.

Move towards protectionism

Direction: Go through it once to understand the trajectory of economic policy. Not so important. No need to remember facts.

Context: Data shows, that since 2018-19, the government has switched from liberalism to protectionism on account of its import substitution.

- Protectionism: the theory or practice of shielding a country's domestic industries from foreign competition by taxing imports.

In the last two decades, there has been a trend to reduce customs duty (liberalization). However, since budget 2018-19, the government changed policy and has since increased customs duty (protectionism) in order to further incentivise domestic value addition.



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The issue with such a policy: The government has used custom duties as a revenue-raising instrument. But, a central principle of public finance does not allow the customs duties to be used as a revenue instrument.

- Increases in customs duties should be strictly reserved for the protection of new industries.

History of tariff setting in India

- British Era: Since 1882, Britain had followed a policy of complete free trade in India.
- Indian Fiscal Commission of 1921-22 recommended that custom duty has a protective role to play, as initial protection is important to withstand foreign competition. It recommended the establishment of a tariff board for the grant of protective duties.
- First Tariff Board was appointed in 1923. It granted protection to the iron and steel industry.
- After Independence, India tried to follow liberal policy, however, in face of the BOP crisis (1957-58), strict import licensing was adopted. In the 1970s, the licence-permit raj era was ushered in. It was only in the 1991 reform, that the government eliminated import licensing.

Issues with the growth pattern in India

Direction: Go through it once. No need to make notes. Although no direct Qn is expected but is important for holistic knowledge and elimination of options.

Context: As India reaches 75 years of Independence, we look at the present development pattern with the national income at the time of independence.

Growth Pattern:

- 1900-01 to 1946-47: National income growth was 1% per annum.
- National Income: the total amount of money earned within a country.
- 1950-51 to 2019-20: GDP has doubled every 14 years and the GDP per capita has doubled every 24 years.
- India's rapid economic growth since 1980 has led to a substantial reduction in absolute poverty

Issues:

- Comparison with East or Southeast Asia economies: They have performed better than the Indian Economy. For example, the per capita income as a proportion of that of the world economy rose from 12% to 18% for India, 13% to 87% for China, and 10% to 35% for Indonesia.
- Growing equality: Economic growth in India has been associated with unequal outcomes that have created divides between regions, sectors, and people.
- Regional divide: Western and Southern India have developed more than the east and north of India.
- Widening gap between richer and poorer states.
- 1950-51 to 2019-20: the agricultural sector's share in GDP fell from 58% to 15%.
- World Inequality Report 2021, estimated that the top 1% held as much as 33% of total wealth in India and the top 10% held 65% of total wealth.

Solutions:

Economic growth can be transformed into meaningful development only if it brings about an improvement in the living conditions of people. It is essential to recognize that employment is not only a source of growth but also a means of mobilizing people, which is the most abundant resource for development in India.

Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Emissions



Direction: Go through it once

Context: Several steps taken by the government to reduce Electromagnetic Field(EMF) Emissions.

EMF: They are invisible areas of energy, often referred to as Radiation, that is associated with the use of electrical power and various forms of natural and man-made lighting.

Sources: Natural Sources (such as thunderstorms, and the earth's magnetic field) and Human-made sources (such as medical equipment using static fields (e.g. MRI), wireless, telecommunications and broadcasting equipment)

Issues: Above certain levels of radiation, EMF emissions can be harmful to health and affect the human body as well as that of animals in different ways depending on their frequency.

Government steps:

- EMF emissions from mobile towers (they are non-ionizing Radio frequencies and not dangerous): Electromagnetic Field (EMF) emissions norms from mobile towers in India are already ten times more stringent (even lower) than the safe limits recommended by WHO.
- Monitoring of EMF emissions: Telecom Service Providers(TSPs) are to adhere to the prescribed norms including the submission of a self-certificate before the commercial start of the Base Transceiver Station (BTS) site.
- EMF audit by the field units of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)
- Penalty and shut down of services if found non-compliant.

Low Altitude Escape Motor (LEM)

Context: ISRO successfully carried out the test-firing of the Low Altitude Escape Motor (LEM) of the Crew Escape System, from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh for the Gaganyaan Project.

The Crew Escape System (CES) takes away the Crew module of the Gaganyaan mission in case of any eventuality and rescues the astronauts. In case of mission-abort during the initial phase of flight, LEM provides the required thrust to CES, to take away Crew Module from the launch vehicle.

The LEM is a distinctive special purpose solid rocket motor with four reverse flow nozzles and generates a maximum sea level thrust of 842 kN (nominal) with a burn time of 5.98 seconds (nominal).

Drugs shortage haunts the HIV-positive community

Context: People Living with HIV (PLHIV) are facing an acute shortage of life-saving drugs, say protesters who have been camping outside the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) office in the capital for over 15 days now.

- As an interim measure, certain State AIDS Control Societies also procured small quantities of the drugs locally.
- But a quality test revealed that some drugs did not meet the quality standards prescribed by the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules, raising concerns about substandard drugs entering the supply chain

Genes that can increase drought resistance in plants

Context: Recent study shows that African 'orphan' crop varieties help plants battle high temperatures.

