CURRENT AFFAIRS COMPENDIUM

August 2023

Offshore Areas Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023

- Parliament passes the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023
- The Bill amends the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002.

Bill Highlights

- The new bill regulates mining in maritime zones of India.
- It allows the government to reserve offshore areas that are not held under any operating right.
- The Bill also allows the administering authority to grant a composite licence or production lease to the government or a government company.
- This amendment will ensure transparency in the auction process.
- The Bill will provide a production lease under a composite licence, which will be valid for 50 years.
- It proposes to remove the provision for renewal of production lease and provide a fixed period of fifty years for production lease similar to the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act 1957.
- It also seeks to provide for the grant of production lease to the private sector only through auction by competitive bidding.
- It also provides for grant of operating rights without competitive bidding to a government or a government company, or a corporation in the mineral-bearing areas reserved by the central government.
- In the case of atomic minerals, the grant of exploration licence or production lease shall be made only to a government or a government or corporation.
- It aims to introduce a four-year timeline for commencement of production and dispatch after the execution of composite licence or production lease under and timeline of two years (extendable by one year) for re-commencement of production and dispatch after discontinuation.
- It will enable the central government to frame rules for the conservation and systematic development of minerals in offshore areas and for the protection of the environment by preventing or controlling any pollution which may be caused by exploration or production operations.

Impact of Climate Change upon the Indian subcontinent

- Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) in 2020 has published 'Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region', which contains a comprehensive assessment of the impact of climate change upon the Indian subcontinent.

The highlights of the report are as follows:

1. India's average temperature has risen by around 0.7 deg. C during 1901-2018.

2. Frequency of daily precipitation extremes (rainfall intensities >150 mm per day) increased by about 75% during 1950-2015.

3. The frequency and spatial extent of droughts over India has increased significantly during 1951-2015.

4. Sea-level rise in the North Indian Ocean occurred at a rate of 3.3 mm per year in the last two and half decades (1993-2017).

5. Frequency of Severe Cyclonic Storms over Arabian sea has increased during the post monsoon seasons of 1998-2018.

- India Meteorological Department (IMD) routinely monitors Climate over Indian Region and bring out yearly publication viz. "Annual Climate summary".

- IMD issues monthly climate summary. Annual climate summary includes information about the temperature, Rainfall and extreme weather events occurring during the concerned period.

MASI Portal

- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has developed an application 'MASI' - Monitoring App for Seamless Inspection for real time monitoring of the Child Care Institutions (CCIs) and their inspection mechanism across the country.

- The app is linked to the monitoring Portal where the automatic reports are generated.

- 'MASI' enables unified inspections by Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), State Inspection Committees, District Inspection Committees, Members of Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) as laid down under the JJ Act, 2015.

- It serves as a single platform for inspections of all the CCIs across the country by any of the above stated authorities.

- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, makes it mandatory to establish at least one Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in each district as the authority to dispose of cases for the care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of children in need of care & protection and to provide for their basic needs and protection of human rights.

PEHCHAN scheme

- PEHCHAN scheme was launched in 2016 to provide new identity to handicraft artisans so that the benefits of various schemes are provided to the deserving artisans.

- Aadhar linked Pehchan Cards are issued after due verification by field functionaries of Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles.

- Pehchan card holders can avail the benefits of all the handicrafts schemes implemented by Ministry of Textiles.
- Registered artisans with Pehchan card can avail the benefits of the National Handicraft Development Programme (NHDP) and Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) of Ministry of Textiles.

eSanjeevani

- Union Health Minister recently informed the Rajya Sabha that the Centre's telemedicine application eSanjeevani has completed 14,17,81,384 teleconsultations.
- It is a cloud-based integrated telemedicine solution of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India.
- It is a telemedicine app that provides both doctor-to-doctor and doctor-to-patient telecommunication.
- It is being designed, developed, deployed, and maintained by The Centre for Development and Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Mohali.

Two modules of eSanjeevani

eSanjeevani AB-HWC

- Rolled out in 2019 it is doctor-to-doctor telemedicine platform, being implemented at all the Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) in the country under the Ayushman Bharat (AB) Scheme of Government of India.
- It operates on a Hub-and-Spoke model wherein the 'Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centers' (HWCs) are set up at the state level, which is connected with the hub (comprising MBBS/Specialty/Super-Specialty doctors) at the zonal level.

eSanjeevani OPD

- It is the Patient-to-Doctor remote consultation services rolled out in 2020 amid the first lockdown imposed to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, while the Outpatient Departments (OPDs) in the country were closed.
- It enables people to get outpatient services in the confines of their homes.

PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme

- The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry recently set a new target for its PM SVANidhi scheme for street vendors
- PM SVANidhi was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on June 01, 2020.
- It is implemented by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
- PM SVANidhi Scheme provides affordable Working Capital loans to street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been adversely affected due to the Covid-19 lockdown.
- It is a micro-credit facility that provides street vendors with a collateral-free loan of Rs 10,000 with low rates of interest (below 12%) for a period of one year, aiding the vendors in getting back on their feet financially.

- The duration of the scheme initially was until March 2022. It has been extended till December 2024, with a focus on enhanced collateral-free affordable loan corpus, increased adoption of digital transactions and holistic socio-economic development of the Street Vendors and their families.
- All vendors who have been vending from or before (March 24, 2020) and with a certificate of vending can avail the loan.
- As per the Street Vendors Act 2014, the Town Vending Committees(which comprises the local authorities and vendors from an area) issue a certificate of vending after a survey has been conducted of all the vendors
- Vendors can avail of a working capital loan of up to Rs. 10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments in the tenure of one year.
- On timely/ early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy @ 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer on a quarterly basis. There will be no penalty on early repayment of loan.

Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)

- The Aviation security body Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) recently informed all the airports across the country to not promote any kind of advertisement or commercial at security checks.
- The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) is an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (India).
- It is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India.
- It is headed by an officer of the rank of Director general of Police and is designated as Director General of Bureau of Civil Aviation Security.
- The BCAS was initially set up as a Cell in the Directorate General of Civil Aviation(DGCA) in January 1978 on the recommendation of the Pande Committee constituted in the wake of the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight on 10 September 1976.
- The role of the Cell was to coordinate, inspect, monitor and train personnel in Civil Aviation Security matters.
- The BCAS was reorganized into an independent department in April , 1987 under the Ministry of Civil Aviation as a sequel to the Kanishka Tragedy in June 1985.
- The main responsibility of BCAS is to lay down standards and measures in respect of security of civil flights at International and domestic airports in India.
- Objective - Laying down Aviation Security Standards in accordance with Annex 17 to the Chicago Convention of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for airport operators, airline operators, and their security agencies responsible for implementing AVSEC measures.

Chicago Convention

- The Chicago Convention (also known as the Convention on International Civil Aviation), established the International Civil Aviation Organisation(ICAO), a specialized agency of the United Nations charged with coordinating and regulating international air travel.

- The Convention was signed by 52 states on 7th December 1944 in Chicago, U.S., and came into effect on 4 April 1947.
- It establishes rules of airspace, aircraft registration and safety and details the rights of the signatories in relation to air travel.
- The Convention also exempts air fuels from tax.
- The Convention provided for the sovereignty of airspace above the territory of each state, together with five freedoms (later expanded to nine by the addition of four unofficial freedoms) which govern the freedom of states to operate air transport flights (including the carriage of passengers, cargo and mail) across, into and within the airspace of other states.

Himalayan Vulture

- The conservationists to script India's first captive breeding success story of the Himalayan vultures inside the Assam State Zoo in Guwahati.
- It is the second instance (First was in France) in the world and first in India where this species has been kept for breeding.
- The captive breeding was a joint project undertaken by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and the Assam forest department
- The Himalayan vulture (Gyps himalayensis) or Himalayan griffon vulture is an Old World vulture.
- It is one of the two largest Old World vultures and true raptors.
- It is a typical vulture which has a bald white head, wings that are very wide and short tail feathers.
- It is native to the Himalayas and the adjoining Tibetan Plateau and also found in the Central Asian mountains.
- Conservation status - IUCN: Near Threatened

Other vulture species found in India

- India is home to 9 species of Vulture namely the Oriental white-backed, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Himalayan, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous and Eurasian Griffon.

Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

- The Prime Minister virtually laid the foundation stone for the redevelopment of 508 railway stations across the country at a cost of over Rs. 24,470 crore.
- The work was part of the Amrit Bharat Station scheme under which 1,300 prime railway stations in the country would be developed.
- Master Plans were being prepared for the development of these stations as City Centres, with proper integration of both sides of the city.
- The design of the station buildings will be inspired by local culture, heritage, and architecture.
- Now goods trains reach western ports from Delhi-NCR in 24 hours, a trip that used to take 72 hours.
- By 2030, India will be a country whose railway network will run on net zero emissions.

Justice G Rohini Committee Submitted Its Report

- Justice G. Rohini-led Commission on the sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes groups, which was constituted in October 2017, submitted its long-awaited report to the President of India on July 31, after having received 14 extensions in the last six years.
- The President had formed the Commission headed by former Delhi High Court Chief Justice G. Rohini in October 2017, to examine the question of sub-categorizing the over 2,600 caste groups listed in the Central OBC list.
- As per the notification, the Commission was tasked with first examining how much of 27% of reservation jobs and education and other government benefits meant for OBCs was dominated by which caste groups.
- The Commission had arrived at the conclusion that a small number of caste groups among all OBC groups, were dominating reservation and other government benefits.

Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT)

- The Central government is working on a proposal to launch a fresh InvIT for national highways where domestic retail investors can hold units of the trust.

Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT)

- It is Collective Investment Scheme similar to a mutual fund, which enables direct investment of money from individual and institutional investors in infrastructure projects
- These are like mutual funds in structure which can be established as a trust and registered with Sebi.
- An InvIT has 4 parties namely; Trustee, Sponsor(s) and Investment Manager and Project Manager.
- While the trustee (certified by Sebi) has the responsibility of inspecting the performance of an InvIT, sponsor(s) are promoters of the company that set up the InvIT.

NHAI InvIT

- It is the infrastructure investment trust sponsored by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to support the government's National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP).
- It is a Trust established by NHAI under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882 and SEBI (Security and Exchange Board of India) regulations.

Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF)

- The Minister of State for Education informed the Lok Sabha about the Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF), mentioned in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.
- The fund will be utilised to ensure that all kids receive a high-quality education.
- It will also be used to guarantee that amenities such as secure and sanitary vending machines are included on GIF's infrastructure checklist.
- The NEP focuses on 'Equitable and Inclusive Education' which reverberates the idea that no child should be left behind in terms of educational opportunity because of their background and socio-cultural identities.

- It has taken into account the concerns of the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which includes female and transgender individuals.
- NEP prescribes to approach gender as a cross-cutting priority to achieve gender equality in education with the partnership of states and local community organizations.
- The objectives of NEP for equitable and quality education for girl children are being met through specific provisions under Samagra Shiksha 2.0 by allocating dedicated resources for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

Under Samagra Shiksha, various interventions have been targeted for providing quality education to girls, which include:

- Opening of schools in the neighbourhood to make access easier for girls,
- Free uniform and text-books to girls up to class VIII,
- Additional teachers and residential quarters for teachers in remote/hilly areas,
- Appointment of additional teachers including women teachers,
- Stipend to CWSN girls from class I to class XII, separate toilets for girls,
- Teachers' sensitization programmes to promote girls participation,
- Gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including text books etc.

Metaverse Users to Surpass over 600 Million by 2026

A new report has shown that Metaverse users will surpass 600 million by 2026 due to generative artificial intelligence (AI).

Metaverse

- It refers to a virtual or digital universe where people can interact with each other and digital objects in a shared online space.
- Origin of the term: The term "metaverse" first appeared in author Neal Stephenson's 1992 science-fiction novel Snowcrash, which describes a future where millions of people use virtual avatars to participate in a cyberspace realm.
- The metaverse is essentially an interconnected network of virtual worlds, augmented reality, and virtual reality environments accessible through the internet.
- In this digital realm, users can create avatars, socialize with others, engage in various activities, explore virtual landscapes, and even conduct business or trade virtual goods and services.
- Elements of the metaverse include virtual reality (VR) platforms, augmented reality (AR) experiences, online games, social media, virtual commerce, and virtual art galleries, among others.
- The metaverse aims to offer a seamless and immersive experience, blurring the lines between the physical and digital worlds.
- Companies such as Meta (formerly Facebook), Microsoft, and Roblox are all investing heavily in the metaverse, and it is seen as a potential major driver of growth in the technology industry in the coming years.

Augmented Reality (AR)

- It is an enhanced version of the real physical world that is achieved through the use of digital visual elements, sound, or other sensory stimuli and delivered via technology.
- It overlays digital content onto real-life environments and objects.
- AR works by superimposing digital information onto real-world objects to create a 3D experience that allows users to interact with both the physical and digital worlds.
- Unlike Virtual Reality (VR), which creates its own cyber environment, AR adds to the existing world as it is.

Virtual Reality (VR)

- It is a simulated 3D environment that enables users to explore and interact with virtual surroundings in a way that approximates reality as it is perceived through the users' senses.
- The environment is created with computer hardware and software, and the users need to wear devices such as helmets or goggles (Virtual Reality headsets or helmets) to interact with the environment.

Lokmanya Tilak National Award

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was honoured with the Lokmanya Tilak National Award on his visit to Pune.
- The award was instituted in 1983 by the Tilak Smarak Mandir Trust.
- This award is given every year on 1st August, the death anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak, to persons who have made remarkable and extraordinary contributions, working for the progress and development of the nation.

Lokmanya Tilak

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak, commonly known as Lokmanya Tilak, was a prominent Indian nationalist, freedom fighter, social reformer, and political leader during the Indian independence movement.
- He was one of the prime architects of modern India and probably the strongest advocate of Swaraj or Self Rule for India.
- He is known for his slogan, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it."
- He was born as Keshav Gangadhar Tilak and his followers bequeathed upon him the title of 'Lokmanya', meaning he who is revered by the people.
- He was considered a radical Nationalist.
- The British Government termed him the "Father of Indian Unrest".
- He joined the Indian National Congress Party in the year 1890.
- He also helped found the All India Home Rule League in 1916–18 with G. S. Khaparde and Annie Besant.
- Tilak started his Home Rule League in Maharashtra, Central Provinces, and Karnataka and Berar region. Besant's League was active in the rest part of India. It aimed to advocate for self-rule and raise public awareness about India's right to govern itself.

- Tilak was a prolific writer and journalist. He used his newspaper, "Kesari" (meaning Lion) in Marathi and later "Maratha" in English to disseminate nationalist ideas.
- Some of his notable literary works include "The Arctic Home in the Vedas," where he presented his theory that the Vedas originated in the Arctic region, and "Shrimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya," an interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita from a nationalist perspective.
- Tilak established the Deccan Education Society in Pune in 1884.
- Tilak actively supported the eradication of social evils like untouchability and child marriage and promoted education for women.
- He had popular leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai as his political companions, and the three were popularly known as the 'Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate.'
- He was arrested for sedition on multiple occasions. His most prolonged incarceration lasted from 1908 to 1914, during which he wrote the famous book "Gita Rahasya" (The Secret of the Bhagavad Gita).
- In 1916 he concluded the Lucknow Pact with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, which provided for Hindu-Muslim unity in the nationalist struggle.

Railway Protection Force

- The history of the RPF dates back to 1882 when various Railway companies appointed their own guards for protection of Railway property.
- It was declared as statutory force in the year 1957 by an enactment of Parliament and subsequently declared as an armed force of the Union of India in the year 1985.
- In 2003, the RPF partially took up the duties of escorting of passenger trains and access control at the railway stations".
- It is led by a director-general.
- It is an armed force under the operational and administrative control of the Union Ministry of Railways.
- It is tasked with protecting and securing railway property, the passenger areas, and the passengers themselves.

Government Railway Police (GRP)

- The GRP is a part of the district police force, reporting to the state government.
- It works alongside the RPF, and should, under ideal circumstances, complement and strengthens its operations.
- They responsible generally for the prevention and detection of crime on railways.

Bhojpatra Tree

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India, in the 103rd edition of 'Mann ki Baat programme highlighted the business of 'bhojpatra calligraphy' by the women of Mana village near Badrinath.

Bhojpatra tree

- It is also known as Himalayan Birch and it is widely found in the Himalayas.

- It is a deciduous tree native to the Western Himalayas that grows at elevations of up to 4,500 metres
- It has a high freezing tolerance potential, allowing it to form a treeline in the Himalayan region.
- It is a long-lived species which can survive up to 400 years and the only angiosperm in the Himalaya which dominates an extensive area at sub - alpine altitudes.
- Distribution: It is widely distributed in the altitudinal range from 3100 - 3800 min North-western Himalaya.
- It contributes to the preservation of the Himalayan ecosystem by reducing soil erosion and creating a bio-shield for the remaining forests and sub-alpine meadows below the treeline.
- The bark of this tree was used for centuries in our Country for writing lengthy scriptures and texts in Sanskrit and other scripts, particularly in historical Uttarkhand and Kashmir.

India Stack

- Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) of Papua New Guinea signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for sharing India Stack.
- India Stack is a set of Application Programming Interface (APIs) that allows governments, businesses, startups and developers to utilise a unique digital Infrastructure.
- India Stack consists of three layers of open APIs: identity, payments, and data.
- Although the name of this project bears the word India, the vision of India Stack is not limited to one country.
- It can be applied to any nation, be it a developed one or an emerging one.

The four distinct technology layers provided are

1. *Presenceless layer*: A universal biometric digital identity allows people to participate in any service from anywhere in the country.
2. *Paperless layer*: Where digital records move with an individual's digital identity, eliminating the need for massive amount of paper collection and storage.
3. *Cashless layer*: Where a single interface to all the country's bank accounts and wallets to democratize payments.
4. *Consent layer*: Which allows data to move freely and securely to democratize the market for data

- Some of the APIs that are a central part of India Stack: Aadhaar Proof, Aadhaar e-KYC, e-Sign, Digital Locker, Unified Payment Interface
- The Open API team at iSPIRT has been a pro-bono partner in the development, evolution, and evangelisation of these APIs and systems.

API

- In the context of APIs, the word Application refers to any software with a distinct function.
- Interface can be thought of as a contract of service between two applications.
- This contract defines how the two communicate with each other using requests and responses.

- Their API documentation contains information on how developers are to structure those requests and responses.

