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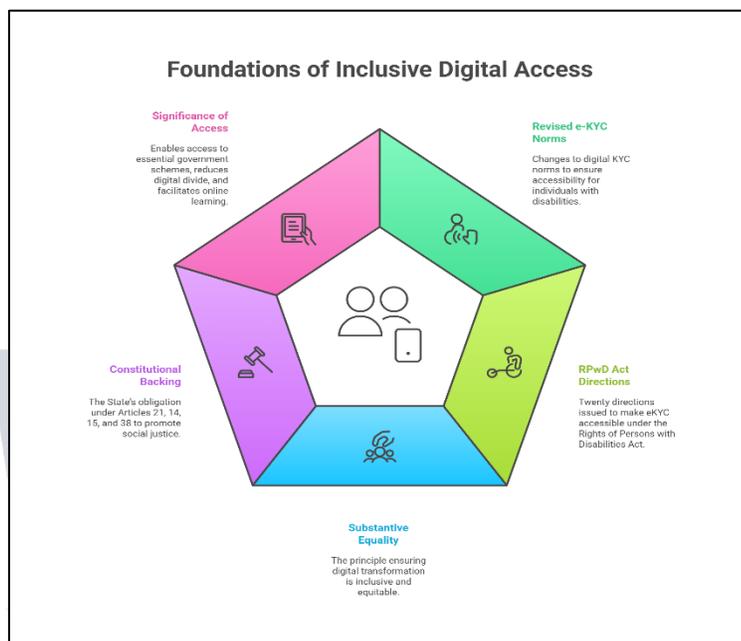
CONSTITUTION, POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1. Supreme Court Recognises Inclusive Digital Access as a Fundamental Right

Context: In the *Amar Jain v. Union of India and Ors.* judgment, the Supreme Court held that inclusive and meaningful digital access to e-governance and welfare delivery systems is part of the fundamental right to life and liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

About the Judgment:

- **Directive to Revise e-KYC Norms:** The Court ordered changes to digital Know-Your-Customer (KYC) norms to ensure accessibility for individuals with facial disfiguration due to acid attacks and for the visually impaired.
- **20 Directions Under RPwD Act, 2016:** The Court issued twenty directions to make the eKYC process accessible under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.
- **Substantive Equality Principle:** The Court invoked the principle of substantive equality, asserting that digital transformation must be inclusive and equitable.
- **Constitutional Backing:** The State's obligation arises under:
 - ✓ Article 21 – Right to a dignified life
 - ✓ Article 14 – Right to equality
 - ✓ Article 15 – Right against discrimination
 - ✓ Article 38 – Directive to promote social justice
- **Significance of Inclusive Digital Access:**
 - ✓ Enables access to essential government schemes
 - ✓ Reduces rural-urban digital divide
 - ✓ Facilitates access to online learning and fintech
 - ✓ Ensures inclusion of marginalized populations in development

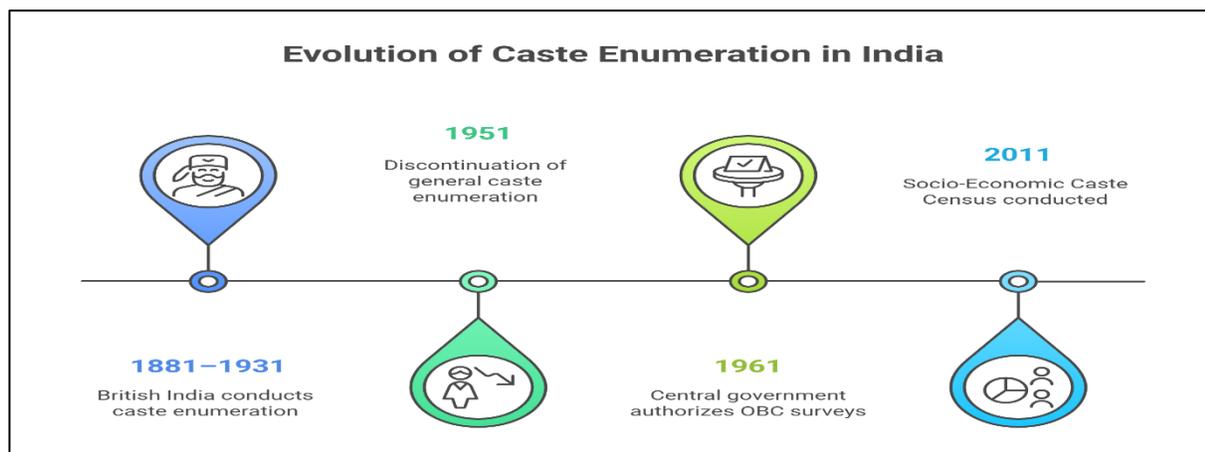


This judgment marks a critical step in making India's digital infrastructure truly inclusive and constitutionally just.