Orphan crops are nutritious local food crops that could play a crucial role in combating hunger. These crops are not traded internationally but have adapted themselves to grow in harsh weather conditions.



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African Orphan Crops Consortium (AOCC), works to address food security on the continent. The consortium had identified genes that were high temperature tolerant, had increased salinity adaptability and had low water requirements that provided essential nutrition.

This might be a solution to growing concerns of climate change hampering crop productivity.

Examples of Orphan Crops are buckwheat [*Fagopyrum esculentum*], quinoa [*Chenopodium quinoa*], root crops (e.g., cassava [*Manihot esculenta*], sweet potato [*Ipomoea batatas*], and yam [*Dioscorea spp.*]), and legumes.

Centre releases ₹1.16 lakh cr. to States

Context: Central government released funds (double the usual amount) to help front-load State governments' capital spending abilities in this financial year, after the expiry of the assured Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation to States from this July.

Front-loaded approach by the Centre: In order to incentivize States to increase their capital expenditure, to spur spending and growth.

States get revenue from the Center:

- Devolution (States' share of taxes): As state's share of taxes from the Gross Tax Revenue (extra-budgetary)
- Scheme Related Transfer: As Centrally Sponsored Schemes from the Scheme Expenditure. (Based on Budget Allocations).
- Finance Commission Grants: As Transfer to States from the Transfers, Expenditure, and Other Expenses. (Based on Budget Allocations)
- Other Transfers: Other grants or loans. (Based on Budget Allocations)

15th Finance Commission's recommended:

- Vertical Devolution (Union to States): States' share in the divisible pool of taxes to 41% for the five-year period starting 2021-22.
- Horizontal Devolution (allocation between the states): The commission suggested 12.5% weightage to demographic performance, 45% to income, 15% each to population and area, 10% to forest and ecology and 2.5% to tax and fiscal efforts.

Recognition of Minorities at the District level

Context: Recently, the Supreme court has pronounced that recognition of minorities at the district level is contrary to law.

- SC (in Kerala Education Bill Case, 1958) had rejected that minorities be identified at the block or district level.
- SC (in TMA Pai Case, 2008) had said that Linguistic and religious minorities are determined by taking the state as a unit and not at the national level.

Minorities in India:

- Recognition: Currently, only those communities notified under section 2(c) of the NCM (National Commission for Minorities) Act, 1992, by the central government are regarded as a minority.
- The Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains (in 2014) have been notified as minority communities.

Constitutional Status:



- Constitution doesn't define the word 'minorities'
- Article 29 (Right to conserve distinct language, script and culture): It grants protection to both religious as well as linguistic minorities. Its scope is not necessarily restricted to minorities only.
- Article 30 (Right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice): The protection under it is confined only to minorities (religious or linguistic).
- Article 350-B (provides for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India)

Rule 267

Context: In his parting address, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu advocated against indiscriminate demand from members to invoke rule 267 that allows for the suspension of the day's business to discuss other important issues in the Parliament.

Direction: Just go through it once.

Issues: Rule 267 of Rajya Sabha should be resorted to in the rarest of the rare cases that justify the suspension of other rules of the house

Status of house disruptions: For the first 17 years since 1978, the annual productivity of the Rajya Sabha has been more than 100%. Since then it has been on a downslide with the lowest annual productivity recorded at 40% in the year 2018.

Challenges faced by parliamentarians:

- Disruptions don't allow members to speak in the House, thereby reducing their enthusiasm to speak.
- Low percentage of members attending the meetings of standing committees
- One who makes a reasonably good speech — well argued and supported by statistics, examples or case studies — rarely get adequate attention.
- Only the politics of pandemonium (Chaos) grabs headlines in the news.

What can be done:

Presiding officers can conduct what is called in-camera proceedings in their chambers, especially for Zero Hour and Question Hour.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)

Context: 'Samvaad' (a virtual interaction) with the students of EMRS was organized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs

About EMRS:

- It was started in 1997-98, to provide quality education (middle and high-level education) to scheduled tribe (ST) students in remote areas (with high tribal population), in form of residential schools.
- Every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons will have an EMRS.
- Provision: Set up by grants provided under Article 275(1) of the Constitution.
- Set up as an autonomous society under the ministry of tribal affairs — similar to Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti — to run the EMRSs.

STs constitute 8.6% of the country's total population (11 crores).

EC to hold virtual regional forum meeting on inclusive polls

Context:



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The Election Commission of India will host a virtual meeting of the Asian Regional Forum on the theme of inclusive and accessible elections, as a precursor to the 'Global Summit for Democracy' next month.

Aim: It is aimed at generating synergy amongst international organizations, and electoral bodies from around the world and promoting intellectual and institutional mobilization to strengthen electoral democracy in the world.

Last year, the first Summit for Democracy was hosted by the United States "to renew democracy at home and confront autocracies abroad".

India's status on Democracy:

- Freedom House 2021 report put India as only "partly free"
- V-Dem report called India an "electoral autocracy".
- Global State of Democracy 2021 report: India was amongst the 10 most backsliding democracies—a more severe and deliberate kind of democratic erosion.