Western Tragopan

- There has been a gradual increase in the population of Western Tragopan at Himachal Pradesh's Sarahan pheasantry, the conservation breeding centre, bringing a glimmer of hope for its survival and growth.
- Western horned tragopan, is amongst the rarest of all living pheasants.
- Due to its beautiful plumage and large size, this bird is locally known as 'jujurana' or 'king of birds'.
- It is the state bird of Himachal Pradesh.
- Distribution: It is endemic to the northwest Himalaya, within a narrow range from Hazara in north Pakistan through Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, to the western part of Garhwal.
- The upper part of Great Himalayan National Park's (GHNP) forest zone holds the world's largest known population of western tragopan.
- It prefers a habitat of ringal (dwarf) bamboo beneath dense forest.
- Diet: It feeds mostly on leaves, shoots and seeds, but also consumes insects and other invertebrates.
- Threats: Habitat loss, hunting pressure and anthropogenic disturbances which includes livestock grazing, minor forest produce collection like medicinal herbs etc.
- Conservation status - IUCN: Vulnerable

Akira Ransomware

- Recently, the Computer Emergency Response Team of India issued an alert for ransomware dubbed Akira.
- It is designed to encrypt data, create a ransomware note and delete Windows Shadow Volume copies on affected devices.
- The ransomware gets its name due to its ability to modify filenames of all encrypted files by appending them with the ".akira" extension.
- The ransomware is designed to close processes or shut down Windows services that may keep it from encrypting files on the affected system.
- It uses VPN services, especially when users have not enabled two-factor authentication, to trick users into downloading malicious files.
- The ransomware also terminates active Windows services using the Windows Restart Manager API, preventing any interference with the encryption process.
- It is designed to not encrypt Program Data, Recycle Bin, Boot, System Volume information, and other folders instrumental in system stability.
- It also avoids modifying Windows system files with extensions like .syn. .msl and .exe.
- Once sensitive data is stolen and encrypted, the ransomware leaves behind a note named akira_readme.txt which includes information about the attack and the link to Akira's leak and negotiation site.
- Each victim is given a unique negotiation password to be entered into the threat actor's Tor site.

- Unlike other ransomware operations, this negotiation site just includes a chat system that the victim can use to communicate with the ransomware gang.

How does ransomware infect devices?

- Ransomware is typically spread through spear phishing emails that contain malicious attachments in the form of archived content (zip/rar) files.
- Other methods used to infect devices include drive-by-download, a cyber-attack that unintentionally downloads malicious code onto a device, and specially crafted web links in emails, clicking on which downloads malicious code.
- The ransomware reportedly also spreads through insecure Remote Desktop connections.

Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Symposium

- Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Symposium organised by IIT Madras in Chennai.
- The DIR-V programme, launched last year, aims at boosting India's semiconductor ecosystem by creating advanced microprocessors.
- It would largely be driven by the creativity and innovation of Indian youth and start-ups across the globe
- The Ministry of Electronics and IT has started the Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) programme to launch the first indigenous chipset by 2023-24 and boost the local development of electronic chips
- The Blueprint of the roadmap of design & implementation of the DIR-V Program with – SHAKTI Processor by IIT Madras and VEGA Processor by C-DAC and the strategic Roadmap for India's Semiconductor Design & Innovation to catalyze the semiconductor ecosystem in the country were announced.

Five-Year Extension of Digital India Programme

- Union Cabinet approved a five-year extension and expansion of the Digital India Programme, including an expansion of the Computer Emergency Response Team- India (CERT-in).
- Under the programme, 6.25 lakh IT professionals will receive upskilling and re-skilling training, and 2.65 lakh employees will receive information security training.
- These funds will also be used to improve and modernize the National Knowledge Network (NKN), a high-speed broadband network that was established in 2010 to improve connectivity among educational and research institutions.
- The Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG) platform, which offers access to about 1,700 government services, will have 540 more services added to it.
- DigiLocker, the online repository operated by the Government for official documents, will be expanded to serve MSMEs.

Project Devika

- North India's first River Rejuvenation Project Devika is nearing completion.
- It has been built at a cost of over Rs 190 crore on the lines of 'Namami Ganga'

- Devika river originates from the hilly Suddha Mahadev temple in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir and flows down towards western Punjab (now in Pakistan) where it merges with the Ravi river.
- The river holds religious significance as it is revered by Hindus as the sister of river Ganga.

National River Conservation Plan (NRCP)

- NRCP is a centrally funded scheme
- It was launched in 1995 aimed at preventing the pollution of rivers.
- It is being implemented under National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) and NGRBA (National Ganga River Basin Authority).
- The National Ganga Council, also known as the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga, has replaced the NRGBA.

Theppakadu Elephant Camp and the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

- The President of India, visited Theppakadu Elephant Camp, one of Asia's oldest Elephant camps, at the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve
- The Government is setting up a "State-of-the-art Elephant Conservation Center and Eco Complex" at Theppakadu Elephant Camp to make it a pioneer in Asian elephant conservation.
- Tribal communities are playing an important role in preserving India's cultural heritage.
- Traditional knowledge and experience of the people belonging to Bettakurumbar, Kattunayakar and Malasar tribal communities is being utilized to manage the Theppakadu Elephant Camp.

Mudumalai National Park

- Mudumalai National Park is a national park in the Nilgiri Mountains in Tamil Nadu in southern India.
- It shares boundaries with the states of Karnataka and Kerala.
- The national park has been part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve since 1986 and was declared a tiger reserve together with a buffer zone of 367.59 km2 in 2007.
- It is drained by the Moyar River and several tributaries, which harbour 38 fish species.

Bureau of Indian Standards

- Bureau of Indian Standards, the National Standards Body of India signed Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with 35 prestigious institutions across the country for fostering collaboration in standardization and conformity assessment.
- BIS is a statutory body functioning under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India.
- It operates various schemes like Product Certification (ISI mark), Management Systems Certification, Hall Marking of Gold and Silver Jewellery/Artefacts and Laboratory Services for the benefit of the industry and in turn aiming at consumer protection.

Adichanallur

- Union Finance Minister visited Adichanallur, an ancient and historical Iron-age burial site located in Thoothukudi District Tamil Nadu, set along the banks of the Tamirabarani (Porunai) river.

- This archaeological site was one of five declared to be developed as 'Iconic Sites' in the Union Budget 2020-21.

- On the occasion, the Union Finance Minister also laid the foundation stone for the 'Iconic Site Museum' at the Adichanallur site.

- Other proposed Iconic sites - Rakhigarhi in Haryana, Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh, Sivasagar in Assam, Dholavira in Gujarat

Other initiatives

- Numerous heritage sites, including the Somnath, Kashi Vishwanath Temple, and more, have been revitalised. In line with this, several tourism circuits under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, such as the Buddhist Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Desert Circuit, and Himalayan Circuit, are being established to promote tourism and bring due recognition to these places.

- Ongoing development of five sites, known as 'Panchtheerth' - It is based on Babasaheb Ambedkar's life

Panchteerath include

1. Amedbkar's birthplace in Mhow
2. The place in London where he stayed while studying in the UK
3. Deeksha Bhoomi in Nagpur, where he took education
4. Mahaparinirvan Sthal in Delhi
5. Chaitya Bhoomi in Mumbai.

Dr. Ambedkar

- B.R. Ambedkar was born on 14 April 1891 in Mhow, Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh).

- He was India's first Law Minister and was Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the new Constitution.

- He played an important role in framing the Indian Constitution

Contributions in the Freedom Struggle

- Mahad Satyagraha was led by B. R Ambedkar in 1927 to allow the untouchables to use water in a public tank in Mahad, Maharashtra.

- He participated in all three round-table conferences.

- In 1932, Ambedkar agreed on Poona pact with Mahatma Gandhi and an agreement was signed between Ambedkar and Madan Mohan Malviya which abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes(Communal Award).

- In 1939, during the Second World War, he called upon Indians to join the Army in large numbers to defeat Nazism, which he said, was another name for Fascism.

Organisations formed by Dr. Ambedkar

1. Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (1923),

2. Independent Labor Party (1936),

3. Scheduled Castes Federation (1942)

- On October 14, 1956 he embraced Buddhism along with many of his followers. The same year he completed his last writing 'Buddha and His Dharma'.

- In 1990, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, was bestowed with Bharat Ratna.

- The period from 14th April 1990 – 14th April 1991 was observed as 'Year of Social Justice' in the memory of Babasaheb.

- Dr. Ambedkar Foundation was established by the Government of India under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on March 24, 1992 as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

- The main objective of the foundation is to oversee the implementation of programmes and activities for furthering the ideology and message of Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar among the masses in India as well as abroad.

Books

- Annihilation of Caste

- Buddha Or Karl Marx

- Buddha and His Dhamma

- Who were the Shudras

- The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women among others.

Journals

- Mooknayak

- Bahishkrit Bharat

- Samatha

- Equality Janata among others.

Anusandhan National Research Foundation

- Parliament passes the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023

National Research Foundation (NRF)

- Objective – It will provide high level strategic direction for research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences including mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture.

- It will also promote scientific and technological interfaces of humanities and social sciences to promote, monitor and provide support as required for such research and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- The approved Bill will pave the way to establish NRF that will seed, grow and promote Research and Development (R&D) and foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.

- The bill, after approval in the Parliament, will establish NRF, an apex body to provide high-level strategic direction of scientific research in the country as per recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), at a total estimated cost of Rs. 50,000 crores during five years (2023-28).

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will be the administrative Department of NRF which will be governed by a Governing Board consisting of eminent researchers and professionals across disciplines.

- Since the scope of the NRF is wide-ranging – impacting all ministries - the Prime Minister will be the ex-officio President of the Board and the Union Minister of Science & Technology & Union Minister of Education will be the ex-officio Vice-Presidents.

- NRF's functioning will be governed by an Executive Council chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.

- NRF will forge collaborations among the industry, academia, and government departments and research institutions

- It will focus on creating a policy framework and putting in place regulatory processes that can encourage collaboration and increased spending by the industry on R&D.

- The bill will also repeal the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) established by an act of Parliament in 2008 and subsume it into NRF which has an expanded mandate and covers activities over and above the activities of SERB.

Indian Mini Satellite-1

- ISRO has transferred the IMS-1 Satellite Bus Technology to Alpha Design Technologies Pvt. Ltd in a step towards enhancing private industry participation in the country's space sector.

- NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of ISRO, facilitated the technology transfer through an agreement signed during an event held at the NSIL headquarters

- ADTL is one of the two private players identified to receive the transfer of this technology through Interest Exploratory Note (IEN) published by NSIL

Indian Mini Satellite-1

- It was developed by the UR Rao Satellite Centre of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- It is a small satellite platform designed to enable low-cost access to space.
- The IMS-1 bus weighs about 100 kilograms and can carry a 30-kilogram payload.
- The solar arrays onboard generate 330 watts of power.
- It comes with four reaction wheels with a 1 Newton thruster that is good for pointing accuracy with an accuracy threshold of 0.1 Degrees.
- It was used in previous ISRO missions like IMS-1, Youthsat and Microsat-2D.
- It would enable low cost access to space by providing dedicated platform for payloads for earth imaging, ocean and atmospheric studies, microwave remote sensing and space science missions with a quick turnaround time.

Bhu-Vision (Krishi-RASTAA)

- In a significant development for agricultural technology, a revolutionary IoT-based automated soil testing and agronomy advisory platform, Bhu-Vision (also known as KRISHI-RASTAA Soil Testing System) was officially launched at AICRP (ICAR-IIRR), Hyderabad
- It has been jointly developed by ICAR-IIRR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research -Indian Institute of Rice Research) and KrishiTantra.
- This system seamlessly conducts 12 key soil parameter tests in just 30 minutes.
- It provides quick and accurate results directly to farmers and stakeholders through a soil health card on their mobile devices.

Clouded Leopard

- The mainland clouded leopard (Neofelis nebulosa) is often likened to the Ice Age sabretooth because it has the largest canines in proportion to its skull size among all cat species.
- It also has rotating rear ankles that enable it to climb down head first from trees, unlike the other felines.
- The clouded leopard is categorised into two species: the mainland clouded leopard distributed from central Nepal to peninsular Malaysia, and the Sunda clouded leopard (Neofelis diardi) native to Borneo and Sumatra.
- The mainland clouded leopard is tagged vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List and is considered at high risk of extinction in the wild due to deforestation and poaching.
- The availability of small prey species and primary forests influenced clouded leopard habitat use significantly, highlighting the potential conservation importance of species such as hares, birds, porcupines, and primates,"
- They seemed to go wherever they pleased without worrying about other predators, primarily because of their ability to climb trees, even hang upside down from large branches.

India has Started Manufacturing 38 APIs in Past 18 Months

- Over the past eighteen months, India has commenced the production of 38 active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) that were previously reliant on imports

API

- Active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) are the active components in a pharmaceutical drug that produce the required effect on the body to treat a condition.
- APIs are produced by processing chemical compounds.
- For example, an active ingredient to relieve pain is included in a painkiller. This is called API.
- In a biologic drug, the active ingredient is known as a bulk process intermediate (BPI).
- APIs are the key active components that interact with specific receptors or target molecules in the body to bring about the desired physiological or therapeutic response
- All drugs are made up of two core components- Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) and excipients.

- Excipients are substances other than the drug that helps deliver the medication to your system.

Digital Portal of the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS)

- The digital portal of the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS) office in Pune, Maharashtra has been launched by Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Minister Amit Shah.

CRCS

- The main objectives of computerization of the Central Registrar's Office are Completely paperless application, Automatic compliance to Multi State Co-operative Societies Act (MSCS Act) and Rules, Ease of Doing Business, Digital communication and Transparent processing. This computerization project will prove helpful in new registration.

- 1555 multi-state cooperative societies of the country will be benefited by the portal launched and 42% of these 1555 societies are in Maharashtra only, this shows the strength of cooperative movement in Maharashtra.

- It will be helpful in the registration of new Multi-State Cooperative Societies, simplifying their operations and creating a more efficient and transparent digital ecosystem.

- The digital portal will encompass various modules, including registration, amendment of bye-laws, annual return filing, appeal, audit, inspection, inquiry, arbitration, winding up, liquidation, ombudsman, and election.

Cabinet Approves Investment of ₹1.3 lakh crore in BharatNet

- The Union Cabinet has approved an allotment of ₹1,39,579 crore for the next phase of Bharat Net to make 5G network available to remote areas of the country

- With this the government is planning to reach 6.4 lakh villages within the next two years from the current 1.94 lakh connected villages under the Bharat Net Udyami Yojana

BharatNet Project

- The Bharat Net project, executed by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) consisting of Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) merger, completed a pilot project in eight months, covering 60,000 villages across four districts.

- The National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN), launched in October 2011, was renamed the Bharat Net Project in 2015.

- It is an ambitious project of the Government of India to provide broadband connectivity to all village panchayats in the country.

- It aims to provide affordable broadband connectivity of 2 Mbps to 20 Mbps for all households and on-demand capacity to all institutions to realize the vision of Digital India, in partnership with States and the private sector.

- The objective is to facilitate the delivery of e-governance, e-health, e-education, e-banking, Internet and other services to rural India.

- To achieve this, the existing fibres of PSUs (BSNL, Railtel and Power Grid) were utilised and incremental fibre was laid to connect to Gram Panchayats wherever necessary.

- The entire project is being funded by the Universal service Obligation Fund (USOF), which was set up to improve telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country.
- The project is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), namely Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), which was incorporated on 25.02.2012 under Indian Companies Act 1956.

Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

- It is a government fund established by the Government of India to provide financial support for the expansion of telecommunications and broadband services in rural and remote areas of the country.
- The primary objective of USOF is to bridge the digital divide and ensure that telecom and internet services are accessible to all, especially in areas where private telecom operators may find it economically unviable to operate due to high infrastructure costs and low population density.
- The USOF is funded through a levy on the revenue earned by telecom operators.
- The government imposes a Universal Service Levy (USL) on the gross revenue of the telecom companies, which is a percentage of their Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR).
- This levy is collected and deposited into the USOF.
- The USOF is managed by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) under the Ministry of Communications.

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) Standards

- Following recent incidents of several countries reporting deaths allegedly linked to "contaminated" India-manufactured drugs, the government has set a deadline for mandatory implementation of the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) which were revised in 2018, bringing them on par with World Health Organisation (WHO) standards.
- Companies with a turnover of over Rs 250 crore will have to implement the revised GMP within six months, while medium and small-scale enterprises with turnover of less than Rs 250 crore will have to implement it within a year
- Good manufacturing practice (GMP) is a system for ensuring that products are consistently produced and controlled according to quality standards.
- It is designed to minimize the risks involved in any pharmaceutical production that cannot be eliminated through testing the final product.
- It covers all aspects of production; from the starting materials, premises and equipment to the training and personal hygiene of staff.
- The GMP system was first incorporated in India in 1988 in Schedule M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, and the last amendment was done in June 2005. WHO-GMP standards are now part of the revised Schedule M.
- There are around 10,500 manufacturing units in India out of which around 8,500 falls under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) category.
- The country has about 2,000 units in MSME category in the country having WHO-GMP certification.

The new regulations

- Companies with a turnover of over Rs 250 crore will have to implement the revised GMP within six months,
- Medium and small-scale enterprises with turnover of less than Rs 250 crore will have to implement it within a year

Trachoma as a Public Health Problem

- Iraq has now joined the league of 17 other countries that have eliminated trachoma, a neglected tropical disease and the world's leading infectious cause of blindness, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced recently.
- The country is also the 50th to be acknowledged by the United Nations health agency for eliminating at least one neglected tropical disease globally.
- Trachoma is the world's leading infectious cause of blindness and is one of the conditions known as neglected tropical diseases.
- Trachoma starts off as a bacterial infection caused by Chlamydia trachomatis and can be easily treated.
- Over time, it causes the eyelashes to be pushed inward into the eye. So with every blink, they brush against the eyeball.
- This advanced form of trachoma is called trichiasis. Over time, if it's not treated, trichiasis can lead to blindness.
- The disease thrives where there are water shortages, poor sanitation and infestations of flies, which are considered physical vectors of the disease.
- To eliminate trachoma as a public health problem, WHO recommends the SAFE strategy, a comprehensive approach to reduce transmission of the causative organism, clear existing infections and deal with their effects.
- The SAFE strategy includes: Surgery to treat the blinding stage (trachomatous trichiasis); Antibiotics to clear the infection, particularly the antibiotic azithromycin; Facial cleanliness and Environmental improvement, particularly improving access to water and sanitation.
- The 17 other countries that have eliminated trachoma are: Benin, Cambodia, China, Gambia, Ghana, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Togo and Vanuatu.