2. Inclusion of Caste Enumeration in Upcoming Census

Context: Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs approved the inclusion of caste enumeration in the upcoming Census, marking a significant development in India's population data collection mechanism.

History of Caste Enumeration in India



- **1881–1931 (British India)**
 - ✓ British colonial administration conducted comprehensive caste enumeration for administrative purposes.
- **1951 (Post-Independence)**
 - ✓ Discontinued general caste enumeration, counting only SC/ST to promote national unity.
- **1961 (1961 Directive)**
 - ✓ Central government authorized states to conduct their own surveys for identifying OBCs.
- **2011 (SECC 2011)**
 - ✓ Socio-Economic Caste Census conducted to obtain data about the socio-economic status of various communities.

Census in India

- Census is a Union subject under Entry 69 of the Union List in Schedule VII of the Constitution, governed by Article 246.
- The Census Act, 1948 provides the legal framework for conducting the census and defines the duties and responsibilities of census officers.

Significance of Caste Enumeration in Census

- **Judicial Requirement:**
 - ✓ As per the Indra Sawhney & Others v. Union of India (1992) judgment, backwardness of a particular class must be determined only after proper assessment and objective evaluation.
 - ✓ The Supreme Court also held that such determination should be subject to periodic review by a permanent body of experts.
- **Social Justice:**
 - ✓ Caste census, along with other socio-economic data, can aid in preparing a fresh list of socially and educationally backward classes.
 - ✓ It may also enable more equitable distribution of reservation benefits through sub-categorization or 'quota-within-quota' mechanisms.
- **Policy Making:**
 - ✓ Accurate caste data will support the creation of evidence-based and targeted policies, helping address the needs of the underprivileged and downtrodden more effectively.

3. Upholding Integrity in the Higher Judiciary

Context: In an unprecedented move, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna initiated the removal process of Justice Yashwant Varma following the recovery of unaccounted cash from his residence. This marks the first instance where the Supreme Court itself has triggered the removal process, signalling a significant shift towards judicial self-regulation.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- India's Constitution allows the removal (not impeachment) of Supreme Court and High Court judges only on specific grounds:
 - ✓ Article 124(4) (for Supreme Court) and Articles 217 & 218 (for High Courts) empower the President to remove a judge on proven misbehaviour or incapacity.
 - ✓ Article 124(5) enables Parliament to regulate the procedure via legislation.
- The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 outlines the procedure:
 - ✓ A removal motion must be signed by 100 MPs (Lok Sabha) or 50 MPs (Rajya Sabha).
 - ✓ If admitted by the Speaker or Chairman, a three-member inquiry committee (comprising a Supreme Court judge, a High Court Chief Justice, and a distinguished jurist) is formed.
 - ✓ Upon finding the judge guilty, the motion must be passed in both Houses with a special majority (two-thirds of members present and voting and a majority of total membership).
 - ✓ The President then issues the order of removal.
- This multi-layered process ensures a balance between judicial accountability and independence.

Historical Precedents

- **Justice V. Ramaswami (1993):** First judge against whom removal proceedings were initiated; the motion failed in Lok Sabha due to abstentions.
- **Justice Soumitra Sen (2011):** Found guilty of misappropriating public funds; resigned before the Lok Sabha could vote after Rajya Sabha passed the motion.

4. Disqualification of Lawmakers

Context: A Karnataka MLA was recently disqualified following his conviction in an illegal mining case by a CBI court. The disqualification, which led to a vacancy in the constituency, was carried out under Article 191 of the Constitution and Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951.