Cabinet approves extension of urban housing scheme till 2024

Context: The union cabinet has approved the extension of the flagship urban housing scheme — Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) — till December 31, 2024.

About PMAY:

- Launched in 2015, the original deadline for the scheme aimed at providing affordable housing with incentives was March 2022.
- It was launched with the aim to achieve housing for all by 2022.

Status:

According to data on the PMAY site, a total of 12.26 million houses have been sanctioned so far, out of which 61.77 lakh houses have been completed.

- In December 2021, the cabinet approved the extension of the rural housing scheme, PMAY-Gramin (Rural) till March 2024.
- The Urban scheme is being implemented through four verticals:
- Beneficiary-Led Construction (BLC)
- Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)
- In-situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR)
- Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS).
- While the Center provides financial assistance, state governments and union territories implement the scheme including the selection of beneficiaries.

Cooperatives on Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

Context: Cooperatives have been onboarded to the GeM portal, thus allowing them to procure like other government agencies. Until now, cooperatives were purchasing from the open market.

Direction: Cooperatives are important.

GeM is a one-stop portal for the online procurement of goods and services. It has been developed by the Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (Ministry of Electronics)

About cooperatives:



- Def: It is a voluntary association of individuals having common needs who join hands for common economic interests.
- Based on the principle of: Voluntary and open membership, Autonomy to members, Aimed at community concerns.
- A separate 'Ministry of Co-operation' has been created by the Central Government for realizing the vision of 'Sahkar se Samridhhi' (Prosperity through Cooperation)
- Constitutional provisions:
 - Under the 'state list' of the 7th schedule
 - Forming a cooperative is a fundamental right under Art19(1)(c) and states must promote cooperatives (Art 43-B)
 - 97th A Act 2011 added a new part PartIX-B regarding cooperative working in India.
- History: The first credit cooperative society was formed in Banking in 1903. Cooperative got a legal status with the enactment of the Cooperative Credit Societies Act, 1904.

UN sanctions regime

Context: India has said to the UN that the credibility of the United Nations' sanctions regime is at an "all-time low". Double standards and continuing politicisation have rendered the credibility of the sanctions regime at an all-time low

Issues with the Sanction regime:

- Double standards: Some countries such as China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United Nations Secretariat have adopted "selectivity" and "double standards" against terrorism.
- China: China's decision to place a hold on terror listings, the "glorification" of terror acts by the Pakistan
 - Frequent blocks and 'technical holds' placed by China in its attempts to add a number of terrorists to the UNSC-designated terrorist listings, including the top leadership of the LeT and the JeM based in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
 - For E.g. China thwarted a more recent joint proposal by India and the U.S. to list LeT deputy chief Abdul Rahman Makki.
- Taliban regime in Afghanistan: It has provided shelter to terror groups, including ISIL-Khorasan which was behind the attacks on a Gurdwara in Kabul.
- UN Secretary-General's report on terrorism: In its section on threats in Central and South Asia, referred only to ISIL-K, and not to the allied groups that target India.
- Pakistan: Dawood Ibrahim, crime syndicates turning to terror received "state hospitality" in a "neighbouring country", despite being listed by the UNSC.

Background:

- UNSC's 'sanctions regime' against al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIL), which was first put into place in the late 1990s and then updated as a part of the global war on terrorism.
- UNSC 1267 Committee: It was established for the purpose of overseeing the implementation of sanctions measures imposed on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, but eventually its scope has been enlarged to include individuals as well as organizations.

What should be done:



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The practice of placing holds and blocks on listing requests without giving any justification must end. All members of the UNSC should pronounce together in one voice, sooner rather than later, when it comes to this collective fight against international terrorism.

Technology Innovation Hubs (TIH)

Context: Joint India-US research projects will be implemented through TIH

Direction: Just go through it once.

About TIH

- It comes under National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) and is aimed at providing requisite infrastructure (testbeds and data sets), enabling collaboration (e.g. on AI and wireless) and encouraging exchange programmes.

NM-ICPS was launched in 2018 for 5 year period to enable academia-industry-government collaboration and provide technical support for CPS implementations.

Activities under NM-ICPS are: Technology Development; Human Resources and Skill development; Entrepreneurship; Innovations and International Collaborations.

ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce)

Context: Microsoft will onboard the Government led ONDC.

ONDC (launched by DPIIT) is aimed at decentralizing and democratizing digital commerce. It will allow small merchants and mom-and-pop stores in any part of the country to access consumers (similar to those done by Amazon and Flipkart).

It is an open-source platform and will work in e-commerce, similar to what UPI does in digital payment. Integration of the platform will be provided by the Quality Council of India.

Need for ONDC: There has been rising dominance of global players in India's e-commerce, which makes the entry of smaller players difficult. ONDC eyes at transforming from an operator-driven platform-centric model to a facilitator-driven interoperable open network model.