Neglected tropical disease

- Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a diverse group of 20 conditions that are mainly prevalent in tropical areas, where they mostly affect impoverished communities and disproportionately affect women and children.
- These diseases cause devastating health, social and economic consequences to more than one billion people.
- The epidemiology of NTDs is complex and often related to environmental conditions.
- Many of them are vector-borne, have animal reservoirs and are associated with complex life cycles.

India launches 'Neerakshi' - Autonomous Underwater Vehicle for Mine Detection

- An autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) designed to detect mines and a first of its kind in the country was launched
- The AUV named 'Neerakshi' is a collaboration of Kolkata-based warshipmaker Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd and MSME entity Aerospace Engineering Private Ltd (AEPL).
- The commercial launch of the AUV is likely to be within six months to a year after completion of user trials by the Indian Navy, Coast Guard and possibly the Army too
- This can be used for a variety of functions ranging from mine detection to mine disposal to underwater survey

National Health Authority (NHA) extends its incentive scheme under Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

- The National Health Authority (NHA) announces extension of its Digital Health Incentives Scheme (DHIS) under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) till 31stDecember 2023.
- Under DHIS, incentives are provided to hospitals and diagnostic labs and to the providers of digital health solutions such as Hospital/ Health Management Information System (HMIS) and Laboratory Management Information System (LMIS) for adopting and enabling transformative digitization under ABDM.
- The DHIS was launched with effect from 1st January, 2023 as part of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.
- The scheme proved to be a significant catalyst in promoting the adoption of digital health technologies and practices in healthcare delivery across the country.
- Owing to its impact and response from the healthcare providers and health tech companies, the scheme has been extended to allow more stakeholders to benefit from the financial incentives.
- Under the DHIS, the eligible health facilities and digital solutions companies shall be able to earn financial incentives of up to Rs. 4 crores based on the number of digital health records created and linked to ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) numbers of the patients.

National Health Authority (NHA)

- It is the apex body responsible for implementing AB PM-JAY.
- It has been entrusted with the role of designing strategy, building technological infrastructure and implementation of "National Digital Health Mission '' to create a National Digital Health Eco-system.
- It is the successor of the National Health Agency, which has been functioning as a registered society since 2018. Pursuant to Cabinet decision for full functional autonomy, National Health Agency was reconstituted as the National Health Authority in January 2019.
- An attached office of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with full functional autonomy, NHA is governed by a Governing Board chaired by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare.

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

- International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples also known as World Tribal Day is observed every year on August 9 to promote and protect the rights of indigenous populations around the world.
- The day attempts to honour their distinctive cultures, languages, customs, and social contributions.
- The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is to be marked annually on August 9, according to a decision made by the UN General Assembly in December 1994.
- The day was picked in honour of the 1982 Geneva-based Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights inaugural meeting, which served as the inspiration for the date.
- The theme of World Tribal Day in 2023 is "Indigenous Youth as Agents of Change for Self-determination."
- The day is necessary since indigenous peoples are frequently among the most underprivileged racial and ethnic groupings in society.
- The UN estimates that although indigenous people make up less than 5% of the global population, they are responsible for 15% of the world's poorest people.

Janjatiya Gaurav Divas

- On November 10, 2021, the Union Cabinet declared November 15 as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' marking the birth anniversary of the revered leader and saluting his contributions to India's freedom movement.
- November 15 is celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas or Tribal Pride Day to honour tribal freedom fighter, Birsa Munda.
- Born in 1875, Birsa Munda led a rebellious movement against British colonial rule and conversion activities in the areas of the Bengal Presidency, which today are part of Jharkhand.
- His rebellion in the Munda belt of Khunti, Tamar, Sarwada, and Bandgaon helped in the revival of traditional tribal culture.
- Birsa Munda gave the slogan of 'Abua Raj Ete Jana, Maharani Raj Tundu Jana,' which translates as "Let the queen's kingdom end and our kingdom be established."
- Birsa Munda died at the young age of 25 in British custody at the Ranchi jail.
- However, in his limited years, Birsa Munda's contribution to tribal causes earned him the title of 'Bhagwan' or Lord.

ECOWAS

- Niger's military government has rejected the latest diplomatic mission from African countries aimed at restoring constitutional order after a July 26 coup
- The African Union (AU) planned to send a joint mission with representatives of the UN and the West African bloc ECOWAS to Niger , but it was denied permission by the military government, which has closed Niger's airspace

The West African bloc of nations has indicated that it is planning to intervene in the coup in Niger

15 ECOWAS members: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo (*in blue*), and Niger (*in red*)

About ECOWAS

- Also known as CEDEAO in French, the regional group was established in 1975 through the Lagos Treaty – with a mandate of promoting economic integration among its members.
- Today, ECOWAS has 15 members: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo. Around 400 million people live in this region.
- Although, following coups in recent years in some of the biggest countries in the bloc – namely Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso – it suspended the three members and refused to recognise their new governments.
- ECOWAS' larger aims are to have a single common currency and create a single, large trading bloc in areas of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, financial issues, and social and cultural matters.
- The vision of ECOWAS is the creation of a "borderless region" that is well-integrated.
- ECOWAS is meant to be a region governed in accordance with the principles of democracy, rule of law and good governance.

Central Government Schemes to Farmers

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme

- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), a Central Sector Scheme, aims at providing financial assistance to cultivable landholding farmer families across the country, subject to certain exclusion criteria.
- Under the Scheme, an amount of Rs. 6000/- is transferred annually in three equal instalments of Rs.2000/- directly into the Aadhaar Seeded bank accounts of the farmers.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana (PMKMY)

- It is a Central Sector Scheme launched on 12.09.2019, is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme for the entry age group of 18 to 40 years with a provision of Rs. 3000/- monthly pension on attaining the age of 60 years

- All Small and Marginal landholder farmers who own cultivable land upto 2 hectare as per land records of the concerned State/UT are eligible to be enrolled under the Scheme.

- The Scheme aims to create a social security net for the farmers as old age would result in loss of livelihood for most of them.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)

- With a view to provide financial support to farmers at the time of losses due to natural calamities, a yield index based Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and weather index based Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) are introduced in the country from Kharif 2016 season.

- Under this Scheme, farmers' share in premium of maximum 2% of sum insured for Kharif season and 1.5% for Rabi season for food and oilseed crops and 5% for commercial/ horticultural crops and remaining of actuarial/ bidded premium is shared equally 50: 50 ration by the Central and State Governments except in North Eastern States& Hilly States where sharing pattern ratio is 90 : 10.

Major schemes by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare

Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS)

- The Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS) provides concessional short term agri-loans to the farmers practicing crop husbandry and other allied activities like animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries.

- ISS is available to farmers availing short term crop loans upto Rs.3.00 lakh at an interest rate of 7% per annum for one year.

- Additional 3% subvention is also given to the farmers for prompt and timely repayment of loans thus reducing the effective rate of interest to 4% per annum.

- The benefit of ISS is also available for post-harvest loans against Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWRs) on crop loans for a further period of six months post-harvest to small and marginal farmers having Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs), on occurrence of natural calamities and severe natural calamities.

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)

- Agri Infra Fund was launched under Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package.

- AIF was introduced with a vision to transform the agriculture infrastructure landscape of the country.

- The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

- Under the scheme, Rs. 1 Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with interest subvention of 3% per annum and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE for loans up to Rs. 2 Crores.

Formation and promotion of new 10,000 FPOs

- The Government of India has launched the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) for "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)" in the year 2020.

Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)

- Per Drop More Crop scheme mainly focuses on water use efficiency at farm level through precision/micro irrigation. Besides promoting precision irrigation (drip and sprinkler irrigation systems) and better on-farm water management practices to optimize the use of available water resources, this component also supports micro level water storage or water conservation/management activities to supplement micro irrigation.

Sub-Mission on Agriculture Extension (SMAE)

- The scheme aims at making the extension system farmer driven and farmer accountable by disseminating technology to farmers through new institutional arrangements viz. Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at district level to operationalize extension reforms in a participatory mode.

Sub-Mission on Seed and Planting Material (SMSP)

- SMSP covers the entire gamut of seed production chain, from production of nucleus seed to supply of certified seeds to the farmers, to provide support for creation of infrastructure conducive for development of the seed sector, support to the public seed producing organisations for improving their capacity and quality of seed production, create dedicated seed bank to meet unforeseen circumstances of natural calamities, et

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)

- PKVY aims at development of sustainable models of organic farming through a mix of traditional wisdom and modern science to ensure long term soil fertility build-up, resource conservation and helps in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

- It primarily aims to increase soil fertility and thereby helps in production of healthy food through organic practices without the use of agro-chemicals.

National Food Security Mission (NFSM)

- The Mission aims at increasing production of rice, wheat, pulses coarse cereals (maize & barley), nutri-cereals (jowar, bajra, ragi& other small millets) and commercial crops (jute, cotton & sugarcane) and oilseeds through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner in the identified districts of the country.

Integrated Scheme for Agriculture Marketing (ISAM)

- ISAM supports state governments in governing the agricultural produce marketing through creation and improvement of market structures, capacity building and generating access to market information. During 2017-18, National Agriculture Market Scheme popularly known as

e-NAM scheme has also been made part of the same.1260 mandis of 22 States and 03 UTs have been integrated to e-NAM platform.

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

• Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), a Centrally Sponsored Scheme was launched during 2014-15 for holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and Bamboo.

Soil Health Card (SHC)

• Soil Health Card is used to assess the current status of soil health and, when used over time, to determine changes in soil health that are affected by land management. A Soil Health Card displays soil health indicators and associated descriptive terms.

• The indicators are typically based on farmers' practical experience and knowledge of local natural resources.

• The card lists soil health indicators that can be assessed without the aid of technical or laboratory equipment.

Rainfed Area Development (RAD)

• The Scheme aims to promote integrated farming systems by focusing on multi-cropping, crop rotation and allied activities like livestock, apiculture etc.

• Integrated farming systems helps in minimizing adverse impact of crop failure through diversified systems thereby enhancing production and productivity of rainfed area and helping in sustaining the income of small and marginal farmers even in climatic variability.

Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)

• The scheme focuses on creation of pre & post-harvest infrastructure in agriculture and allied sectors that help in supply of quality inputs, market facilities, etc to farmers.

• It provides flexibility and autonomy to states to implement projects as per the local farmers' needs and priorities from a bouquet of activities in agriculture and allied sectors.

• The scheme aims to fill the resources gap of agriculture and allied sectors by providing financial support to states for undertaking various activities to increase in overall growth of agriculture and allied sectors and farmers' income.

National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO)-Oil Palm

• NMEO-OP has been launched during the year 2021-22 with the aim to enhance the edible oils availability in the country by harnessing Oil Palm area expansion, increasing CPO production and to reduce the import burden on edible oil.

• The Mission will bring additional area of 6.5 lakh ha under Oil Palm plantation. Allocation for the scheme during 2022-23 is Rs 900 crore.

Market Intervention Scheme and Price support Scheme (MIS-PSS)

• Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare implements the Price Support Scheme (PSS) for procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra. Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for procurement

of agricultural and horticultural commodities which are perishable in nature and are not covered under the Price Support Scheme (PSS).

- The objective of intervention is to protect the growers of these commodities from making distress sale in the event of a bumper crop during the peak arrival period when the prices tend to fall below economic levels and cost of production.

National Bamboo Mission (NBM)

- To increase the area under bamboo plantation in non-forest Government and private lands to supplement farm income and contribute towards resilience to climate change as well as availability of quality raw material requirement of industries.

National beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)

- A National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM) has been launched in 2020 as part of the AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. Rs. 500 crore for the period 2020-2021 to 2022-2023 has been allocated for beekeeping sector.

Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region

- The MOVCDNER scheme aims at development of commodity specific, concentrated, certified organic production clusters in value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of entire value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification, to the creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing and brand building initiative in Northeast Region

OS Maya

- The Defence Ministry switched to Operating System Maya in all their computers in place of the Microsoft OS to prevent cyber and malware attacks.
- OS Maya was built locally based on open-source Ubuntu.
- Maya has the interface and all functionality like Windows and users will not feel much difference as they transition to it.
- To begin with, the direction is to install Maya on all computers connected to the Internet in South Block before August 15.
- A Chakravyuh will also be installed in the systems to avail an 'end point detection and protection system'.
- The OS Maya is being installed on the computers of the Defence Ministry only and not on the rest of the Services.
- Indian Navy has decided to install Maya OS in their systems while the Army and the Air Force are evaluating it.

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)

- The *National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority* (*NPPA*), under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, fixes retail rates of 44 formulations
- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has fixed the prices under the Drugs (Price Control) Order, 2013

- It is a government regulatory agency established with the aim of controlling and regulating the prices of pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices in the country to ensure their availability at affordable rates.
- It was constituted vide Government of India Resolution dated 29th August 1997 as an attached office of the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP),Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.

Functions of NPPA

- To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order in accordance with the powers delegated to it.
- To deal with all legal matters arising out of the decisions of the Authority.
- To monitor the availability of drugs, identify shortages, if any, and to take remedial steps.
- To collect/ maintain data on production, exports and imports, market share of individual companies, profitability of companies etc, for bulk drugs and formulations.
- To undertake and/ or sponsor relevant studies in respect of pricing of drugs/ pharmaceuticals.
- To recruit/ appoint the officers and other staff members of the Authority, as per rules and procedures laid down by the Government.
- To render advice to the Central Government on changes/ revisions in the drug policy.
- To render assistance to the Central Government in the parliamentary matters relating to drug pricing.

Bulk Drugs

- An *Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient* (*API*), often *known* as a *bulk drug*, is the vital *component* of a *medicine* that *gives* it the *desired* therapeutic effect. For example, paracetamol is a bulk drug, which acts against pain.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has successfully orchestrated the export of the maiden trial shipment of fresh pomegranates to the United States via the air route.
- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in December, 1985.
- It works under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Its objective is to develop and promote the export of scheduled products.
- The products specified under the APEDA ACT are called scheduled products, and exporters of such scheduled products are required to register under APEDA.
- It provides financial assistance, information, and guidelines for the development of scheduled products.

Indian Space Policy 2023

- The Indian Space Policy – 2023 has been approved and released in the public domain.
- The Policy opens up the sector for enhanced participation of Non-Government Entities (NGEs) across the entire value chain of the space economy, while clearly delineating the roles of various stakeholders viz. IN-SPACe, ISRO, NSIL and DOS.
- The Government has set up the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) as a single-window agency for promotion and authorization of space activities.
- The Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory – India (LIGO-India) project has been approved by the Government of India at an estimated cost of Rs. 2600 Crore, with Department of Atomic Energy as the Lead Agency.
- After completion of the project, the LIGO-India will be operated as a national facility for detecting Gravitation Waves and Research in related areas of Astronomy.

Technology Development Board Signs Agreement with Private Company

- The Technology Development Board penned an agreement with Bangalore-based M/s TIEA Connectors Private Limited under the initiative "Commercialization of Indigenous Technologies through Tech Start-ups".
- The Board has pledged a support of Rs. 3.81 crore out of the total project cost of Rs. 8.19 crore for the project "Commercialization of micro-electronic harsh environment connectors and terminals".
- The start-up has graduated from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore incubator, the Society for Innovation and Development (SID-IISc).
- TDB launched the initiative "Commercialization of Indigenous Technologies through Tech Start-ups" with the goal of supporting the development of indigenous technologies and promoting entrepreneurship and innovation.

Technology Development Board (TDB)

- The Government of India constituted the Technology Development Board (TDB) in September 1996, under the Technology Development Board Act, 1995, as a statutory body, to promote development and commercialization of indigenous technology and adaptation of imported technology for wider application. The board consists of 11 Board members.
- The TDB is the first organization of its kind within the government framework with the sole objective of commercializing the fruit of indigenous research.
- The Board plays a pro-active role by encouraging enterprises to take up technology oriented products.
- Provides equity capital or loans to industrial concerns and financial assistance to research and development institutions.

Industrial Corridor Projects

- The government of India is developing eleven (11) Industrial Corridor Projects as part of the National Industrial Corridor Programme across the country in a phased manner.

- The Government of India, through National Industrial Corridor Development & Implementation Trust (NICDIT), provides funds as equity/debt for the development of world-class trunk infrastructure in the industrial nodes/regions under industrial corridors and the States are responsible for making available contiguous and encumbrance free land parcels.

The following 11 industrial corridors are being developed by Government of India in a phased manner:

1. Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)
2. Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC)
3. Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC)
4. East Coast Industrial Corridor (ECIC) with Vizag Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC)
5. Bengaluru Mumbai Industrial Corridor (BMIC)
6. Extension of CBIC to Kochi via Coimbatore
7. Hyderabad Nagpur Industrial Corridor (HNIC)
8. Hyderabad Warangal Industrial Corridor (HWIC)
9. Hyderabad Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (HBIC)
10. Odisha Economic Corridor (OEC)
11. Delhi Nagpur Industrial Corridor (DNIC)

Technology Development Fund Scheme

- The Technology Development Fund (TDF) Scheme has adopted a flexible funding approach for applicants to encourage participation.
- The government has allocated a total of Rs 260 crore under the TDF Scheme, since its inception from 2016 and Rs 64.35 crore has been disbursed as a grant-in-aid to industries for development of defence technologies.
- The Government provides support to the private industries especially MSMEs and start-ups through TDF Scheme.
- Technology Development Fund Scheme is a program of Ministry of Defence (MoD) executed by DRDO under "Make-in-India" initiative.
- The Government has approved TDF Scheme to encourage participation of public/private industries especially MSMEs and start-ups to design and develop various defence technologies indigenously.
- A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of TDF scheme has been formulated and approved by Competent Authority in 2016.
- The SOP describes about the evaluation and assessment criteria.
- A total of 41 MSMEs and 20 start-ups have been supported under the TDF Scheme.

New Soil Health Card Scheme

Under Soil Health Cards (SHCs) Scheme introduced in the year 2014-15, a massive programme of soil sampling, testing, and generation of SHCs was launched to assist State Governments to issue soil health cards to all farmers in the country.