Constitutional Grounds for Disqualification

- The Constitution of India lays out the eligibility criteria for legislators and the grounds for their disqualification:
 - ✓ Article 102: Disqualification of Members of Parliament
 - ✓ Article 191: Disqualification of Members of State Legislatures
- A legislator can be disqualified under these articles for the following reasons:
 - ✓ Holding an office of profit under the government
 - ✓ Being of unsound mind, as declared by a court
 - ✓ Being an undischarged insolvent
 - ✓ Not a citizen of India, or if having voluntarily acquired citizenship of a foreign country
 - ✓ Defection, as per the Tenth Schedule
 - ✓ Disqualification under any law made by Parliament

Statutory Provisions: Representation of the People Act, 1951

- The RPA, 1951 elaborates specific disqualification criteria for elected representatives:

- ✓ Section 8: Disqualification on conviction for certain offences such as:
 - Bribery, rape, promoting enmity between groups
 - Offences related to untouchability or moral turpitude
- ✓ Other grounds include:
 - Involvement in corrupt practices
 - Dismissal from government service for corruption or disloyalty
 - Failure to report election expenditure
 - Conflict of interest, such as holding government contracts or controlling stakes in government-owned companies

Duration of Disqualification

- Under Section 8(3) of the RPA, 1951, a lawmaker convicted and sentenced to two years or more is disqualified for the duration of the sentence plus six additional years.
- The Supreme Court in *Lily Thomas v Union of India* (2013) held that disqualification takes effect immediately upon conviction, removing the earlier protection of a three-month appeal window.

5. Justice B.R. Gavai to Assume Office as the 52nd Chief Justice of India

Context: Justice B.R. Gavai is set to take oath as the 52nd Chief Justice of India (CJI), marking a significant event in the Indian judiciary. The CJI heads the Supreme Court, the apex judicial authority established under Article 124(1) of the Constitution.

Appointment Process:

- Under Article 124(2), the President appoints the CJI after consulting the outgoing CJI. By convention, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court is appointed to the position. The Memorandum of Procedure mandates that the Union Law Minister initiates the process by seeking the outgoing CJI's recommendation, which is forwarded to the Prime Minister for Presidential advice.

Tenure and Oath:

- The CJI serves until the age of 65 and is administered the oath by the President of India. The first CJI of India was Justice Harilal J. Kania.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Administrative:**
 - ✓ Under Article 146, the CJI is responsible for appointing officers and servants of the Supreme Court.
- **Statutory:**
 - ✓ The CJI heads search-cum-selection committees for appointments to key statutory bodies such as the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).
- **Judicial Authority:**
 - ✓ As the Master of the Roster, the CJI holds exclusive power to allocate cases to benches. This authority is formalized in the Supreme Court's Handbook of Practice and Procedure (2017).
- **Other Functions:**
 - ✓ The CJI administers the oath to the President, appoints ad hoc judges, invites retired judges for special assignments, and determines the seat of the Supreme Court.

Transparency:

- Importantly, the office of the CJI is under the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, ensuring public accountability.

6. Maternity Leave as a Reproductive Right

Context: The Supreme Court of India recently ruled that maternity leave is an integral part of a woman's reproductive rights, setting aside a Madras High Court decision that had denied maternity leave to a government school teacher in Tamil Nadu for her third child.

Case Background: K. Umadevi v. Government of Tamil Nadu

- The petitioner, a government school teacher, was denied maternity leave for her third child under Tamil Nadu Fundamental Rule 101(a), which restricts maternity benefits to the first two surviving children.
 - ✓ The Single Bench of the Madras High Court held this rule to be in conflict with the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, and declared it void under Article 254 of the Constitution.
 - ✓ However, a Division Bench later reversed this, stating that the central legislation was not applicable to state government employees governed by their own service rules.
- The Supreme Court reinstated the petitioner's right to maternity leave, recognizing it as a component of reproductive rights and placing it within the broader framework of constitutional and human rights law.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- Article 42 (DPSP) directs the State to ensure humane working conditions and maternity relief.
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (amended in 2017), provides:
 - ✓ 26 weeks of leave for the first and second child.
 - ✓ 12 weeks for the third child or in cases of miscarriage/adoption.
- Work-from-home flexibility and mandatory crèche facilities for organizations with 50+ employees.