Blue Bonds

Context: SEBI has proposed the 'blue bonds' for sustainable finance

About Blue bond

- It will be a debt instrument to support investments in healthy oceans and blue economies (i.e. use of ocean resources for economic growth)- sustainable exploitation of ocean resources, fishing, and extracting renewable energy.
- It will catalyse progress towards SDG 14 (Life Below Water)
- UN Decade of Ocean Science for sustainable development (2021-2030)
- First Blue Bond: the Republic of Seychelles, in 2018, was the first to come with a sovereign blue bond.

Other similar types of bonds: Green Bond (used to fund projects that have positive environmental and/or climate benefits)





ECOSTRESS

Context: NASA's ECOsystem and Spaceborne Thermal Radiometer Experiment on Space Station (ECOSTRESS) are helping in understanding the pattern and reasons behind wildfires.

About:

It is a multiple wavelength imaging spectrometers to study the effectiveness of water use by vegetation, the water stress and their ability to adapt to a warming climate. By measuring the rate of release of water by plants, the intensity of coming wildfires can be measured.

A spectrometer is an optical instrument used to measure the properties of light over a specific portion of the electromagnetic spectrum.

World Lion's Day

Context: August 10 is celebrated as world Lion's day

Direction: Just go through it once

Significance: Over the course of five decades, the global lion population has decreased by about 95%, necessitating a need to work towards its conservation, which World Lion Day emphasizes on.

- Increase public awareness of the threats they face, protect their natural habitat, and build more habitats.

About Lion (Panthera Leo)

- Lions are the second-largest cats after tigers. They live in groups (called Pride).
- The lion is an apex and keystone predator
- IUCN Status: Asiatic lion: Endangered while African Lion: Vulnerable
- India: Gir Forest (Gujarat) is home to the only wild population of lions outside of Africa. The population of the lion has continuously expanded in India (from 523 to 674 (between 2015 and 2020))
- Difference between Male and females: Males have a thick mane of hair around their head while females don't have it.
- Difference between Asiatic and African lion: The male Asiatic lion has a relatively short, sparse and darker mane compared to the fuller mane of the African lion. The most distinguishing characteristic of the Asiatic lion is the longitudinal fold of skin that runs along its belly.

Butterfly Mine

The UK Ministry of Defence, in its intelligence assessment of the ongoing war in Ukraine, has sounded an alarm on the possible use of the PFM-1 series 'Butterfly Mines' by the Russian military in Donetsk and Kramatorsk.

The PFM-1 and PFM-1S are two kinds of anti-personnel landmines that are commonly referred to as 'Butterfly mines' or 'Green Parrots'. These names are derived from the shape and colour of the mines. The main difference between the PFM-1 and PFM-1S mine is that the latter comes with a self-destruction mechanism which gets activated within one to 40 hours.

Agriculture Minister launches indigenous vaccine for Lumpy Skin disease

Context:

17
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<https://www.facebook.com/acsaipur>



Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, launched the indigenous vaccine Lumpi-ProVaInd to protect livestock from Lumpy Skin disease.

- The vaccine has been developed by the National Equine Research Center, Hisar (Haryana) in collaboration with the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izzatnagar (Bareilly).

Lumpy skin disease (LSD)

- It is an infectious disease in cattle caused by a virus of the family Poxviridae, also known as the Neethling virus.
- The disease is characterized by fever, enlarged superficial lymph nodes and multiple nodules (measuring 2–5 centimetres (1–2 in) in diameter) on the skin and mucous membranes (including those of the respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts).
- Infected cattle also may develop edematous swelling in their limbs and exhibit lameness.
- The virus has important economic implications since affected animals tend to have permanent damage to their skin, lowering the commercial value of their hide.
- Additionally, the disease often results in chronic debility, reduced milk production, poor growth, infertility, abortion, and sometimes death.

Bhitarkanika National Park

Context: Experts on saltwater crocodiles say the park has reached a saturation point, which could prove to be a big problem if not addressed properly.

Bhitarkanika National Park, the second-largest mangrove forest in India after the Sundarbans, is known for a successful saltwater crocodile conservation programme

It was found that crocodiles have killed as many as 50 people since 2012 in and around the park, while 25 crocodiles died during the same time after entering human settlements or getting caught in fishing nets.

Katchal island in the Nicobars

Context: The United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) recently highlighted the loss of mangrove cover on Katchal island, a part of India's Nicobar archipelago.

More than 90% of mangrove cover on the island was lost due to the Indian Ocean Tsunami.

Vasculitis

Context: Actor Ashton Kutcher had a "weird, super rare form of vasculitis" two years ago that "knocked out" his vision, hearing, and "equilibrium". He mentioned about it in a recent tweet.

Vasculitis is simply an inflammation of blood vessels.

Inflammation is the natural response of the body's immune system to any injury or infection, which in normal course can help the body fight invading germs. However, in vasculitis, the body's immune system turns on healthy blood vessels, causing them to swell up and narrow down.

Novel Langya Henipavirus

Context: Cases of a novel Langya henipavirus (LayV) have been reported in Shandong and Henan provinces of China.