- Soil health card provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.
- Now, Government of India has made some technological interventions in New Soil Health Card Scheme.
- The Soil Health Card portal has been revamped and integrated with a Geographic Information System (GIS) system so that all the test results are captured and seen on a map.
- Soil Health Card scheme has been merged in Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) cafeteria scheme as its one component under name 'Soil Health & Fertility' from the year 2022-23.

Digi Yatra to be Launched at 6 more Airports

- Digi Yatra facility will be launched at 6 more airports namely Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kochi, Lucknow, Jaipur, and Guwahati airports in the month of August 2023.
- The implementation and installation of Digi Yatra infrastructure at these airports will take place in a phased manner.
- Digi Yatra is a mobile application-based facility conceived to achieve contactless, seamless processing of passengers at airports based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT).
- It helps travelers pass through various checkpoints at the airports through paperless and contactless processing using facial features to validate their identity and travel details.
- In the Digi Yatra process, there is no central storage of passenger's Personally Identifiable Information (PII) data.
- All the passengers' data is encrypted and stored in the wallet of their smartphone. It is shared only between the passenger and the airport of travel origin, where the passenger's Digi Yatra ID needs to be validated.
- The data is purged from the airport's system within 24 hours of departure of the flight. The data is shared by passengers directly, only when they travel and only to the origin Airport.

PM Vishwakarma Scheme

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister approved a new Central Sector Scheme "PM Vishwakarma" with a financial outlay of Rs.13,000 crore for a period of five years (FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28).
- The scheme aims to strengthen and nurture the Guru-Shishya parampara or family-based practice of traditional skills by artisans and craftspeople working with their hands and tools.
- The scheme also aims at improving the quality, as well as the reach of products and services of artisans and craftspeople and to ensure that the Vishwakarmas are integrated with the domestic and global value chains.
- Under PM Vishwakarma scheme, the artisans and craftspeople will be provided recognition through PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card, Credit Support upto Rs.1 lakh (First Tranche) and Rs.2 lakh (Second Tranche) with a concessional interest rate of 5%.
- The Scheme will further provide Skill Upgradation, Toolkit Incentive, Incentive for Digital Transactions and Marketing Support.

- The scheme will provide support to artisans and craftspeople of rural and urban areas across India.
- Eighteen traditional trades will be covered in the first instance under PM Vishwakarma.

International Youth Day 2023

- International Youth Day (IYD) is an awareness day designated by the United Nations.
- The purpose of the day is to draw attention to a given set of cultural and legal issues surrounding youth.
- Endorsed by the United Nations in 1999 after a recommendation was made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, the first International Youth Day was observed on 12 August, 2000.
- Theme 2023 - Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable World

UDGAM (Unclaimed Deposits – Gateway to Access Information)

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched a centralised web portal called UDGAM (Unclaimed Deposits – Gateway to Access Information) which allows people to search for their unclaimed deposits across multiple banks.
- Through the new portal, users will be able to identify their unclaimed deposits or accounts and then either claim the deposit amount or make their deposit accounts operative again.
- According to the central bank, an increasing trend has been observed in the amount of unclaimed deposits and the RBI has been undertaking several campaigns to raise awareness about it.
- The UDGAM Portal aims to empower users to identify their unclaimed deposits/accounts and provides options to either claim the deposit amount or reactivate their dormant accounts.
- Reserve Bank Information Technology Pvt Ltd (ReBIT), Indian Financial Technology & Allied Services (IFTAS), and participating banks joined hands to develop the UDGAM Portal

Know about unclaimed deposits

- RBI describes unclaimed deposits as "balances in savings/current accounts which are not operated for 10 years, or term deposits not claimed within 10 years from date of maturity".
- These unclaimed deposits are transferred by the respective banks to the Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) fund, which is maintained by RBI.
- People can still claim their deposits from the banks along with the interest.

ReBIT (Reserve Bank Information Technology Pvt. Ltd.)

- It is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- It has been set up to take care of the IT requirements, including the cyber security needs of the RBI and its regulated entities.
- ReBIT focuses on IT and cyber security (including related research) of the financial sector and assists in IT systems audit and assessment of the RBI regulated entities.
- ReBIT advise, implement and manage internal or system-wide IT projects (both the existing and new) of the RBI as mutually decided between the Reserve Bank and ReBIT.

- ReBIT serves as a catalyst for innovation, big systems, and new ideas, in addition to guiding regulated entities in the IT areas of their operations and the RBI's IT-related functions and initiatives.

World Lion Day 2023

- World Lion Day is observed on August 10 each year on a global scale to raise awareness about their conservation and protection.
- The day serves as a platform to educate people about the challenges faced by the lions across the world and to promote efforts to conserve them as well as to celebrate these majestic big cats and their significance in ecosystems and cultures around the world.
- World Lion Day was first established in 2013 by Big Cat Rescue, the world's largest accredited sanctuary dedicated to lions and it was co-founded by Dereck and Beverly Joubert, a husband-and-wife team who recognised the need to draw attention to the declining lion populations and the threats they were facing in the wild.
- In 2009, the Jouberts approached "National Geographic" and formed a partnership with them to come up with the Big Cat Initiative (B.C.I.).
- Later in 2013, they began the initiative to bring together both National Geographic and the Big Cat Initiative under a single banner to protect the remaining big cats living in the wild and since then, World Lion Day is observed annually on August 10
- According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, lions are classified as a "vulnerable" species, indicating that their numbers could and should be higher.
- Current estimates by researchers suggest that there are 30,000 to 100,000 lions remaining on Earth.
- Lions have found a natural habitat in India, resulting in a consistent rise in their population within the nation, particularly in the Gir Forest.
- This forest serves as the second-largest habitat for these majestic creatures outside of Africa.
- The population of Asiatic lions has steadily grown in Gujarat's Gir forest and the broader Saurashtra protected area.
- The lion population escalated from 523 to 674 individuals between the years 2015 and 2020.

Lion subspecies

- In the wild, there are two formally recognised lion subspecies.
- The African lion (Panthera leo leo) is found in Africa, south of the Sahara desert.
- *African lions* used to be spread across most of the continent, but now are only found in sub-Saharan Africa, with 80% in eastern or southern Africa.
- The Asiatic lion (Panthera leo persica) exists in one small population around Gir Forest National Park in western India.Since the turn of the 20th century, its range has been restricted to Gir National Park and the surrounding areas in the Indian state of Gujarat.
- Conservation status: Endangered

World Elephant Day 2023

- World Elephant Day, celebrated on August 12, is an international annual event, dedicated to the preservation and protection of the world's elephants.
- The goal of World Elephant Day is to create awareness on elephant conservation, and to share knowledge and positive solutions for the better protection and management of wild and captive elephants

World Elephant Day -History

- On August 12, 2012, Patricia Sims, a Canadian, and the Elephant Reintroduction Foundation of Thailand, an initiative of HM Queen Sirikit of Thailand, co-founded World Elephant Day.
- Patricia Sims has continued to oversee World Elephant Day ever since.
- It has partnered with 100 elephant conservation organisations globally since its beginning and has reached countless people all over the world.

About Indian elephant

- The Indian elephant (Elephas maximus indicus) is one of three extant recognised subspecies of the Asian elephant and native to mainland Asia
- Since 1986, the Asian elephant has been listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List as the wild population has declined by at least 50% since the 1930s to 1940s, i.e. three elephant generations.
- The Asian elephant is threatened by habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation.
- In general, Asian elephants are smaller than African elephants and have the highest body point on the head.

Status of elephants

- Elephant (Elephas maximus) is the largest terrestrial mammal of India.
- It is a keystone species affecting habitats and ecosystems in significant ways, ensuring ecological balance and resulting ecosystem services for human well-being.
- Elephants are referred to as ecosystem engineers due to their transformative role in the ecosystems
- The Elephant is recognised as a National Heritage animal and is deeply rooted in our culture.
- The current population estimates indicate that there are about 50,000 -60000 Asian elephants in the world.
- India holds by far the largest number of wild Asian Elephants, estimated at about 29,964, this is nearly 60% of the population of the species.
- The Elephant is placed under Schedule I and Part I of the Indian Wild Life Protection Act (1972), which confers it the highest level of protection.
- Indian Elephant has also been listed in the Appendix I of the Convention of the Migratory species in the Conference of Parties of CMS
- Asian elephants are listed as "Endangered" on the IUCN Red List of threatened species.
- India has the largest number of wild Asian Elephants, estimated at 29,964 according to 2017 census by Project Elephant, i.e. about 60% of the species' global population.

- Loss of natural habitat and fragmentation have been bringing wild elephants closer to human habitations, sparking these conflicts.
- Over 500 humans are killed in encounters with elephants annually, and crops and property worth millions are also damaged.

Measures taken for protection of Elephants

- Project Elephant: Project Elephant was launched in 1991-92 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change.
- Elephant Reserves: Elephant Reserve is a management entity notified by the State Governments as per recommendation of Govt. of India. It includes Protected Areas, forest areas, corridors and private/reserve lands.
- Elephant Corridors of India: Is prepared by the Project Elephant. The report is an outcome of ground-validation of all the indentified elephant corridors in India in coordination with the State Forest Departments of the elephant range states.
- Gaj Gaurav awards: Awards given to recognise exemplary contributions in the field of elephant conservation and management.
- Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme – MIKE: The program started in South Asia in the year 2003 with following purpose — To provide information needed for elephant range States to make appropriate management and enforcement decisions

Indian Flying Fox Bat

- A new study found that India's largest species of bats, Indian Flying Fox bat spends 7% of its day-roosting time being environmentally vigilant.
- The Indian flying fox (Pteropus medius, formerly Pteropus giganteus), also known as the greater Indian fruit bat, is a species of flying fox native to the Indian subcontinent.
- It is one of the largest bats in the world.
- It is generally considered vermin as they raid orchards.
- It is a keystone species causing seed dispersals of many plants in tropical systems.
- These bats are endemic to South Central Asia, found from Pakistan and China to the Maldives Islands.
- These bats live in a 'vertical', male-dominated hierarchy system, where higher-ranked individuals occupy higher spots of the tree, while lower-ranked individuals remain on lower spots.

Lakhpati Didi Scheme

- The government is planning skill development training for two crore women under the 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme that aims to encourage them to start micro-enterprises
- The 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme has been in place in some states and now the government is planning to train two crore women under it.
- The official also said that women would be trained in skills like plumbing, LED bulb making and operating and repairing drones among others.

- Such skill training will be provided to women through the scheme so that they can earn at least Rs 1 lakh annually.
- The government will provide drones to thousands of women self-help groups and 15,000 women self-help groups will be given loans and training to operate and repair drones.
- These drone services will be available for agriculture work as well as create substantial employment generation and agribusiness opportunities in rural areas.

A-HELP Programme

- The Union Minister for Animal Husbandry and Dairying has unveiled the 'A-HELP' (Accredited Agent for Health and Extension of Livestock Production) programme
- The 'A-HELP' programme aims to empower women by engaging them as trained agents who contribute significantly to disease control, artificial insemination under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM), animal tagging, and livestock insurance.
- Pahudhan Jagriti Abhiyaan under Inclusive Development stand as a tribute to the ongoing Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, celebrating the spirit of freedom and progress.
- The crux of this campaign lies in equipping farmers with knowledge and resources that address critical areas of livestock health, disease management, and animal infertility

National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS)

- Union Home Minister congratulated the team of National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) of NCRB for winning the Gold Award under the Excellence in Government Process Reengineering for Digital Transformation Category-1 of Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).
- Conceptualized and managed by the NCRB at the Central Fingerprint Bureau (CFPB) in New Delhi, the National Automated Fingerprints Identification System (NAFIS) project is a country-wide searchable database of crime- and criminal-related fingerprints.
- The web-based application functions as a central information repository by consolidating fingerprint data from all states and Union Territories. According to a 2020 report by the NCRB, it enables law enforcement agencies to upload, trace, and retrieve data from the database in real time on a 24×7 basis.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs has provided NAFIS devices to all Districts, Police Commissionerate, Central and State Fingerprint Bureaus and Central agencies like NIA, CBI and NCB.
- NAFIS has revolutionized the fingerprint recognition system in crime control.
- NAFIS has created a central database of fingerprints of criminals, which can be accessed by users from all States, Union Territories and Central Agencies.
- NAFIS assigns a unique 10-digit National Fingerprint Number (NFN) to each person arrested for a crime.
- This unique ID will be used for the person's lifetime, and different crimes registered under different FIRs will be linked to the same NFN.
- The 2020 report states that the ID's first two digits will be that of the state code in which the person arrested for a crime is registered, followed by a sequence number.

- By automating the collection, storage, and matching of fingerprints, along with digitizing the records of fingerprint data, NAFIS will "provide the much-needed unique identifier for every arrested person in the CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems) database as both are connected at the backend.

Cabinet Approves PM-eBus Sewa

- The Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved a bus scheme "PM-eBus Sewa" for augmenting city bus operation by 10,000 e-buses on PPP model.
- The Scheme would have an estimated cost of Rs.57,613 crore, out of which support of Rs.20,000 crore will be provided by the Central government.
- The Scheme will support bus operations for 10 years.

Reaching the Unreached

- The scheme will cover cities of Three lakh and above population as per census 2011 including all the Capital cities of Union Territories, North Eastern Region and Hill States.
- Under this scheme priority will be given to cities having no organized bus service.

Direct Employment Generation

- The scheme will generate 45,000 to 55,000 direct jobs through deployment of around 10,000 buses in city bus operation.

The Scheme has two segments:

Segment A – Augmenting the City bus services:(169 cities)

- The approved bus scheme will augment city bus operations with 10,000 e-buses on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.

Segment B– Green Urban Mobility Initiatives (GUMI): (181 cities)

- The scheme envisages green initiatives like bus priority, infrastructure, multimodal interchange facilities, NCMC-based Automated Fare Collection Systems, Charging infrastructure, etc.

Boost to E-Mobility

- The scheme will promote e-mobility and provide full support for behind-the-meter power infrastructure.
- Cities will also be supported for development of charging infrastructure under Green Urban Mobility Initiatives.
- The support to bus priority infrastructure shall not only accelerate the proliferation of state-of-the-art, energy efficient electric buses but also foster the innovation in the e-mobility sector as well as development of resilient supply chain for electric vehicles.
- This scheme shall also bring in economies of scale for the procurement of electric buses through aggregation for e-buses.
- Adoption to Electric mobility will reduce noise and air pollution and curb carbon emissions.
- Modal shift due to increased share of bus-based public transportation will lead to GHG reduction.

Operation Jericho

- The use of air power in Mizoram in 1966 became a hot topic of discussion after Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned it in the Lok Sabha while replying to the no-confidence motion

Mizo Rebellion

- In the first two months of 1966, a separatist movement led by Mizo National Front (MNF) was gathering steam in the area now known as Mizoram, and then referred to as the Mizo Hills.
- The Mizo Rebellion of 1966, also known as Operation Jericho, witnessed the Indian Air Force's strategic involvement in aiding the Army's efforts to quell the separatist movement led by the Mizo National Front.
- As the rebels sought to gain control over Mizoram, the IAF played a crucial role in regaining control.
- Two IAF Squadrons, 29 Squadron and 14 Squadron, were instrumental in the air operations, utilizing aircraft like Toofani and Hunters.
- The air attacks, utilizing cannons and rockets, helped the Army regain strategic areas that had declared "independence."
- The IAF's partnership with the Army in this conflict showcases its versatility and vital role in complex military operations.

Expansion of the Digital India Programme

- The Digital India programme was launched on 1st July 2015 to enable digital delivery of services to citizens.
- The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister approved the expansion of the Digital India programme. The total outlay is ₹14,903 crores.

This would enable the following:

- 6.25 lakh IT professionals will be re-skilled and up-skilled under the FutureSkills Prime Programme;
- 2.65 lakh persons will be trained in information security under the Information Security & Education Awareness Phase (ISEA) Programme;
- 540 additional services will be available under the Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG) app/ platform. At present over 1,700 services are already available on UMANG;
- 9 more supercomputers will be added under National Super Computer Mission. This is in addition to 18 supercomputers already deployed;
- Bhashini, the AI-enabled multi-language translation tool (currently available in 10 languages) will be rolled out in all 22 schedule 8 languages;
- Modernisation of the National Knowledge Network (NKN) which connects 1,787 educational institutions;
- Digital document verification facility under DigiLocker will now be available to MSMEs and other organisations;

- 1,200 startups will be supported in Tier 2/3 cities;
- 3 Centres of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence on health, agriculture and sustainable cities will be set up;
- Cyber-awareness courses for 12 crores college students;
- New initiatives in the area of cyber security including development of tools and integration of more than 200 sites with National Cyber Coordination Centre

Barh Super Thermal Power Project

- The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy dedicated to the nation a 660 MW unit of NTPC's Barh Super Thermal Power Project in Barh, Bihar on August 18, 2023.
- The 660 MW unit being inaugurated is Unit #2 of Stage I of the project.
- The commissioning of this unit would be another milestone in the government's endeavour to provide reliable and affordable power to the nation.
- This sub-station has been built by Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- As part of the project, 220 kV GIS will be constructed in existing sub-station premises along with the installation of 2 transformers of 500 MVA capacity.

Exercise Tarang Shakti

- The Indian Air Force is preparing to conduct a multi-national exercise Tarang Shakti that aims to bring together air forces of several countries.
- The exercise that was earlier scheduled to be held later this year will now be conducted next year.
- The exercise, which had originally been planned for the latter part of this year, has been rescheduled to next year, to better align with the schedules of the participating friendly foreign countries and to ensure maximum participation.
- This would also enable the inclusion of certain Air Forces who have evinced an interest in the exercise
- India has participated in many such exercises including the French Orion exercise held at the Mon De Marsan air base in France.