7. India's Position in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index

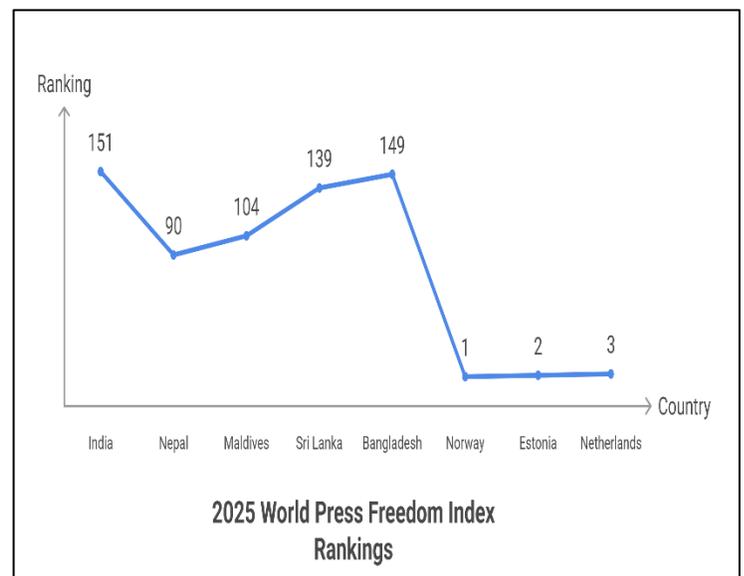
Context: The 2025 World Press Freedom Index, released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), places India at 151st position out of 180 countries. While this reflects a modest improvement from previous years (159th in 2024 and 161st in 2023), India's status continues to fall within the "very serious" category, raising critical concerns regarding the state of press freedom and democratic accountability.

Comparative Regional Performance

- India ranks below several of its neighbours:
 - ✓ Nepal (90th)
 - ✓ Maldives (104th)
 - ✓ Sri Lanka (139th)
 - ✓ Bangladesh (149th)
- This regional lag underscores the need for a policy introspection on journalistic freedom and media independence.

Top Global Performers

- Nations such as Norway (1st), Estonia (2nd), and the Netherlands (3rd) continue to lead the index, setting



benchmarks for a free and independent press backed by institutional safeguards and minimal interference.

Global Trends and Challenges

- The report notes that, for the first time, global press freedom has been labelled as being in a “difficult situation.” A significant contributor to this decline is rising economic pressures, which influence editorial autonomy and compromise the watchdog role of the media.

About the World Press Freedom Index

- Published annually by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), an international non-profit body committed to democratic governance and media freedom.
- The index evaluates countries based on the ability of journalists to work freely, independently, and without fear.
- Parameters include legal environment, political context, economic constraints, and security of journalists.

8. Sikkim Celebrates 50 Years of Statehood

Context: In 2025, Sikkim marks its Golden Jubilee, celebrating 50 years of becoming the 22nd state of the Indian Union. The milestone provides an opportunity to reflect on Sikkim’s unique historical journey—from an independent monarchy to a democratic partner within the Indian federation.

Historical Background

- **Foundation and Early Rule:** Sikkim’s origins date back to the 17th century, established under the Namgyal dynasty. It was ruled by Buddhist priest-kings, known as the Chogyals, who blended spiritual authority with political leadership.
- **Colonial Period:** In 1890, Sikkim was declared a princely state under the British Indian Empire, maintaining a degree of internal autonomy while under British suzerainty.

Post-Independence Developments

- **Protectorate Status (1950):** Post-1947, Sikkim entered into a protectorate arrangement with India through the Indo-Sikkimese Treaty.
 - ✓ India took charge of external affairs, defense, and strategic communications, while internal governance remained with the monarchy.
- **Integration with India (1975):** Following growing public demand for democratization and a referendum, Sikkim was formally integrated into India as the 22nd state on May 16, 1975.
 - ✓ This transformation was enabled through the 36th Constitutional Amendment Act, which granted Sikkim full statehood.

9. Presidential Reference under Article 143

Context: The President has invoked Article 143 to seek the Supreme Court’s advisory opinion on 14 constitutional questions after the 2023 State of Tamil Nadu v Governor of Tamil Nadu judgment.

- The case involved timelines imposed on Presidents and Governors for acting on Bills passed by state legislatures. The reference focuses on Articles 200 and 201 and the limits of judicial power under Article 142, aiming to clarify executive discretion and judicial intervention in the legislative process.

About Article 143

- Article 143 empowers the President to seek the Supreme Court’s advisory opinion on questions of law or fact of public importance.