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The newly discovered virus is a “phylogenetically distinct Henipavirus”, according to a recent study — A Zoonotic Henipavirus in Febrile Patients in China — published in The New [England](#) Journal of Medicine.

Nipah and Hendra virus also belong to the same genus, henipavirus, from the Paramyxoviridae family. Paramyxoviridae is a family of single-stranded Ribonucleic acid (RNA) viruses that cause different types of viral infections.

These viruses are found in bats, rodents and shrews and are known to infect humans and potentially cause fatal diseases.

There is currently no vaccination or therapy for the Langya virus, hence the primary option is supportive care to treat zoonotic disease complications.

AGM-88 HARM

Context: The US announced it has sent AGM-88 Harm missiles to Ukraine, designed to track and destroy radar systems — a move that could significantly boost countermeasures against Russian air defences.

Direction: Don't overthink over such technology or armed exercises. High Effort little benefit. Just read it once.

According to the Federation of American Scientists' Military Analysis Network, the AGM-88 HARM (high-speed antiradiation missile) is a supersonic air-to-surface tactical missile designed to seek and destroy enemy radar-equipped air defence systems. The AGM-88 can detect, attack, and destroy a target with minimum aircrew input.

Him Drone-e-thon Programme

Context: Him Drone-e-thon Programme was recently unveiled by the Indian Army, in association with the Drone Federation of India.

The programme was launched in line with “make in India in defence manufacturing”. It aims to catalyse and provide focused opportunities for the Indian drone ecosystem, in a bid to build drone capabilities for meeting the needs of Indian troops at the frontline.

The ‘Him Drone-a-thon’ is a pan-India programme. It seeks to connect all the stakeholders including industry, software developers, academia, and drone product manufacturers.

Ex Vajra Prahar 2022

Context: A joint exercise between the special forces (13th edition) of India and the US began in Himachal Pradesh's Bakloh.

Aim: The drill aims to improve interoperability between the special forces of both the countries

Other Exercises of India with the USA: Exercise Yudh Abhyas (Army); Cope India (Air Force); Red Flag (USA's multilateral air exercise); Malabar Exercise (trilateral naval exercise of India, USA and Japan).

Portulaca oleracea

Context: Scientists integrated two metabolic pathways to produce a novel type of photosynthesis that enables the weed to withstand drought while remaining highly productive.

A common weed and succulent— Portulaca oleracea, commonly known as purslane, offers important clues about creating drought-tolerant crops in a world beset by climate change.





Purslane has the evolutionary adaptations that help it to be both highly productive and drought tolerant, an unlikely combination for a plant.

Other uses: Portulaca oleracea has been used as a folk medicine in many countries, acting as a febrifuge, antiseptic, and vermifuge.

Culture Ministry-Google 'India ki Udaan' initiative

This initiative seeks to celebrate the unwavering & undying spirit of India and its achievements in the last 75 years. It aims to take citizens to the rich culture & heritage of India, by means of its rich archives and featuring artistic illustrations.

It is being implemented by Google Arts and Culture, in association with the Ministry of Culture.

PARVAZ Market Linkage scheme

Context: The government of Jammu & Kashmir launched the "PARVAZ Market Linkage Scheme". This is an innovative Market Linkage scheme, that has tremendous potential to uplift the economic conditions of farmers across Jammu and Kashmir.

Under the scheme, the government will provide a subsidy of 25% on freight charges, in a bid to carry perishable fruits through Air Cargo. The subsidy will be provided to farmers through the Direct Benefit Transfer mode.

Indian Virtual Herbarium

Context:

It is the biggest database of the country's flora.

Developed by scientists of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI), the Indian Virtual Herbarium was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change.

Each record in the digital herbarium includes an image of the preserved plant specimen, scientific name, collection locality, collection date, collector name, and barcode number. The digital herbarium also includes features to extract the data State-wise and users can search plants of their own States which will help them to identify regional plants and in building regional checklists.

SC: Unmarried women can avail abortion services

Context: (The Hindu Editorial section) Last week Supreme court pointed out that the rules mentioned 'partner' and not husband, thereby reinterpreting the MTPA and putting unmarried women on equal footing with that of married ones.

Direction: Just glance through it once.

Background: The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 and its Rules, 2003, prohibit unmarried women who are between 20 weeks and 24 weeks pregnant to terminate the pregnancy.

Significance of the Judgement:

- Fairness: SC set right a rule that was 'manifestly arbitrary and violative of women's right to bodily dignity' fits right into the concept of justice that is free, and without prejudice or favour to any person or group of people.
 - SC recommended the Government have a 'forward-looking interpretation of the law'.





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- Indian Judiciary as 'shining' example: At a time when United States' Supreme Court's recent ruling overturning Roe vs Wade has drawn that nation back several decades on the abortion question, India's court's move is the surest example of the Court's willingness to be modern and progressive.
- Follows the spirit of Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees all persons equality before the law and equal protection of laws.

Previous case: SC had facilitated the abortion (beyond 20 weeks) of a young unmarried woman whose partner parted ways after realizing she was pregnant.

World Tribal Day 2022

Context: Today (9th August) is celebrated as the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Aim: To highlight the role of indigenous people and the importance of preserving their rights, communities and knowledge they gathered and passed down over centuries.