Common Testing Centre for Unmanned Aerial Systems (drones)

- The country's first common testing centre for unmanned aerial systems (drones) will be established in Tamil Nadu at an outlay of Rs 45 crore
- Under the Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS), the facility will come up over 2.3 acres at the SIPCOT industrial park in Vallam Vadagal near Sriperumbudur.
- Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) is the nodal agency for implementing the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor (TNDIC).
- It noted that the absence of test centres supporting the aerospace and defence standards outside defence public sector undertakings or Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

is an entry barrier for many organisations. TIDCO planned to lower this barrier by establishing test centres for multiple sub-domains, including unmanned aerial systems (UAS)

- The testing for UAS (drone) is currently done component-wise at different test centres which reduces the efficiencies of the organisations and also increases the cost.
- Such an integrated facility is available only with DRDO at Chitradurga, Karnataka, for its own use

G20-Digital Innovation Alliance (G20-DIA)

- Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Electronics and IT, inaugurated the G20-Digital Innovation Alliance Summit, being held in Bengaluru
- The two-day Summit, being held on sidelines of the Fourth meeting of DEWG under G20, will be attended by global experts and digital leaders including representatives from other G20 countries.
- The Summit will have focused discussions on 'Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)', 'Security in the Digital Economy', 'Digital Skilling ' etc.
- The Minister will also inaugurate an innovation exhibition, that has been put up by corporates and startups, on the sidelines of the Summit.
- As part of India's G20 Presidency, G20 Digital Innovation Alliance (G20-DIA) initiative was launched under MeitY Startup Hub.
- It recognizes and accelerates the growth of startups from all G20 countries and nine invited guest countries in six sectors – Ed-tech, Health-tech, Agri-tech, Fin-tech, Secured Digital Infrastructure, and Circular Economy that are using digital technologies to solve humanity's most pressing needs.
- A total of 174 startups from 29 countries are part of the program.
- These startups will pitch to a jury of global leaders at the G20-DIA Summit.
- The Summit culminated on August 18 with an awards ceremony in which 30 startups will be honoured in various categories.

Navroz

- The festival of Navroz, also known by the names of Nowruz or Parsi New Year, which is celebrated by the ethnoreligious group of Parsi people adhering to Zoroastrianism, marks the beginning of spring and the renewal of nature.
- The Parsi community in India celebrates Navroz nearly 200 days after the rest of the world as it follows the Shahenshahi calendar.
- Nowruz for India falls in July or August and this year Parsi New Year is observed on August 16
- Rooted in Zoroastrianism, the festival is celebrated in many countries which have Persian cultural influence like India, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and parts of Central Asia.
- On this day, Parsis in India clean their homes, decorate it, wear new clothes, pray to God for happiness and prosperity and invite friends over for a good time and hearty meal
- Navroz is believed to be 3000 years old festival and emerged from one of world's oldest religions Zoroastrianism.

- Zoroastrians believe it is the time of spiritual renewal and physical rejuvenation.
- Parsi New Year is also related to the life of Jamshid, a Persian king of mythology.
- In India, it is believed that souls of the dead return to earth to see their loved ones.

International Conference on 'Preserving Information Integrity and Public Trust in Elections'

- The Election Commissioner of India, Arun Goel, attended an international conference in Brasilia, Brazil, focused on "Preserving Information Integrity and Public Trust in Elections."
- Hosted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, Brazil, the conference aimed to address challenges related to information integrity in the digital age.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

- IFES advances democracy for a better future.
- IFES collaborates with civil society, public institutions, and the private sector to build resilient democracies that deliver for everyone.
- It is a global leader in the promotion and protection of democracy, technical assistance and applied research develop trusted electoral bodies capable of conducting credible elections; effective and accountable governing stakeholders; civic and political processes in which all people can safely and equally participate; and innovative ways in which technology and data can positively serve elections and democracy.
- Since 1987, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries, from developing to mature democracies.
- IFES is a global, nonpartisan organization based in Arlington, Virginia, USA, and registered as a nonprofit organization under the United States tax code.

Triton Island

- China appears to be constructing an airstrip on a disputed South China Sea island that is also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan
- The work on Triton island in the Paracel group mirrors construction on seven human-made islands in the Spratly group to the east which have been equipped with airstrips, docks and military systems
- Triton Island, part of the Paracel group, has seen previous tensions as China vies for control over the region.
- Triton is one of the major islands in the Paracel group, which is roughly equidistant from the coast of Vietnam and China's island province of Hainan.
- China's militarization efforts extend to the Spratly group as well, with built-up artificial islands containing airstrips and military facilities.
- The construction of the airstrip adds to concerns over China's expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Spratly Islands

- The Spratly Islands are a disputed archipelago in the South China Sea.

- Composed of islands, islets, cays, and more than 100 reefs, sometimes grouped in submerged old atolls, the archipelago lies off the coasts of the Philippines, Malaysia, and southern Vietnam.
- Named after the 19th-century British whaling captain Richard Spratly who sighted Spratly Island in 1843, the islands contain less than 2 km2 (490 acres) of naturally occurring land area, which is spread over an area of more than 425,000 km2
- The Spratly Islands are one of the major archipelagos in the South China Sea
- The islands are largely uninhabited, but offer rich fishing grounds and may contain significant oil and natural gas reserves

Paracel Islands

- The archipelago includes about 130 small coral islands and reefs, most grouped into the northeastern Amphitrite Group or the western Crescent Group.

Shivshakti Point

- The Prime Minister of India recently visited the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking, and Command Network Mission Control Complex in Bengaluru

- In August 2023, the location on the Moon's South Pole where Chandrayaan-3 successfully touched down will bear the title "Shivshakti Point," while the area where the Chandrayaan-2 lander unfortunately crashed in 2019 will now be referred to as "Tiranga Point."

- Prime Minister Modi further announced that August 23, the date of Chandrayaan-3's landing, will be designated as National Space Day in India.

Shivshakti Point

- The naming choice draws from Hindu mythology, where the term "Shivshakti" finds its roots.

- Prime Minister Modi highlighted the inherent connection between humanitarian determination and the concept of Shiva.

- He pointed out that from Shakti arises the capability to actualize these humanitarian ambitions.

- The "Shakti" component within "Shiv Shakti" is a tribute to the diligence, inspiration, and empowerment of women scientists.

- The 'Shiv Shakti' point holds immense significance for humanity and space exploration as this is the first time any country has reached the far side of the Moon.

- The data gathered by Vikram Lander and the Pragyan rover will be key to understanding the atmospheric composition of the moon, its surface and other details about its environment.

Chandrayaan-3 mission

- India accomplished a significant breakthrough by successfully guiding the Chandrayaan-3 lander module to a successful landing on the Moon's South Pole.

- This achievement marks India as the inaugural nation to attain this historic milestone, putting an end to the previous setback experienced with the Chandrayaan-2 crash landing four years ago.
- This achievement solidifies India's position as the fourth nation, following the United States, China, and Russia, to have achieved a triumphant landing on the lunar surface.

How are points on lunar surface named?

- The International Astronomical Union (IAU), founded in 1919, is the nodal body to standardise the nomenclature of celestial objects, its website states.
- It has various task forces such as an executive committee, divisions, commissions, and working groups, which comprise professional astronomers from across the world.
- When the first images of the surface of a planet or satellite are obtained, new themes for naming features are chosen and names of a few important features are proposed, usually by the appropriate IAU Task Group in collaboration with the mission team.
- After following the protocols, the IAU's Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature (WGPSN) ultimately approves proposed names in these cases.
- Upon successful review by vote of the members of the WGPSN, the proposed names are considered approved as official IAU nomenclature, and then used on maps and in publications
- Earlier in 2020, a Moon crater spotted by Chandrayaan-2, was named after Vikram Sarabhai, the father of the Indian space programme.
- Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter captured the images of 'Sarabhai Crater' which has a depth of around 1.7 kilometres

White Tigress SITA's twin cubs, Avni and Vyom

- National Zoological Park celebrated the first birthday of the adorable white tigress SITA's twin cubs, Avni and Vyom
- At present National Zoological Park have 12 numbers of tigers of 02 varieties, and among these there are 7 normal coloured Royal Bengal Tigers (*Panthera tigris tigris*) and 5 White Tigers (*Panthera tigris tigris color_mutation*).

About White Tiger

- The white tiger or bleached tiger is a leucistic pigmentation variant of the mainland Asian tiger.
- It is reported in the wild from time to time in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, in the Sunderbans region and especially in the former State of Rewa.
- It has the typical black stripes of a tiger, but its coat is otherwise white or near-white.

Dadi Prakashmani

- The President of India, released a postage stamp in memory of Dadi Prakashmani, former chief of Brahma Kumaris
- This stamp was released under the 'My Stamp' initiative of the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications to mark the 16th death anniversary of Dadi Prakashmani.
- Dadi Prakashmani was a pioneer for all women.
- She was the leader of a spiritual organization primarily run and managed by women at a time when women did not have an equal status in society.
- She was the Administrative Head of Brahma Kumaris from 1969 until 2007.
- Her exceptional leadership was displayed by the practical fact that during her lifetime, the organization expanded from 1 country to 120 countries with over 5,000 centres and sub-centres around the world.
- She headed the Brahma Kumaris movement, the world's largest spiritual organisation run by women.
- Dadi Janki was 21 years old when she chose her spiritual path and became a founding member of Brahma Kumaris.

International Conference on Structural Integrity (ICONS 2023)

- The Third International Conference on Structural Integrity (ICONS 2023) was inaugurated at Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu
- ICONS 2023 is jointly organized by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam and the Society for Failure Analysis, in association with Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Indian Society for Non-destructive Testing, Kalpakkam Chapter, Indian Institute of Metals Kalpakkam Chapter and Indian Structural Integrity Society.

- ICONS 2023 is attended by around 250 delegates from India and abroad comprising of mechanical engineers, materials scientists, academicians, industry experts, plant managers and regulatory personnel.

- The conference will be deliberating on various topics related to recent development and future directions in assessing and ensuring structural integrity of structures and operating equipments in nuclear, defense, aerospace, chemical and oil industries.

Project AMBER

Accelerated Mission for Better
Employment and Retention

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with Generation India Foundation (GIF) and Amazon Web Services India Private Limited (AWS India) is providing 'cloud' skills training to 1,500 learners and connecting them to employment opportunities, under project AMBER.

- The initiative has been undertaken under the SANKALP programme of MSDE with a focus on women to improve gender diversification in the tech industry and underprivileged groups.

- Projects like AMBER, which is a joint initiative of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) – under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) - and GIF create the necessary avenues.

- Co-funded by MSDE (under the SANKALP program) and private philanthropy, project AMBER aims to train 30,000 youth, 50% of whom will be women.

- Project AMBER (Accelerated Mission for Better Employment and Retention) is a joint initiative of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Generation India Foundation (GIF) under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

- This project is co-funded by MSDE (under the SANKALP programme) and private philanthropy and aims to train 30,000 youth, 50% of whom will be women trainees.

- The training will be conducted in post-COVID resilient job roles, over a period of two years.

- Generation's holistic 7-step skilling methodology will be utilised to drive higher quality skilling, improved employment, and retention outcomes.

About SANKALP

- Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion ("SANKALP") is a programme of the Ministry of Skill Development with loan assistance from the World Bank.

- It aims to improve short term skill training qualitatively and quantitatively through strengthening institutions, bring in better market connectivity, and inclusion of marginalised sections of the society.

- SANKALP was launched on 19th January 2018 and has a tenure till March 2023.

Generation India Foundation

- It is a not-for-profit founded by McKinsey & Company in 2014.
- Generation is a global youth employment program that connects unemployed and underemployed young adults with skills and jobs, and helps provide high-quality entry-level talent for employers.
- It has become the world's largest demand driven skilling initiative, with 50,000+ graduates spread across 16 countries.
- Generation is pioneering a new way to build skills and job-readiness – and applying it in high-growth industries around the world.

Kumbhalgarh as a Tiger Reserve

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) cleared the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)'s in-principle approval to declare Kumbhalgarh as a tiger reserve.
- It is located in the Rajsamand District of Rajasthan State in western India.
- The wildlife sanctuary surrounds the Kumbhalgarh fortress
- The sanctuary extends across the Aravalli Range, covering parts of Rajsamand, Udaipur, and Pali districts, ranging from 500 to 1,300 metres in elevation.
- It is part of the Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion.
- It acts as a dividing line between Mewar and Marwar, two different parts of Rajasthan.
- River Banas also graces the sanctuary and is the primary source of water.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was established in December 2005, following a recommendation of the Tiger Task Force
- The Prime Minister of India established it to reorganise the management of Project Tiger and India's many Tiger Reserves in India.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has been constituted under section 38 L (1) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Further, as per the section 38 L, sub section 2 of the said Act, the authority consists of the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Chairperson), the Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Vice-Chairperson), three members of Parliament, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests and other members.
- The authority derives its power from section 38 O (1) of WLPA, 1972 and functions under the guidance of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and members.

Ni-Kshay Mitra

- As part of the Indian Air Force's endeavour to contribute towards social causes that foster nation building, the service has committed its involvement in the "Ni-kshay Mitra" scheme.

- This is an initiative under the "Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMBA), implemented by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare that seeks to eliminate TB by 2025 - five years ahead of the global goal of 2030.
- First articulated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2018, "Ni-kshay Mitra" is an initiative that provides for additional diagnostic, nutritional, and vocational support by elected representatives, corporates, organisations, NGOs, and individuals to those undergoing TB treatment.
- This in turn, would help them on their journey towards a successful recovery.
- The IAF has committed to support 765 patients undergoing treatment in the State of Delhi for a duration of six months.

About TB

- Tuberculosis commonly known as TB is a highly infectious disease caused by a bacterium known as Mycobacterium Tuberculosis.
- It is an airborne disease that spreads from one person to the other through coughing, sneezing, or talking.
- Under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), patients are supported with free diagnostics and medicines.
- The goal of elimination seems to be impracticable without community participation.
- Active community participation plays a vital role in the TB elimination goal.
- On the 9th of September 2022, the Hon'ble President of India launched a nationwide campaign of PMTBMBA.
- Under this programme a donor is called Nikshay-Mitra. Nikshay-Mitras can be Individuals, NGOs, Co-operative societies, Faith-based organizations, Cooperates, Political parties, and others.
- A Mitra can adopt a minimum of one consented TB patient on treatment for a minimum period of six months for any kind of support they want to give to the patient.

6th Census on Minor Irrigation Schemes

- The Ministry of Jal Shakti, Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation released the report on the 6th census on minor irrigation schemes.

Report Highlights

- As per the report, 23.14 million minor irrigation (MI) schemes have been reported in the country, out of which 21.93 million (94.8%) are Ground Water (GW) and 1.21 million (5.2%) are Surface Water (SW) schemes.
- Uttar Pradesh possesses the largest number of MI schemes in the country followed by Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- Leading States in GW schemes are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.
- In SW schemes Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Odisha and Jharkhand have the highest share.
- GW schemes comprise dugwells, shallow tube wells, medium tube wells and deep tube wells.
- The SW schemes comprise surface flow and surface lift schemes.
- There has been increase of about 1.42 million in MI schemes during 6th MI census as compared to 5th Census.
- Dug-wells have highest share in MI schemes followed by shallow tube-wells, medium tube-wells and deep tube-wells.
- Maharashtra is the leading State in dug-wells, surface flow and surface lift schemes.
- Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab are the leading States in shallow tube-wells, medium tube-wells and deep tube-wells, respectively.
- Out of all MI schemes, 97.0% are 'in use', 2.1% are 'temporarily not in use' whereas 0.9% are 'permanently not in use'.
- Shallow tube-wells and medium tube-wells lead in the category of 'in use' schemes.
- A majority of MI schemes (96.6%) are under private ownership.
- In GW schemes, the share of private entities in the ownership is 98.3% whereas in SW schemes the respective share is 64.2%.
- For the first time, the information about gender of the owner of MI scheme was also collected in case of individual ownership.
- Out of all the individually owned schemes, 18.1% are owned by women.

Census of minor irrigation schemes - other facts

- Government of India has been conducting census of minor irrigation schemes.
- So far, five censuses have been conducted with reference year 1986-87, 1993-94, 2000-01, 2006-07 and 2013-14 respectively.
- The 6th minor irrigation census with reference year 2017-18 was completed in 32 States/ UTs.
- The 6th MI census work was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The census work has been successfully completed now and the All India and State-wise report on 6thMI census has been published.

- The census was conducted under the centrally sponsored scheme "Irrigation Census".

State of India's Bird Report 2023

- The State of India's Birds 2023, report was released, which is based on 30 million observations contributed by 30,000 birdwatchers across the country to assess the survival of the birds in India.
- The State of India's Birds (SoIB) report showed worrisome declines, with 178 species of wild birds identified as needing immediate priority for conservation.
- The report analysed data collated from India's birdwatchers and conservation organisations on 942 bird species, including several previously thought to be common and widespread.
- It recommended an urgent reassessment of the status of 14 of these species, including the Indian roller, which is listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as being of "least concern".

Report Highlights

- It found that nearly 60% of the 348 species studied over a period of 25 years showed long-term declines, and 40% of the 359 species assessed over the short term (since 2015) had also declined.
- Raptor and duck populations had declined the most, while numbers of several common species, such as the great grey shrike, were also falling.
- Migratory birds were found to be declining more rapidly than non-migratory ones.
- Categorised by diet, carnivorous, insectivorous and grain-eating birds were found to have declined more rapidly than fruit- and nectar-eating types.
- Birds in specific habitats like grasslands and shrublands, classified in India as wastelands, had also declined more rapidly than those in open habitats.

Reasons For Decline of Birds

- land-use changes, urbanisation, ecosystem degradation, monocultures, infrastructure development, pollution and climate breakdown as threats. 90 are classified as globally of Least Concern by the IUCN Red List 2022.

SVAMITVA Scheme

- SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) Scheme of Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been conferred with the prestigious National Award for e-Governance 2023 (Gold) for Application of Emerging Technologies for Providing Citizen Centric Services at the 26th National Conference on e-Governance (NCeG) organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India

26th NCeG Highlights

- The two-day National Conference on e-Governance (NCeG) was organised on the theme '*Viksit Bharat, Empowering Citizens*' jointly by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India in collaboration with the Government of Madhya Pradesh

The National e-Governance Awards were presented under 5 categories viz.

1. Government process re-engineering for digital transformation
2. application of emerging technology for providing citizen-centric services
3. district-level initiative for e-Governance
4. research on citizen-centric services by academic and research institutions
5. application of emerging technology in e-Governance by start-ups.

- The 26th NCeG provided an appropriate platform for effective and meaningful brainstorming on the latest technologies for promoting e-Governance and for sharing knowledge and insights on the theme identified for the National e-Governance Conference.

SVAMITVA Scheme

- SVAMITVA Scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj provides ownership to property owners in village-inhabited area by using latest drone and GIS technology.
- The Property Cards facilitate monetization of rural residential assets for bank loan and other financial benefits and help in the settlement of land-related disputes through the preparation of 5cm accuracy maps.
- The Scheme is implemented with the collaborative efforts of Survey of India being the technology implementation partner, State Revenue and Panchayati Raj Departments, and NIC–GIS.