Theme: "The Role of Indigenous Women in the Preservation and Transmission of Traditional Knowledge."

History: In 1994, the UNGA, passed a resolution, declaring August 9 as the International Day of the World's Indigenous People as it was on 9th August that the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations held its first meeting.

Significance:

- Taking cognisance of the knowledge acquired by indigenous people is vital culturally and also scientifically
- Understanding and preservation of indigenous languages, their spiritual practices, and philosophies can help in the conservation and upliftment of Tribals without compromising their identity.

Status of Tribes in India: Tribal Population constitutes 8.6% (or 11 cr) of the total population (the second largest number of tribal people in any country in the world). 89.97% of them live in rural areas and 10.03% in urban areas.

According to Lokur Committee (1965), the essential characteristics to be recognized by Scheduled Tribe are: Indication of Primitive Traits, Distinctive Culture, Shyness of Contact with the Community at Large, Geographical Isolation, Backwardness

Constitution: Constitution of India does not define the term 'tribe', however, the term 'Scheduled Tribe' was inserted in the Constitution through Article 342 (i).

Great Barrier Reef

Context: According to the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) report, the highest levels of coral cover within the past 36 years have been recorded in the northern and central parts of Australia's Great Barrier Reef (GBR).

GBR: It is the world's largest and longest coral reef system. It is located in Australia. It is a World Heritage Area since 1981 (the world's first reef ecosystem to be recognised by UNESCO). It is home to 400 types of coral, 1500 species of fish and 4000 types of molluscs.

Definition: Corals are marine invertebrates or animals which do not possess a spine (phylum Cnidaria). They are the largest living structures on the planet.

- A coral reef is an underwater ecosystem characterized by reef-building corals. Reefs are formed of colonies of coral polyps held together by calcium carbonate.
- Coral Bleaching: Coral bleaching is the process when corals become white due to various stressors, such as changes in temperature, light, or nutrients. Bleaching occurs when coral polyps expel the algae that live inside



their tissue, causing the coral to turn white. GBR has faced several mass coral bleaching in the recent past (including the recent one in March 2022)

- Importance of Corals: Coral reefs support over 25% of marine biodiversity even though corals occupy only 1% of the seafloor. Coral reef systems generate \$2.7 trillion in annual economic value through goods and service trade and tourism and other livelihood activities.

Forecasting by IMD

Context: IMD said that Climate Change has hampered the ability of forecasting agencies to make predictions accurately.

Tools used for forecasting:

- Radars (The number of radars will increase from 34 at present to 67 by 2025): Radars are preferred because they have a higher resolution and can provide observations every 10 minutes.
- Automatic weather stations and rain gauges and satellites
- Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) also plans to upgrade its high-performance computing system — from a capacity of 10 petaflops currently to 30 petaflops in the next two years.

IMD uses the Long Period Average (LPA) as a base to predict the expected amount of Monsoon rainfall in a particular year.

Based on LPA, IMD categorizes yearly monsoon rainfall on an all-India basis in below five categories-

- Normal or Near Normal: percentage departure of actual rainfall is +/-10% of LPA (rainfall between 96-104% of LPA).
- Below Normal: When the departure of actual rainfall is less than 10% of LPA, that is 90-96% of LPA.
- Above Normal: When actual rainfall is 104-110% of LPA.
- Deficient: When the departure of actual rainfall is less than 90% of LPA.
- Excess: When the departure of actual rainfall is more than 110% of LPA.

Forecasting model:

- Dynamical Monsoon Forecast Model: It was recently adopted by IMD which uses the evolving weather patterns to predict monsoon (better on smaller spatial and temporal scales)

About IMD: Established in 1875, (HQ: Pune), IMD comes under the Ministry of Earth Sciences and is the principal government agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting, and seismology.

Undertrials

Context: SC has asked to facilitate the release of undertrials and those convicted of minor offences to celebrate the 75th year of Independence.

Direction: Diagrams are just for noticing the trends. No need to note it down.

Definition of Under-trials: One who is arrested for some crime and is waiting to appear before the magistrate.

- 76% of prisoners in Indian jails are under-trials, thus violating their basic rights (NCRB 2020 data)

Reasons for a high number of undertrials: Delay in the justice system, shortages of court staff and judges, inconsistency in the bail system, poor legal representation etc.



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Initiative for Undertrials: setting up of several Fast-Track Courts, Modernization of Prison scheme, Open Court, Streamlining of IPC and CrPC laws, Clubbing of similar petty offences and clearing them on mission mode, E-Prison project.

Malimath Committee (2013) recommendation: Standard of 'Proof beyond reasonable doubt' followed in criminal cases be done away with.

Article 370 and Article 35A

Context: Three years of abrogation of Art 370 and Art 35A in Jammu and Kashmir.

Direction: No need to remember, just go through it once.

- Article 370 conferred on J&K the power to have a separate constitution, a state flag, and autonomy of internal administration.
- Article 35A: It empowered the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents" of the state and provide special rights and privileges to them.