National Judicial Data Grid

- National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) is a database of orders, judgments and case details of 18,735 District & Subordinate Courts and High Courts created as an online platform under the eCourts Project.
- Data is updated on a near real-time basis by the connected District and Taluka courts.
- It provides data relating to judicial proceedings/decisions of all computerized district and subordinate courts of the country.
- All High Courts have also joined the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) through web services, providing easy access facility to the litigant public.
- NJDG works as a monitoring tool to identify, manage and reduce pendency of cases.
- It helps to provide timely inputs for making policy decisions to reduce delays in disposing of cases and helps in reducing case pendency.
- It also facilitates better monitoring of court performance and systemic bottlenecks, and, thus, serves as an efficient resource management tool.
- To track cases related to land disputes, Land Records data of 26 States have been linked with NJDG.

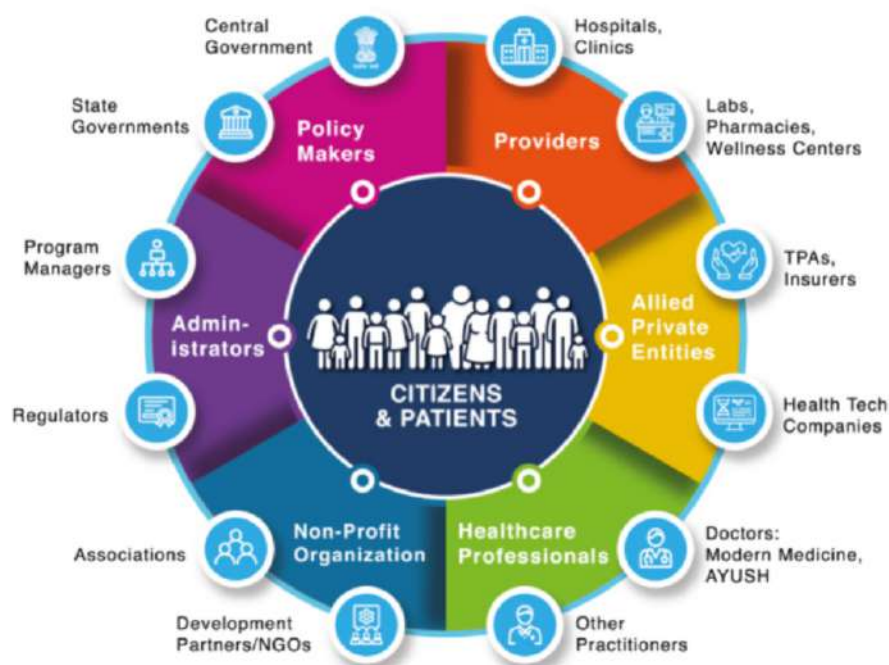## Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) Microsite

- The National Health Authority (NHA) had announced 100 Microsites project for accelerated adoption of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) across the country.

- Mizoram becomes the first state in India to operationalize an ABDM Microsite in its capital city Aizawl.
- Under this, all healthcare facilities including the private clinics, small hospitals and labs in the region shall be made ABDM-enabled and will offer digital health services to the patients.
- The 100 Microsite project under ABDM is an important initiative for reaching out to the bulk of small and medium scale healthcare providers from the private sector.
- The concept of Microsites was envisaged to provide a strong impetus to healthcare digitization efforts across the country.

ABDM Microsites

- The ABDM Microsites are defined geographical regions where focused outreach efforts would be made to onboard small and medium scale private healthcare providers.
- These Microsites would be majorly implemented by State Mission Directors of ABDM while the financial resources and overall guidance would be provided by NHA.
- An interfacing agency under this program will have an on-ground team to reach out to the healthcare providers in the area.
- This team will spread awareness about the benefits of ABDM and will help the service providers to join the core registries under ABDM besides promoting the use of ABDM enable digital solutions for regular clinical documentation.
- Patients will be able to link the health records generated at these facilities with their Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHAs) and will be able to view and share these records using any ABDM-enabled Personal Health Record (PHR) application on their phones

The ABDM Ecosystem

- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission will connect the digital health solutions of hospitals across the country with each other.
- The Mission will not only make the processes of hospitals simplified but also will increase ease of living.
- The Digital Ecosystem will also enable a host of other facilities like Digital Consultation, Consent of patients in letting medical practitioners access their records, etc.
- With the implementation of this scheme, old medical records cannot get lost as every record will be stored digitally.

eCourt project

- The Wide Area Network (WAN) Project under eCourts project is aimed at connecting all District and Subordinate court complexes, spread across the country using various technologies like OFC, RF, VSAT.
- This forms the backbone for the eCourts project ensuring data connectivity in courts across the length and breadth of the country.
- Many courts under the eCourts project are located in far flung areas, termed as Technically Not Feasible (TNF) sites, where terrestrial cable cannot be used.
- These sites are being connected using alternative means like RF, VSAT, Submarine cable etc.

Project Inception

- The Department of Justice awarded the prestigious eCourts' WAN project to BSNL at a cost of Rs. 167 crores for establishing Wide Area Network (WAN) connecting 2992 district and subordinate court complexes across the country including 547 court complexes with no connectivity.
- An online monitoring tool prepared by NIC for tracking real-time progress and monitoring of pan – Indian Wide Area Network (WAN) project against the set baselines was launched on 7th September, 2018.

White Shipping Information Exchange

- Chief of the Naval Staff and Commandant of Philippine Coast Guard signed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for exchange of White Shipping Information
- The SOP was signed in New Delhi during ongoing visit of the Commandant, Philippine Coast Guard to India.
- The signing of the SOP between Philippine Coast Guard and Indian Navy would facilitate operationalization of information exchange on merchant shipping traffic, which will contribute to enhanced maritime safety and security in the region.

15th BRICS Summit

- Prime Minister participated in the 15th BRICS Summit held under South Africa's chairship, in Johannesburg
- The leaders held productive discussions including on global economic recovery, partnership with Africa and the Global South and reviewed the progress made on the BRICS agenda so far.
- This is the first in-person summit of BRICS comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, since 2019.

BRICS 2023 Highlights

- The BRICS countries, Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China, and South Africa, convene for a BRICS Leaders' Summit annually.
- As the Chair of BRICS, South Africa is focusing on the theme, 'BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism'.
- The BRICS -- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa -- agreed at their annual summit to make Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates full members from January 1.

PM Modi Speech Highlights

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue in Johannesburg. The meeting saw participation from the guest countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, along with the leaders of the BRICS countries.
- During his intervention, Prime Minister called for the BRICS to be the voice of the Global South.
- He underlined India's close partnership with Africa and reaffirmed India's commitment to support Africa in its development journey under Agenda 2063.
- Prime Minister extended invitation to countries to be a part of international initiatives such as International Solar Alliance, One Sun One World One Grid, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, One Earth One Health, Big Cat Alliance and Global Centre for Traditional Medicine.
- He also offered to share India's Digital Public Infrastructure Stack

Khanan Prahari App

The mobile app

- Khanan Prahari, which allows citizens to report incidents of illegal coal mining through geo-tagged photographs and textual information, is a significant step taken by the Ministry of Coal towards curbing illegal coal mining activities.
- The corresponding web portal called as Coal Mine Surveillance & Management System (CMSMS) has been developed in association with the Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Application & Geoinformatics, Gandhinagar, and CMPDI, Ranchi.
- The objective of the Khanan Prahari mobile app and CMSMS web portal is to encourage public participation through reporting about illegal coal mining.

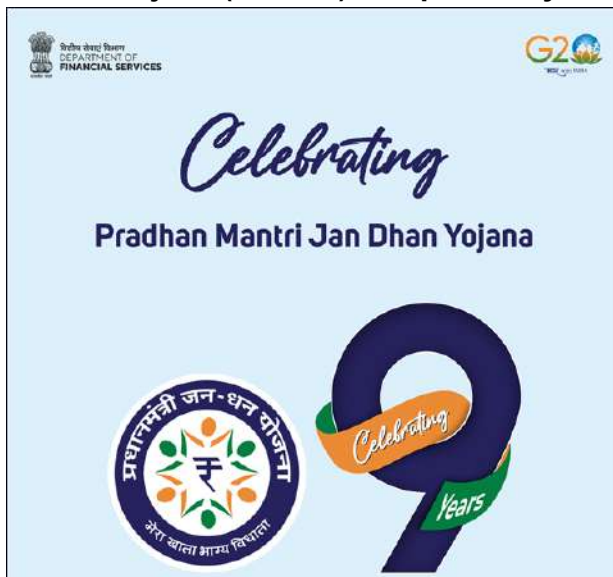**Key features of the Khanan Prahari mobile app include:**

- Reporting Incidents: Users can easily report incidents of illegal mining by taking photographs and providing comments on the incident. The app allows for the geotagging of photographs by enabling the GPS location feature.
- Confidentiality: The user's identity is kept confidential, ensuring privacy and security.
- Complaint Tracking: Complainants receive a complaint number, which they can use to easily track the status of their reported complaints on the Khanan Prahari mobile app.

Launch of Tele-Law 2.0

- Committed to fulfill the Constitutional mandate of Article 39 A to ensure Access to Justice, Department of Justice (DoJ) is celebrating its Tele-Law 2.0
- The event is seminal as it commemorates the reaching of 50 Lakh milestone, that earmarks rendering of pre-litigation advice to the common citizens through the use of technology.

- It also integrates this legal advice service under Tele-Law with legal representation services under Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono) programme.
- This would enable the common citizen to access legal advice, legal assistance and legal representation through a single registration and single gateway of Tele-Law.
- The event is being organized by Department of Justice and is supported by CSC e- Governance Services India Limited.
- The event exemplifies the Government's vision to strengthen the legal aid eco-system and to ensure "Justice for All".

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) completes 9 years

- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) – the National Mission for Financial Inclusion - completes nine years of successful implementation
- The PMJDY was announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address on 15th August 2014.

Background

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is a National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

Objectives

- Ensure access of financial products & services at an affordable cost
- Use of technology to lower cost & widen reach

Basic tenets of the scheme

- Banking the unbanked - Opening of basic savings bank deposit (BSBD) account with minimal paperwork, relaxed KYC, e-KYC, account opening in camp mode, zero balance & zero charges

- Securing the unsecured - Issuance of Indigenous Debit cards for cash withdrawals & payments at merchant locations, with free accident insurance coverage of Rs. 2 lakhs
- Funding the unfunded - Other financial products like micro-insurance, overdraft for consumption, micro-pension & micro-credit

Initial Features of PMJDY

The scheme was launched based upon the following 6 pillars:

1. Universal access to banking services – Branch and BC
2. Basic savings bank accounts with overdraft facility of Rs. 10,000/- to every eligible adult
3. Financial Literacy Programme– Promoting savings, use of ATMs, getting ready for credit, availing insurance and pensions, using basic mobile phones for banking
4. Creation of Credit Guarantee Fund – To provide banks some guarantee against defaults
5. Insurance – Accident cover up to Rs. 1,00,000 and life cover of Rs. 30,000 on account opened between 15 Aug 2014 to 31 January 2015
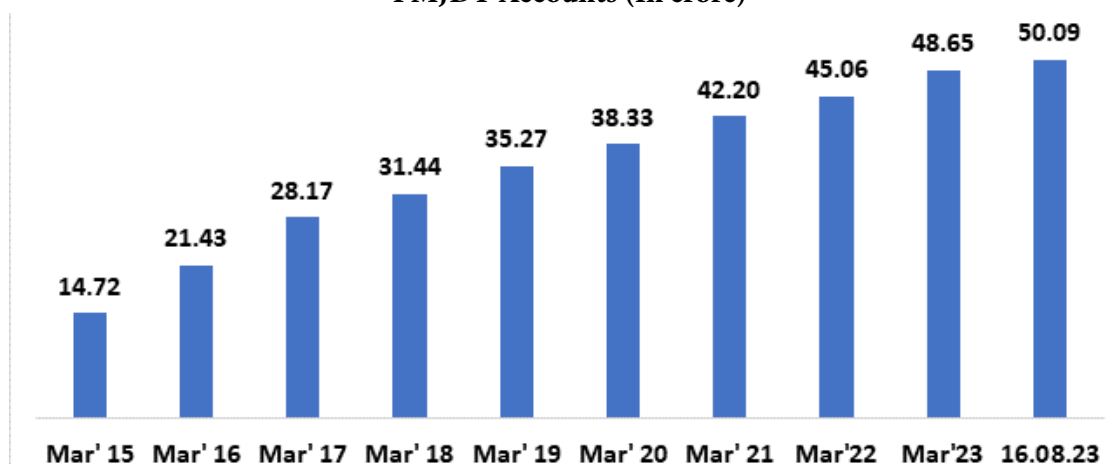6. Pension scheme for Unorganised sector

Extension of PMJDY with New Features

The Government decided to extend the comprehensive PMJDY programme beyond 28.8.2018 with some modifications

- Focus shifted from 'Every Household' to Every Unbanked Adult'
- RuPay Card Insurance - Free accidental insurance cover on RuPay cards increased from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakhs for PMJDY accounts opened after 28.8.2018.
- Enhancement in overdraft facilities: OD limit doubled from Rs 5,000/- to Rs 10,000/-; OD upto Rs 2,000/- (without conditions) with Increase in upper age limit for OD from 60 to 65 years

PMJDY has brought the unbanked into the banking system, expanded the financial architecture of India and brought financial inclusion to almost every adult.

PMJDY Accounts (In crore)

Mar' 15	Mar' 16	Mar' 17	Mar' 18	Mar' 19	Mar' 20	Mar' 21	Mar'22	Mar'23	16.08.23
14.72	21.43	28.17	31.44	35.27	38.33	42.20	45.06	48.65	50.09

- As on 9th August 23 number of total PMJDY Accounts: 50.09 crore; 55.6% (27.82 crore) Jan-Dhan account holders are women and 66.7% (33.45 crore) Jan Dhan accounts are in rural and semi-urban areas

Jan Dhan Darshak App (JDD App)

- JDD App is a mobile application which provides a citizen-centric platform for locating banking touch points such as bank branches, ATMs, Banking Correspondents (BCs), Indian Post Payment Banks etc. in the country. Over 13 lakh banking touchpoints have been mapped on the JDD App.

- This app is also being used for identification of villages which are yet to covered by banking outlets within 5 km radius. These identified villages are allocated to various banks by concerned SLBCs for opening of banking outlets.

National Sports Day

- India celebrated National Sports Day on 29th August to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend, Major Dhyan Chand.

- The primary motto of National Sports Day is to promote awareness about the significance of sports and being physically active in the day to day life

- The day is also dedicated to the nation's sports heroes and champions, honoring their contribution and dedication towards bringing laurels to the country.

- India celebrated the first National Sports Day on August 29, 2012.

- Widely known as the 'Hockey Wizard' and 'The Magician', Major Dhyan Chand was born on August 29, 1905.

- The Wizard of hockey Major Dhyan Chand gave us three consecutive Olympic gold medals in hockey in 1928, 1932, and 1936.

- On the occasion of National Sports Day 2023, Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur launched the third edition of the Fit India Quiz

- The Minister also launched an Information booklet on Sports Infrastructure Projects sanctioned under the Khelo India Scheme as well as launched a National Sports Federations portal

- The National Sports Federations portal launched is in line with the Government of India's vision for Digital India, for ensuring ease of business and good governance.

- It is a unified online portal for the NSFs, which shall be a single window system for processing of annual renewal of recognition of NSFs, elections of National Sports Federations etc.

- This will do away with the existing system of physical mode of submission of documents by NSFs and examination of the same by the Union Sports Ministry.

- The online portal will also be ensuring better coordination among the Department of Sports and the National Sports Federations.

Zonal Councils

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah chaired the 26th Meeting of the Western Zonal Council at Gandhinagar, Gujarat

About Zonal Councils

- The Zonal Councils are the statutory bodies. They are established by an Act of the Parliament, that is, States Reorganisation Act of 1956.\The act divided the country into five zones (Northern, Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern) and provided a zonal council for each zone.

The present composition of each of these Zonal Councils is as under:

1. The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh;

2. The Central Zonal Council, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh;

3. The Eastern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim and West Bengal;

4. The Western Zonal Council, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli;

5. The Southern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

- The North Eastern States i.e. (i) Assam (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (iii) Manipur (iv) Tripura (v) Mizoram (vi) Meghalaya and (vii) Nagaland are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the North Eastern Council, set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.

- The State of Sikkim has also been included in the North Eastern Council vide North Eastern Council (Amendment) Act, 2002 notified on 23rd December 2002. Consequently, action for the exclusion of Sikkim as member of Eastern Zonal Council has been initiated by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Each zonal council consists of the following members:

- Home Minister of Central government.
- Chief Ministers of all the States in the zone.
- Two other ministers from each state in the zone.
- The administrator of each union territory in the zone

The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are as under :

- Bringing out national integration;
- Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies;
- Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences;
- Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

Technical Textiles

- The Ministry of Textiles has approved the Startup Guidelines for Technical Textiles - Grant for Research and Entrepreneurship across Aspiring Innovators in Technical Textiles (GREAT) providing grant-in-aid upto INR 50 Lakhs for upto a period of 18 months

- The GREAT Guidelines provides thrust in Technical Textiles' application areas including Agro-textiles, Building-textiles, Geo-textiles, Home-textiles, Medical-textiles, Mobile-textiles, Packaging- textiles, Protective-textiles and Sports-textiles

- To incentivize the incubators, Ministry to additionally provide 10% of total grant-in-aid to incubators.

- To strengthen authenticity and commitment towards the project, a minimum investment of 10% of the funding from the incubatee in two equal installments is mandated.

- The Startup Guidelines (GREAT) to provide much-needed impetus for the development of technical textiles startup ecosystem in India, especially in niche sub-segments such as Bio-degradable and Sustainable textiles, High-performance & Specialty fibres, Smart textiles, among others.

About Technical Textile

- Technical textiles are defined as textile materials and products used primarily for their technical performance and functional properties rather than their aesthetic or decorative characteristics.

- This is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the Textile Industry, which is manufacturing high-tech, high-performance fabric designed not just to look attractive, but to present a significant added value in terms of functionality.