Under Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019: It made provisions of the Indian constitution applicable in the state of J&K. All provisions which separated the Constitution of J&K were abrogated (35A was automatically scrapped)

Under the J&K reorganization Act, 2019: The state was reorganized into two UTs – J&K (with legislature) and Ladakh (without Legislature)

Impact of the Move: J&K cannot maintain a separate flag, Ranbir Penal Code replaced with IPC, all the provisions of the Indian Constitution now automatically apply to J&K as well, and Law and order incidents have seen a drastic reduction

ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AIFMM)

Context: 30 years of India-ASEAN relations and 2022 has been designated as ASEAN-India friendship year.

Direction: Those preparing for Mains this year, do keep a ready-made note prepared on India-ASEAN relations.

Areas of Cooperation:

- Trade: Over 10% of India's overall trade with ASEAN countries (India's 4th largest trading partner)
- Forums: India is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Mekong Ganga Cooperation.
- Transport: India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highways, Kaladan Multi-modal Project.
- Security: India's 'Act East Policy' and 'Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)'
- Military exercise: CORPAT (with Indonesia and Thailand); Samudra Shakti (Indonesia); SIMBEX (Singapore)
- Socio-Cultural Cooperation: Inviting ASEAN students to India, Special Training Course for ASEAN diplomats, Exchange of Parliamentarians, etc.
- East Asia Summit (EAS): First held in 2005, the summit is usually attended by the heads of state from ASEAN, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, and the United States.

About: ASEAN (Est. 1967) is an inter-governmental organization of 10 countries aimed at promoting economic growth and regional stability.





Porcupine strategy

Context: Taiwan is planning to use this strategy to fight back in case China attempts to occupy it by force

The “porcupine doctrine”, which was proposed in 2008 by US Naval War College research professor William S Murray, is a strategy of asymmetric warfare focused on fortifying a weak state’s defences to exploit the enemy’s weaknesses rather than taking on its strengths.

It is about building defences that would ensure that Taiwan “could be attacked and damaged but not defeated, at least without unacceptably high costs and risks”.

Bharat Bill Payment System

Context: RBI has allowed BBPS to process cross-border “inbound” bill payments aimed at benefiting senior citizens and families of persons who are dependent on remittances from abroad.

Till now, BBPS was accessible only to ‘residents in India’.

BBPS: It is an interoperable platform for the standardized bill payment system, conceptualised by RBI and implemented by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

NPCI: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organization for all retail payments systems in India. It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks’ Association (IBA). NPCI has ten promoter banks.

Start-up India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)

- Aim: Commerce and Industry ministry launched this scheme in 2021 to provide financial assistance to eligible startups (DPIIT chosen) through incubators for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials and commercialization.
- Eligibility: A startup, recognized by DPIIT, incorporated not more than 2 years ago at the time of application and should not have received more than 10 lakhs of monetary support under any other Central or State Government scheme.
- Features: Grants of up to 5 crores to eligible incubators, they in turn will provide up to Rs. 20 lakh (for proof of concept, prototype development, or product trials to startups) and up to Rs. 50 lakh (for market entry, commercialization, or scaling up) to eligible startups.

About Startup India Initiative: Started in 2016, it envisages building a robust Startup ecosystem in the country for nurturing innovation and providing opportunities to budding entrepreneurs.

Other initiatives for startups: Startup Innovation Challenges, National Startup Awards, Ranking of States on Support to Startup Ecosystems, Shanghai Cooperation Organization Startup Forum, ‘Prarambh’ Summit.

National Water Awards (NWA)

Context: 4th NWA launched for nomination

About: NWA is given for exemplary work in the field of water resource management. The first National Water Award was launched in 2018, by the Jal Shakti Ministry. It aims to fulfil the government’s vision of ‘Jal Samridh Bharat’

Under the 3rd NWA

- Best state: Uttar Pradesh followed by Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.





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- Best District category: Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh) and Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar (Punjab)

Other schemes for water conservation: Catch the Rain, Jal Kranti Abhiyan (Jal Gram Scheme to develop two model villages in the water-deficient region), MGNREGA for water conservation, National Water Mission (increase water use efficiency by 20%), NITI Aayog Composite Water Management Index, Jal Jeevan Mission (for Piped drinking water)

SSLV

Context: Recently, SSLV-D1 placed the satellites into a 356×76 km elliptical orbit instead of the 356-km circular orbit, making the satellite unusable.

About SSLV

The SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle) is the smallest vehicle (110tn) aimed at launching small satellites into Earth's low orbits.

- It is a three-stage all-solid vehicle with the capacity to launch a 500kg satellite into a 500 km Low earth orbit and 300kg into a Sun-synchronous Orbit.

Benefits: Low cost, with low turn-around time, flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites, launch on-demand feasibility, minimal launch infrastructure requirements, etc.

NSIL: ISRO commercial arm, New Space India Limited (NSIL) will mass-produce and manufacture the SSLV and the more powerful PSLV in partnership with the private sector in India through technology transfers.

Operation 'Skylight'

Context: Indian Army tested the operational readiness of its satellite-based systems under this operation.