- The textile coating process is widely used in the manufacturing of technical textiles.

- The textile industry is not only experiencing clothing application but also continuing a major outlook towards the non-clothing application of textiles known as Technical textiles.

Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)

- The Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) under the Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India organized an outreach programme on "registration of warehouses with WDRA"

- The Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) was constituted on 26.10.2010 under the Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007

- The WDRA is a Statutory Authority under the Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India. The Authority has its Headquarters in New Delhi.

- The Authority consists of a Chairperson and two Members appointed by the Central Government.

- The main functions of the Authority are to make provisions for the development and regulation of warehouses which interalia includes negotiability of warehouse receipts, registration of warehouses, promotion of scientific warehousing of goods, improving fiduciary trust of depositors and banks, enhancing liquidity in rural areas and promoting efficient supply chain.

- The negotiable warehouse receipts issued by the WDRA will help the farmers to seek loans from banks against the NWRs to avoid distress sales of agricultural produce during the peak marketing season and to avoid the post-harvest storage loss.
- 136 agricultural commodities including cereals, pulses, oil seeds, spices, rubber, tobacco, coffee etc for issuing negotiable warehouse receipts and also 24 horticultural commodities for cold storage, and 9 non-agricultural commodities have been notified.
- To discourage distress sale by farmers and to encourage them to store their produce against warehouse receipts the benefit of interest subvention was made available to small and marginal farmers having Kisan Credit Cards for a period of six months @ 7%.

Launch of Y - 12654 (Mahendragiri)

- *Mahendragiri*, the last Project 17A Frigate, was launched at M/s Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai on 01 Sep 23.
- *Mahendragiri*, named after a mountain peak in Eastern Ghats located in the state of Orissa, is the seventh ship of the Project 17A Frigates.
- These warships are follow-ons of the Project 17 Class Frigates (Shivalik Class), with improved stealth features, advanced weapons and sensors and platform management systems.
- Under the Project 17A program, a total of four ships by M/s MDL and three ships by M/s GRSE are under construction.
- The first six ships of the project have been launched so far by MDL & GRSE, between 2019-2023.
- Project 17A ships have been designed in-house by Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau, the pioneer organisation for all warship design activities.
- A substantial 75% of the orders for equipment and systems of Project 17A ships have been ordered on indigenous firms, including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Project 17-A

- The Nilgiri-class frigates, designated as Project-17 Alpha frigates (P-17A), form a collection of stealthy guided-missile frigates.
- These ships are equipped with improved stealth features, advanced weapons and sensors, and platform management systems.
- Mahendragiri is the fourth and final Project 17A frigate built by MDL.
- The first-in-class ship, Nilgiri, was launched in September 2019 by MDL.
- The first Project 17A frigate built by GRSE, Himgiri, was launched in December 2020.
- Seven vessels of the class are planned. Four are being built by MDL and three by GRSE.

Sagar Parikrama Phase VIII

- Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying launched Sagar Parikrama Phase-VIII on 31st August in Thengapattanam Fishing harbour in Kanyakumari district.
- This phase of Sagar Parikrama will cover four coastal districts of Tamil Nadu including Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, and Ramanathapuram.

Sagar Parikrama Yatra

- It is an outreach program intended to reach out fisher community across the coastal belt.
- The initiative has been launched to better understand the issues, experiences, and aspirations of fishermen, as well as to examine the scope of seafood exports and popularise programs available to fishermen in coastal areas.
- The first seven phases of Sagar Parikrama has covered 3600 km in 8 Western Coastal states/ UTs including Gujarat, Diu & Daman, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Puducherry, and Andaman & Nicobar.
- The journey signifies an evolutionary initiative of the Government of India demonstrating solidarity with fisher folk, fish farmers, and other concerned stakeholders across the coastal belt.
- Aim - to resolve the challenges faced by the fishing community and facilitate their economic upliftment through various fisheries schemes and programs implemented by the government, such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and to disseminate information about various fisheries related schemes and programs, promoting responsible fisheries with a focus on sustainable balance, and protection of marine ecosystems.

World's First Prototype of the BS 6 Stage II 'Electrified Flex fuel Vehicle' Launched

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari launched the world's first prototype of the BS 6 Stage II 'Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle', developed by Toyota Kirloskar Motor
- It is the world's first BS 6 (Stage II) Electrified Flex Fuel vehicle prototype, which has both the flex fuel engine as well as an electric powertrain, thereby offering higher use of ethanol combined with better fuel efficiencies.
- This innovative vehicle is based on the Innova Hycross and is engineered to adhere to India's stricter emission standards, marking it as the first-ever BS 6 (Stage II) Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle prototype globally.

- India has huge Ethanol potential, much beyond E20 mix. This excess potential can be utilised by the country by promoting Flex Fuel vehicle (FFVs) and Flex Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicle (FFV-SHEV) / Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle.

Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle

- Flex fuel is an alternative fuel made by mixing petrol with ethanol.
- An Electrified Flex Fuel Vehicle has both a Flexi Fuel engine and an electric powertrain.
- This gives it the ability to provide the dual benefit of higher ethanol use and much higher fuel efficiency as is in the case of a Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicle (SHEV), which can provide 30-50% higher Fuel Efficiency as it can run 40-60% in EV mode with engine shut off.

Ethanol Blending in India

- It has increased by over 8 times.
- India has advanced the target for E20 blending to 2025 (5 years ahead of earlier planned schedule), from the original plan of 2030.
- E20 fuel is being dispensed at more than 3300 fuel stations across the country and shall be available pan India by April 2025.

Renewable Energy Technology Action Platform (RETAP)

- A meeting between the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India was held on August 29, 2023, to launch the new U.S. - India Renewable Energy Technology Action Platform (RETAP) under the Strategic Clean Energy Partnership.
- RETAP was announced during the June 22, 2023 meeting in Washington D. C., between the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister of India

About RETAP

- The RETAP was established to take bilateral collaboration further with a result-oriented, time-bound technology focus.
- It is intended to advance new and emerging renewable technologies with a view toward deployment and scaling.
- RETAP's initial focus will be on green/clean hydrogen, wind energy, long-duration energy storage, and exploration of geothermal energy, ocean/tidal energy, and other emerging technologies as mutually determined in the future.
- DOE and MNRE outlined an initial workplan regarding RETAP collaboration.

Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP)

- The SCEP was launched in accordance with the US - India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership announced by both countries at the Leaders' Summit on Climate held in 2021.
- SCEP was established as one of the two-track engagements launched under the US-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership.

- 2030 agenda was announced in 2021 to accelerate progress toward shared climate and clean energy goals.
- The SCEP advances energy security and innovation with greater emphasis on electrification and decarbonization of processes and end uses; scaling up emerging clean energy technologies; finding solutions for hard-to-decarbonize sectors; and deploying technical solutions.
- The SCEP was earlier established as the Strategic Energy Partnership in 2018 and had replaced the U.S.-India Energy Dialogue, the previous intergovernmental engagement for energy cooperation.

The five technical pillars of the India-USA Strategic Clean Energy Partnership are:

- Power & Energy Efficiency
- Renewable Energy
- Responsible for Oil & Gas
- Sustainable Growth
- Emerging Fuels and Technologies

Composite Aluminium Third Rail

- Kolkata Metro Railway, India's first Metro built by Indian Railways on 24th October 1984, has been serving as a lifeline for Kolkata, the city of Joy for nearly 40 long years.
- In Kolkata Metro Railway, the power to Metro Rake is supplied to rolling stock at 750V DC through steel Third Rail.
- Kolkata Metro Railway using steel Third Rail for the last 40 years.
- Kolkata Metro Railway has now decided to use composite Aluminium Third Rail in all the upcoming corridors being undertaken for construction along with retro fitment in existing corridors with steel Third Rail.
- With this Metro Railway, Kolkata would become the member of elite club of London, Moscow, Berlin, Munich, and Istanbul Metro who have also shifted from steel Third Rail to Aluminium Third Rail.

World Sanskrit Day

- The Prime Minister has extended greetings on the occasion of World Sanskrit Day.
- World Sanskrit Day, is commemorated on the occasion of Shravan Poornima, which corresponds to the full moon.
- World Sanskrit Day is observed with the aim of promoting Sanskrit, recognized as the world's oldest language.
- It serves as a tribute to the birth anniversary of Pā ini, a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and grammarian.
- Sanskrit is often referred to as Dev Vani, signifying the language of the deities.
- This year, the Sanskrit Diwas falls on Thursday, August 31.
- The purpose of this day's celebration is to raise awareness and advocate for Sanskrit, one of India's oldest and ancient languages.

Utkela Airport

- Minister of Civil Aviation, inaugurated Utkela Airport and a direct flight between Utkela and Bhubaneshwar
- Utkela airport is owned by the Government of Odisha.
- It has been developed as a regional airport under the UDAN scheme of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India at a cost of Rs. 31.07 Cr.
- Utkela airport has a runway of length 917 meters. (2,995 ft.) with a width of 30 meters.
- With the addition of Utkela Airport, Odisha will now have five airports.

Adopt a Heritage 2.0 programme

- ASI has launched "Adopt a Heritage 2.0" programme
- Under this programme, ASI invites corporate stakeholders to enhance the amenities at the monuments by utilizing their CSR funds.
- The programme is a revamped version of the earlier scheme launched in 2017 and clearly defines the amenities sought for different monuments as per AMASR Act 1958.
- The stakeholders can apply for adopting a monument or specific amenity/ amenities at a monument through a dedicated web portal with URL
- The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) has 3696 monuments under protection, which are spread, throughout the country.
- The 'Adopt a Heritage 2.0' programme seeks to foster collaboration with corporate stakeholders through which they can contribute in preserving these monuments for our upcoming generations
- The selected stakeholders will develop, provide and/or maintain amenities in hygiene, accessibility, safety and knowledge categories.
- In doing so, they will get an opportunity to be recognized as a responsible and heritage-friendly entity.
- The term of the appointment will be for a period of five years initially, which may be further extended up to five years.
- A user-friendly mobile app, named 'Indian Heritage' has also launched, which will showcase the heritage monuments of India.

TAMARA

- In a significant move towards responsible waterbody management and environmental protection, the Technology Development Board (TDB) is supporting M/s Bariflo Labs Private Limited, Odisha, for their project called "Development and Commercialization of Intelligent Water Body Management System (IWMS)-TAMARA.
- The board has approved an amount of ₹ 89.00 lakhs for this project, out of the total project cost of ₹ 150.00 lakhs.

TAMARA

- It is a smart aeration system enhanced with sensors and IoT-based technology to manage water quality.

This comprehensive system comprises several key elements, each playing a vital role:

1. **Smart Sediment Aeration System:** This innovation uses robotic systems to move diffuser aerators up and down in water. It helps bring more oxygen to the bottom of water bodies. This system has been tested in real-world conditions and works well in both fresh and salty water.

2. **Smart Climate-Driven Water Quality Monitoring System:** This system moves around in water bodies and checks the quality of water from the bottom to the surface. It follows important points identified by computer simulations. It helps control the level of nutrients in the water and how much oxygen is in it.

3. **Smart Weed Harvester System (PLASHBOT):** This system removes unwanted plants from water bodies. It has different parts to find, remove, crush, and move the plants. It uses smart navigation to work smoothly.

4. **Communication System and Data Protection:** This system uses a special kind of technology to send and receive data between devices. It keeps the data safe and has been tested in labs to make sure it works well.

- The project's approach is based on using robots, IoT, and artificial intelligence in a system that understands weather conditions and water quality.

- This smart system also keeps track of oxygen and nutrient levels, making sure the water is good for aquatic life.

Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur

- The Prime Minister paid tributes to Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur on his birth anniversary.

Bir Chandra Manikya

- Maharaja (Bubagra) Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Debbarman - popularly known as the "Modern Architect of Tripura" was born on 19th August of 1908 in Tripura.

- He was the first to set up Higher educational institution in Tripura.

- He was the son of Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya Bahadur Debbarman.

- He was the king before the merger of Tripura with India.

- In 1862, he started the urbanisation of the Agartala. In 1871 he established the Agartala Municipality.

- Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman is considered the father of modern architecture in Tripura, as the entire planning of present day Tripura was initiated during his rule. He was also an educationist.

- He is the first ruler who visited Europe and America from 1931 to 1939. He was considered one of the pioneers for the land reforms.

- It was for His farsightedness that he reserved land for the local indigenous people of Tripura (native Tripuri), whose outcome is said to be the present TTAADC (Tripura Tribal Area autonomous District councils) Areas.

- He died at a very young age of 39 in 1947. His premature death has really hindered in the process of development in Tripura and Tripuris in particular.

India announces definition of Green Hydrogen

- In a significant move for the progress of the National Green Hydrogen Mission, the government has notified the Green Hydrogen Standard for India.

- The standard issued by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India outlines the emission thresholds that must be met in order for hydrogen produced to be classified as 'Green', i.e., from renewable sources.

- The scope of the definition encompasses both electrolysis-based and biomass-based hydrogen production methods.

- The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy has decided to define Green Hydrogen as having a well-to-gate emission (i.e., including water treatment, electrolysis, gas purification, drying and compression of hydrogen) of not more than 2 kg CO_2 equivalent / kg H_2.

- The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power shall be the Nodal Authority for accreditation of agencies for the monitoring, verification and certification for Green Hydrogen production projects.

National Green Hydrogen Mission

- India has set its sight on becoming energy independent by 2047 and achieving Net Zero by 2070.

- To achieve this target, increasing renewable energy use across all economic spheres is central to India's Energy Transition.

- Green Hydrogen is considered a promising alternative for enabling this transition.

- Hydrogen can be utilized for long-duration storage of renewable energy, replacement of fossil fuels in industry, clean transportation, and potentially also for decentralized power generation, aviation, and marine transport.

The National Green Hydrogen Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet on 4 January 2022, with the intended objectives of:

- Making India a leading producer and supplier of Green Hydrogen in the world
- Creation of export opportunities for Green Hydrogen and its derivatives
- Reduction in dependence on imported fossil fuels and feedstock
- Development of indigenous manufacturing capabilities
- Attracting investment and business opportunities for the industry
- Creating opportunities for employment and economic development
- Supporting R&D projects

Mission Outcomes

The mission outcomes projected by 2030 are:

- Development of green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) per annum with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 GW in the country
- Over Rs. Eight lakh crore in total investments
- Creation of over Six lakh jobs
- Cumulative reduction in fossil fuel imports over Rs. One lakh crore
- Abatement of nearly 50 MMT of annual greenhouse gas emissions

Types Of Hydrogen Based On Extraction Methods

- Depending on the nature of the method of its extraction, hydrogen is categorised into three categories, namely, Grey, Blue and Green.
- **Grey Hydrogen:** It is produced via coal or lignite gasification (black or brown), or via a process called steam methane reformation (SMR) of natural gas or methane (grey). These tend to be mostly carbon-intensive processes.
- **Blue Hydrogen:** It is produced via natural gas or coal gasification combined with carbon capture storage (CCS) or carbon capture use (CCU) technologies to reduce carbon emissions.
- **Green Hydrogen**: It is produced using electrolysis of water with electricity generated by renewable energy. The carbon intensity ultimately depends on the carbon neutrality of the source of electricity (i.e., the more renewable energy there is in the electricity fuel mix, the "greener" the hydrogen produced).

Amrit Sarovars Per District

- States have taken efforts to achieve the District level target of 75 Amrit Sarovar in each of the districts of the State with a exception in case of West Bengal, Punjab, Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Bihar and Rajasthan wherein some of the districts are yet to achieve the target of 75 Amrit Sarovars per district.

Mission Amrit Sarovar

- Mission Amrit Sarovar has been launched by the Prime Minister on 24th April 2022 with an objective to provide sustainable water sources wherein every district is expected to construct/rejuvenate a minimum of 75 Amrit Sarovar.

- The National target of 50,000 Amrit Sarovars has been achieved by following due guidelines of the Mission.

- This Mission is being implemented with a whole of Government Approach in which 8 Central Ministries/Department namely Dept. of Rural Development, Department of land resources, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of Water resources, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate changes, Ministry of Railway, Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways are participating.

- Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N) has been engaged as Technical partner for the Mission.

- The Mission works through the States and Districts, through refocusing of various schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, XV Finance Commission Grants, PMKSY sub schemes such as Watershed Development Component, Har Khet Ko Pani besides States' own schemes.

- The Mission encourages mobilization of citizen and non-govt resources for supplementing these efforts.

Badh Super Thermal Power Project

- Recently, the 660 MW unit of Barh Super Thermal Power Project located at Barh in Bihar's Patna district was dedicated to the nation.

- It is a project of National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), NTPC produces 90% of the total electricity of Bihar.

- The project was opposed for environmental reasons as it is close to the Himalayan range and requires stricter anti-pollution controls.

- The plant is to produce 3,300 (660X 3)MW of electricity. Remaining four units are already operational.

Namoh 108

- A new variety of lotus flower called 'Namoh 108' has apparently been developed by the Lucknow Institute CSIR-NBRI (National Botanical Research Institute).

- It has 108 petals.

- The Namoh 108 lotus variety flowers from March to December "and is rich in nutrients.

- This is the first lotus variety whose genome is completely sequenced for its characteristics,"

- NBRI is a constituent institution of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

Lotus Mission

- The minister also launched the Lotus Mission.

- It is being undertaken in a mission mode like other priority schemes such as the National Honey and Bee Mission, National Bamboo Mission, National Food Security Mission, National Mission on Natural Farming, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture and Gokul Mission.
- This project is being undertaken in Mission mode

NBRI-Nihar

- The Minister also released the new variety of Aloe vera named 'NBRI-Nihar', a clonal selection having approximately 2.5 times high gel yield in comparison to Aloe vera.
- 'NBRI-Nihar' is found least affected against bacterial and fungal diseases.

Jan Dhan Accounts Cross 50 Crore

- The Prime Minister has expressed happiness over the significant milestone in Jan Dhan Accounts. The number of Jan Dhan Accounts crossed 50 crore.

Padhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

- It is the national mission for the financial inclusion of poor people which aims at giving them universal access to financial services like banking, deposit account, remittance, pensions etc.
- It was launched on August 28, 2014. Now, after 9 years, the Jan-Dhan accounts have crossed the 50 crore mark, with 56 per cent of the accounts belonging to women
- 67 per cent of these accounts have been opened in rural and semi-urban areas.
- The deposits in these accounts are above Rs 2.03 lakh crore (trillion) and about 34 crore RuPay cards have been allotted to the owners of these accounts. The cards are given to the holders free of cost.
- As per the Finance Ministry, the average balance in the PMJDY accounts is Rs 4,076 and more than 5.5 crore accounts under this scheme are receiving Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) benefits. In this scheme, the subsidy is directly transferred to the accounts of the citizens who are living below the poverty line.
- PMJDY offers numerous advantages to the account holders if applied under this scheme.
- It includes a bank account without the requirement of a minimum balance, free-of-cost RuPay debit cards and an overdraft facility of up to Rs 10,000.
- Under this credit facility, the account holder can withdraw the funds from their current or savings account even if their bank balance is zero.
- It is a short-time loan which must be paid back by the lender.

Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE)

- The Government's fully funded PM-DevINE scheme, announced in the 2022-23 Union Budget, supports North-East infrastructure and social projects aligned with PM GatiShakti
- Under 'PM-DevINE', all eight North Eastern Indian states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura will be covered.
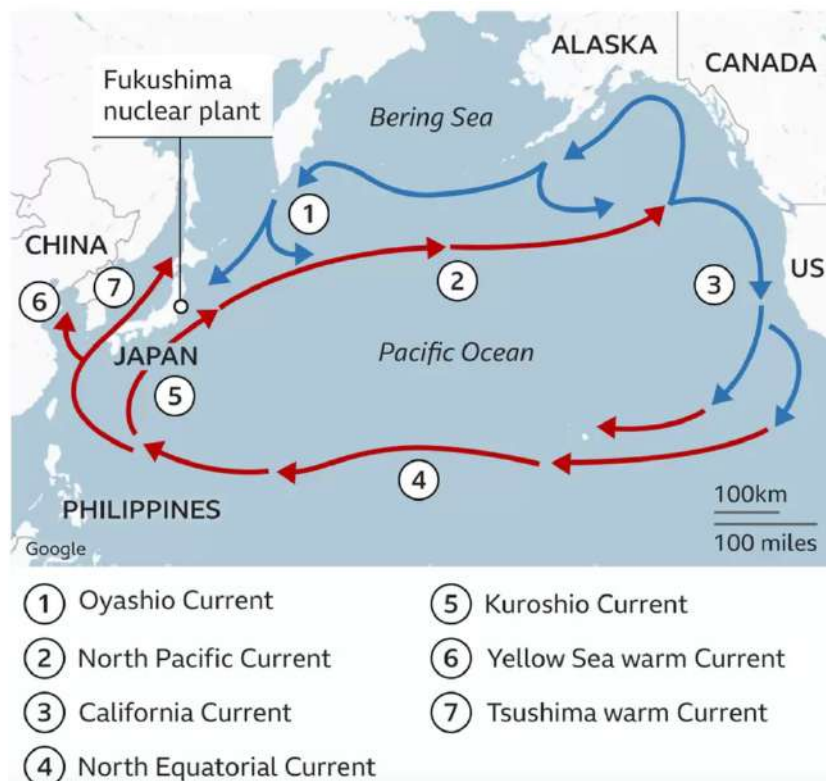
- This scheme will complement existing Government of India and State Government initiatives, avoiding duplication by supporting projects not covered elsewhere.

- The objectives of "PM-DevINE" align with the Ministry of DoNER's vision of accelerating sustainable development in the North Eastern Region to ensure improved living standards for its citizens.

- These goals encompass rapid and comprehensive growth through infrastructure and social projects, promoting youth and women's livelihoods, and addressing developmental gaps across sectors.

- An Empowered Inter-Ministerial Committee (EIMC) will be established, chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.

- This committee will include representatives from pertinent line Ministries, the North Eastern Council, and other relevant entities.

- EIMC addresses any issues forwarded by NEC or SLEC regarding project implementation challenges or guideline clarifications. It offers recommendations, potentially suggesting minor adjustments to Scheme provisions to alleviate difficulties.

- EIMC will meet as frequently as needed, but at least once in three months.

Dibang Multipurpose Project

- NHPC Limited, India's premier hydropower company, has signed an MoU with RITES, a Miniratna Schedule 'A' Central Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Railways, for construction of railway siding at Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, for NHPC's 2,880 MW Dibang Multi Purpose Project.

- The 2,880-megawatt Dibang project in Arunachal Pradesh is estimated to take nine years to build.

- In a 90% dependable year, the project will produce 2880MW (12x240MW) of power, or 11223MU, of energy.

- When it is finished, the 278-meter-tall dam will be India's tallest.

- The Project is in the Lower Dibang Valley District of Arunachal Pradesh, on the Dibang River.

- The project envisages the construction of a 278m high Concrete Gravity Dam (above the deepest foundation level)

- The government of Arunachal Pradesh will receive 1346.76 MU, or 12 percent of the project's cost, upon completion.

- Dibang Multipurpose Project is intended to be a hydroelectric project based on storage, with flood control serving as the primary objective.

- The substantial area downstream will not be flooded if the Dibang MPP is built.

Fukushima Water Release

ALASKA CANADA

Fukushima
nuclear plant

Bering Sea

CHINA

US

JAPAN

Pacific Ocean

PHILIPPINES

Google

100km
100 miles

① Oyashio Current   ⑤ Kuroshio Current
② North Pacific Current   ⑥ Yellow Sea warm Current
③ California Current   ⑦ Tsushima warm Current
④ North Equatorial Current

Source - Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Agency, American Meteorological Society.

- Japan has begun releasing treated radioactive water from its damaged Fukushima power plant into the Pacific Ocean - 12 years after a nuclear meltdown.

- Japan is releasing the wastewater into the ocean gradually, with a green light from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

- The first release is one of four, scheduled between now and the end of March 2024. The entire process will take at least 30 years.

- The problem is being caused by a radioactive element of hydrogen called tritium, which can't be removed from the contaminated water because there is no technology to do it. Instead, the water is diluted.

- The tritium concentration in the water discharged was "far below the operational limit of 1,500 becquerels per litre (Bq/L)".

- That limit is six times less than the World Health Organization's limit for drinking water, which is at 10,000 Bq/L, a measure of radioactivity.

Section – B

Practice Questions for Preliminary Examination based on August 2023 Current Affairs

1. Banco Sur, a monetary fund and lending organization, is the initiative of which of the following countries/organizations?

(a) ASEAN

(b) African Countries

(c) BRICS

(d) None of the following

Answer - (d)

- The Bank of the South or BancoSur is a monetary fund and lending organization established on 26 September 2009 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela

2. Parabens, which are used in pharmaceutical, cosmetic and makeup products - such as moisturizers, shampoos, deodorants, etc., disrupt hormone function, an affect which is linked to heightened risk of _____-

(a) Skin Cancer

(b) Breast Cancer

(c) Lung Cancer

(d) All of the above

Answer - (b)

3. Consider the following aspects of Indian Railway finances

1. The Operating Ratio improved from 107 in 2021-22 to 98 in 2022-23.

2. Profit from freight traffic is being used to subsidize passengers

3. Losses on passenger and other coaching services declined in recent years

4. The pension burden increased in a decade

How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All four

(d) None

Answer - (c)

All statements are correct

- The pension burden increased from around Rs. 17,000 crore in 2011-12 to Rs. 60,000 crore in 2023-

4. Consider the following statements about LK-99

1. LK-99 is a room-temperature and ambient-pressure superconductor.

2. The electrical resistivity of LK-99 dropped sharply at around 104O Celsius

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer - (b)

- The scientific community is now confident that the material known as LK-99 is not a room-temperature and ambient-pressure superconductor.
- The South Koreans reported that the electrical resistivity of LK-99 dropped sharply at around 104O Celsius, a potential sign of superconductivity. But scientists observed the drop due to the material contained copper sulphide as an impurity.

5. Consider the following statements about LIGO-India Project

   1. Department of Atomic Energy is the Lead Department for the LIGO-India Project.

   2. LIGO-India is a collaboration between the LIGO Laboratory, operated by Caltech and MIT, and three institutes in India - RRCAT, Indore, IPR, Ahmedabad and IUCAA, Pune.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

   (a) 1 only

   (b) 2 only

   (c) Both 1 and 2

   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

   Answer - (c)

6. Consider the following statements

   1. All deposits under small savings schemes are credited to the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF)

   2. In recent years, there has been a consistent increase in collections under small savings schemes.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

   (a) 1 only

   (b) 2 only

   (c) Both 1 and 2

   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

   Answer - (a)

   - Net collections under small savings schemes such as National Savings Certificate (NSC) and Public Provident Fund (PPF) dipped for the first time in 11 years in the last fiscal year (FY23).

7. India plans a joint Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) Mission to explore the shadowed regions or the dark side of the Moon with which of the following countries?

   (a) USA

   (b) Japan

(c) European Union

(d) Canada

Answer - (b)

8. Consider the following statements

   1. Each Solar Cycle is 25 years and Solar Maximum is expected to occur in July 2025.

   2. In the Sun, the magnetic field is caused by the movement of gases inside the Sun's interior.

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

   (a) 1 only

   (b) 2 only

   (c) Both 1 and 2

   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

   Answer - (b)

   • During the peak of activity, called solar maximum, the sun's magnetic poles flip. Then, the sun will grow quiet again during a solar minimum. Initially, peak activity was forecast to begin in July 2025. Now, experts believe the cyclical peak is more likely to take place in mid- to late 2024.

9. Elo points, which are quite often in the news, are used to determine the strength of?

   (a) Space Rockets

   (b) Chess players

   (c) Rocket launchers

   (d) Gold material

   Answer - (b)

10. Justice G. Rohini-led Commission on the sub-categorization of _____Classes groups, which was constituted in October 2017, submitted its long-awaited report to the President of India on July 31, after having received 14 extensions in the last six years.

    (a) Schedule

    (b) Backward

    (c) Tribal

    (d) Economic weaker

    Answer - (b)

11. World Poverty Clock is the initiative of which of the following organizations?

    (a) World Bank.

    (b) IMF

    (c) Global Hunger Index

    (d) Multidimensional Poverty Index

    Answer - (a)

12. Malaiyaha Tamils, who are quite often in the news, pertain to which of the following country?

(a) Sri Lanka

(b) Mauritius

(c) Malaysia

(d) Maldives

Answer - (a)

- The Malaiyaha Tamil community refers to a historically marginalized group in Sri Lanka who migrated from southern India around 200 years ago to work in British-run plantations.

13. Funding Winter means?

(a) Increase in funding for startups.

(b) Low inflow of venture capital for startups

(c) Easy to raise funds for startups

(d) None of the above

Answer - (b)

- For the uninitiated, funding winter refers to an extended period where the inflow of venture capital is lower than expected, making it particularly difficult for startups to raise funds.

14. Consider the following statements about Katchatheevu Island

1. The island was ceded by the Indian administration under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to Sri Lanka

2. It is a 285-acre uninhabited isle that was caused by a 14th-century volcanic eruption

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer - (c)

- The island was ceded by the Indian administration under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to Sri Lanka under the Sirimavo Bandaranaike administration in 1974 in an act of bilateral largesse, preceding the 1976 exchange of letters that divided the maritime boundary line in the Sethusamudram littoral region between the two neighbors.

15. Find the incorrect statement about Bhu-Vision.

(a) It is a revolutionary IoT-based automated soil testing and agronomy advisory platform

(b) It has been jointly developed by ICAR-IIRR(Indian Council of Agricultural Research -Indian Institute of Rice Research) and Central Agricultural University, Pusa

(c) This system seamlessly conducts 12 key soil parameter tests in just 30 minutes.

(d) It provides quick and accurate results directly to farmers through a soil health card on their mobile devices.

Answer- (b)

- It has been jointly developed by ICAR-IIRR(Indian Council of Agricultural Research -Indian Institute of Rice Research) and KrishiTantra.

16. Consider the following statements
    1. Chandrayaan-3 landing spot is known as Shiv Shakti point
    2. The Path where Chandrayaan's-3 Rover Pragyan left its footprints will now be called Tiranga
    3. August 23 will be celebrated as ISRO day

    How many of the statements given above are correct?

    (a) Only one
    (b) Only two
    (c) All three
    (d) None

    Answer - (a)

- The path where Chandrayaan - 2 left its footprints will now be called Tiranga
- August 23 will be celebrated as National Space Day

17. Consider the following statements about the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR)
    1. It was established by the first PM of India under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)
    2. It was set up by Dr. Vikram Sarabhai.

    Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

    Answer - (c)

- The Congress said India's space journey began in 1962 with the formation of INCOSPAR which was the result of the farsightedness of Homi Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai, along with enthusiastic support from the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.
- The Congress' assertion came on a day Chandrayaan-3 is set to touch down on the lunar surface.
- The Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR) was established by India's first prime minister Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in 1962, on the suggestion of the scientist Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, recognising the need for space research.
- It committed to formulating the Indian Space Programme.
- At the time, the committee was part of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.
- The committee took over the responsibilities of the Department of Atomic Energy in space science and research.

18. Consider the following statements about National Research Foundation (NRF)

1. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is the administrative Department of NRF
2. NRF's functioning is governed by an Executive Council chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser
3. Prime Minister will be the ex-officio President of the Board

How many of the statements given above are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Answer - (c)

- NRF's functioning will be governed by an Executive Council chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.
- NRF will forge collaborations among the industry, academia, and government departments and research institutions
- The bill will also repeal the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) established by an act of Parliament in 2008 and subsume it into NRF which has an expanded mandate and covers activities over and above the activities of SERB.

19. Consider the following statements about Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

1. It is a government fund established by the Government of India
2. USOF is funded through a levy on the revenue earned by telecom operators.
3. USOF is managed by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer - (c)

- It is a government fund established by the Government of India to provide financial support for the expansion of telecommunications and broadband services in rural and remote areas of the country.
- The USOF is managed by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) under the Ministry of Communications.

20. Consider the following statements with reference to Bt Cotton

1. Cry1Ac produces proteins toxic to American Bollworm and Pink Bollworm, whereas

2. Cry2Ab gives resistance to Spodoptera pests like beat and fall armyworm.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer - (c)

21. The London Convention is related to?

(a) Prevention of Marine Pollution

(b) Prevention of Air Pollution

(c) Convention on the Rights of the Child

(d) Convention on Biological Diversity

Answer - (a)

- The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972, commonly called the "London Convention" or "LC '72" and also abbreviated as Marine Dumping, is an agreement to control pollution of the sea by dumping and to encourage regional agreements supplementary to the Convention

22. Consider the following statements about Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP)

1. It's mandatory for car manufacturers to offer their cars tested as per Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) 197.

2. The car will be awarded star ratings for Adult Occupants (AOP) and Child Occupants (COP).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer - (b)

- Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways will launch the much-awaited Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP) on 22nd August 2023.

- Under this programme, car manufacturers can voluntarily offer their cars tested as per Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) 197.

- Based on the performance of the car in the tests, car will be awarded star ratings for Adult Occupants (AOP) and Child Occupant (COP).

23. The term Prima ET11, recently in news is associated with which of the following?

(a) Fertilizer

(b) Lithium battery

(c) e-Tractor

(d) e-bus

Answer - (c)

- Union Minister of State Science & Technology launched the CSIR Prima ET11, the first indigenous e-Tractor developed by the Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI), Durgapur

24. What is TAMARA?

(a) A smart aeration system enhanced with sensors and IoT-based technology to manage water quality.

(b) A robotic boat that removes weeds and other debris from water bodies.

(c) A system that uses robotic aerators to inject oxygen into the bottom of water bodies.

(d) A system that uses sensors to collect data on water quality parameters such as temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity.

Answer - (c)

- In a significant move towards responsible waterbody management and environmental protection, the Technology Development Board (TDB) is supporting M/s Bariflo Labs Private Limited, Odisha, for their project called "Development and Commercialization of Intelligent Water Body Management System (IWMS)-TAMARA.

- TAMARA - It is a smart aeration system enhanced with sensors and IoT-based technology to manage water quality.

25. What is the name of the autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) designed to detect mines that was launched by India?

(a) Neerakshi

(b) Varunastra

(c) Nirbhay

(d) BrahMos

Answer - (a)

- The AUV named 'Neerakshi' is a collaboration of Kolkata-based warshipmaker Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd and MSME entity Aerospace Engineering Private Ltd (AEPL).

- The commercial launch of the AUV is likely to be within six months to a year after completion of user trials by the Indian Navy, Coast Guard and possibly the Army too

Section – C

Practice Questions for the Main Examination based on Current Affairs August (2023)

1. The impact of climate change is going to be disproportionately high in heavily populated developing countries like India. Do you agree? Substantiate your answer.

2. The health sector is one of the core areas that need to be reformed to realise the potential of human capital. Analyse the steps taken by the government lately to revolutionise the health sector with technology.

3. Discuss the need for the sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Groups in order to make affirmative actions more inclusive. Give the points in the context of Justice G Rohini Committee recommendations.

4. Enumerate the features of the Gender Inclusion Fund as provisioned in the National Education Policy 2020.

5. Explain the concept of metaverse and throw some light on the present trend and potential future applications of this technology.

6. What do you understand by India Stack? Discuss how it is a significant step for all the stakeholders in fulfilling the vision of Digital India.

7. The success of the Chandrayaan 3 is not only reflective of the success of Indian space industry, but also its resilience and widening global acknowledgement. Analyse.

8. What do you understand by Minor Irrigation? Highlight the present trend and patterns in the adoption of Minor Irrigation in India.

9. Discuss the issues that impact the efficiency and transparency of the Indian judicial system. To what extent can digitisation act as the solution. Substantiate your answer.

10. The expansion of BRICS, as agreed upon in the recently concluded 15th BRICS Summit, can unfold new possibilities of both challenges and opportunities. Analyse.

Section - D

Probable Interview Questions based on August 2023 Current Affairs

Mock Transcript

Mock Chairman

Q. Do you think India can potentially become a world leader in the field of electric vehicles?

    Mock Member 1

Q. In what role do you see Artificial Intelligence **10** years from now in India?

    Mock Member 2

Q. Do you think the world is prepared enough to face the unforeseen consequences of AI adoption?

    Mock Member 3

Q. When talking about India's demographic dividend, we mostly focus on employment, health and skill. But why is it so that the sports sector is not much talked about in this context?

    Mock Member 4

Q. Even though India continues to be mostly an agrarian economy, the agri-infrastructure has not progressed up to the desired scale. What do you think might be the reasons behind it?