Definition: 'Satellite-based Systems' provide communication facilities to military's ground and air-based systems. It also acts as a backup in case terrestrial connectivity is disrupted.

Why the need: Currently, Army doesn't have a dedicated satellite system (unlike Air-force and Navy). GSAT-7B satellite will be launched for use by Army.

- GSAT-7 series of the satellite is meant for defence services.

Live-fire exercises

Context: In a massive show of strength, China began its live-fire exercise near Taiwan by launching at least 11 ballistic missiles into the country's coast, after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan.

About: Live-fire exercises are exercises primarily used by military personnel, in which live ammunition is used to create training conditions that are as close to real combat scenarios as possible. Live-fire exercises are also used by law enforcement and fire fighters as a form of field training, to train them to act calmly in real-life emergency situations in the future.

It also involves testing the effectiveness of vehicles, weapon platforms and weapons systems (such as intercontinental ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and anti-aircraft weapons), so that any design flaws can be resolved before the weapons are fully operational.



Rajasthan Special

Unification of Rajasthan

The integration of Rajasthan was completed in 7 phases.

1. First phase- on 18 March 1948

- Name- Matsya Sangh
- Princely states included- Alwar, Bharatpur, Karauli, Dholpur
- Location- Nimrana (Alwar)
- Capital- Alwar
- Inauguration- in Lohagarh fort of Bharatpur
- Inaugurator- N.V. Godgil/Godwill (Narahari Vishnu Godgil)
- Raj Head- Dholpur Naresh Udaybhan Singh
- Upraj chief- Maharawal Ganeshpal of Karauli
- Prime Minister- Shobharam Kumawat (Alwar)
- Deputy Prime Minister- Yugal Kishore Chaturvedi (Nehru of Rajasthan)
- The name given to the Matsya Sangh - K.M. Munshi (Kanhaiya Lal Manikya Lal Munshi)

2. Second Phase- 25 March 1948

- Name- East Rajasthan
- Princely states- Kota, Jhalawar, Bundi, Tonk, Kishangarh, Shahpura, Baswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh
- Location- Lava (Jaipur), Kushalgarh
- Capital - Kota
- Inaugurator- N.V. Godgil (this was the first Anglo Indian)
- Raj Chief- Bhim Singh (Kota)
- Vice-President - Bundi Naresh Bahadur Singh
- Prime Minister- Gokul Lal Aswa (Shahpura)

3. Third Phase- 18 April 1948

- Name- United Rajasthan
- Princely states included - East Rajasthan and Udaipur



AGRASEN CIVIL SERVICES ACADEMY, JAIPUR

Where tradition meets innovation

- Capital- Udaipur (Mewar)
- Inaugurator- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
- Raj Chief- Bhupal Singh
- Upraj chief- Bhim Singh (Kota)
- Prime Minister- Manikya Lal Verma

4. Fourth Phase- 30 March 1949

- Name- Greater Rajasthan
- Princely states included- United Rajasthan, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner
- Capital- Jaipur
- Inaugurated - Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
- Raj Head- Sawai Mansingh II (Jaipur)
- Prime Minister- Hira Lal Shastri
- Rajasthan Day is celebrated only on 30th March, in this phase Maharaj Pramukh Bhupal Singh was made for life and Hira Lal Shastri was made the first nominated Chief Minister of Rajasthan.
- On the recommendation of Satya Narayan Committee, it was recommended to make Jaipur the capital from the point of view of geographical and drinking water.
- The other recommendations of the Satya Narayan Committee were made to the High Court (Jodhpur), Agriculture Department (Bharatpur), Mineral Department (Udaipur), Education Department (Bikaner), Forest Department (Kota).

5. Fifth Phase- 15 May 1949

- Name- United Greater Rajasthan
- Involved princely state - Greater Rajasthan and Matsya Sangh
- Capital- Jaipur
- Inaugurator- Sardar Patel
- Raj Chief- Sawai Mansingh II
- Prime Minister- Hira Lal Shastri
- Greater Rajasthan was included in the fifth phase on the recommendation of Shankar Rai Dev Committee.

6. Sixth Phase- 26 January 1950

- Name- Rajasthan





AGRASEN CIVIL SERVICES ACADEMY, JAIPUR

Where tradition meets innovation

- Princely states included - United Greater Rajasthan and Sirohi (except Abu and Delwara)
- Abu and Delwara were merged in Rajasthan with the efforts of Gokul Bhai Bhatt.
- Gokul Bhai Bhatt is called the Gandhi of Rajasthan.

7. Seventh Phase- 1st November 1956

- Name- Modern Rajasthan (Reorganized Rajasthan)
- Princely states included- Rajasthan Union, Abu, Delwara, Sumail Tappa and Ajmer
- Sumail Tappa was mixed from Bhanupura tehsil of Mandsaur district of Madhya Pradesh to Jhalawar.
- Siroj subdivision of Kota was merged with Madhya Pradesh.
- Rajasthan was given A class status and the appointment of the governor was issued and Gurmukh Nihal Singh became the first governor.

ACSA