- Article 143(1) allows referral of general questions, with the Court having discretion to tender or refuse advice.
- Article 143(2) concerns disputes related to pre-constitutional treaties, where the Court must provide its opinion.
- The Court's opinion is advisory, non-binding on the President.
- The advisory jurisdiction originates from the Government of India Act, 1935.
- Article 145(3) requires a bench of at least five judges to hear such references.

Key Issues in the Current Reference

- Whether courts can constitutionally impose timelines on the President and Governors for sanctioning or withholding assent to Bills (Articles 200 and 201).
- The scope and limits of the Supreme Court's powers under Article 142 for providing "complete justice."
- The justiciability of executive decisions before Bills are enacted into law.
- Impact on federal principles and separation of powers.

Significance of the Presidential Reference System

- Provides constitutional clarity on the roles and powers of President, Governors, and judiciary in legislative processes.
- Strengthens the system of checks and balances among the three branches of government.
- Promotes cooperative federalism by resolving disputes between Centre and States.
- Offers procedural certainty in ambiguous legislative and executive matters.
- Helps maintain judicial restraint and respect for constitutional boundaries.

10. Private Member's Bills in India

Context: Private Member's Bills (PMBs) are legislative proposals introduced by MPs who are not ministers. Despite their potential to address diverse public concerns and legislative innovation, PMBs rarely become law. Recently, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar highlighted PMBs as "forward-looking" and a "gold mine" for parliamentary progress, underscoring their importance in India's democratic process.

1. What are Private Member's Bills (PMBs)?

- Introduced by MPs not holding ministerial office (elected or nominated).
- Drafting and introduction responsibility lies solely with the MP, without Ministry involvement.
- Requires a one-month notice period before introduction.

2. Parliamentary Procedure and Time Allocation for PMBs

- **Lok Sabha:** Last two-and-a-half hours on every Friday dedicated to PMBs.
- **Rajya Sabha:** PMBs discussed every alternate Friday for two-and-a-half hours.
- These provisions allow MPs to present bills outside the government's legislative agenda.

3. Historical Trends and Current Scenario

- Only 14 PMBs have become law since Independence, with the last in 1970.
- 17th Lok Sabha (2019–24):
 - ✓ 729 PMBs introduced in Lok Sabha, 705 in Rajya Sabha.
 - ✓ Only 2 PMBs discussed in Lok Sabha; 14 in Rajya Sabha.
- 18th Lok Sabha (up to 2024 Budget Session):
 - ✓ Only 20 MPs introduced PMBs; none were discussed due to disruptions and government business priority.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India-UK Free Trade Agreement

Context: The India-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (FTA) represents a major step in India's external trade policy. Concluded after extensive negotiations, it reflects India's emergence as a value-driven global economic player, focusing on high-value markets while safeguarding domestic interests.

Key Features and Significance

- **Tariff Elimination:**
 - ✓ Over 99% of Indian exports—including textiles, leather, marine products, and toys—will enjoy zero-duty access in the UK, eliminating long-standing trade disadvantages.
- **Balanced Market Access:**
 - ✓ India has offered phased tariff reductions on 85% of UK goods over a decade, carefully excluding sensitive sectors like dairy, edible oils, and smartphones.
- **Boost to Services Sector:**
 - ✓ The agreement facilitates greater access in IT, telecom, education, and financial services, with mutual recognition of qualifications and exemption from UK social security payments for short-term professionals.
- **Investment & Innovation Linkages:**
 - ✓ The FTA encourages co-manufacturing, technology transfer, joint R&D, and IP creation—especially in advanced manufacturing.
- **Sustainability Commitments:**
 - ✓ For the first time in an Indian FTA, provisions related to labour rights, gender equity, environmental safeguards, and anti-corruption have been included.

2. Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)

Context: The United States has recently approved a Foreign Military Sale (FMS) to India involving advanced maritime surveillance tools under the broader framework of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative. This move strengthens India's maritime capabilities and reflects growing strategic cooperation under the Quad framework.

What is IPMDA?

- Launched at the Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo in May 2022, the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) is a collaborative effort by Quad countries (India, U.S., Japan, and Australia) aimed at enhancing maritime transparency and security in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It focuses on tracking "dark shipping" — vessels that deliberately disable tracking systems to avoid detection — and on building a robust, real-time surveillance network across the maritime zones.

Geographic Scope

- IPMDA specifically targets three strategically sensitive sub-regions:
 - ✓ Pacific Islands
 - ✓ Southeast Asia
 - ✓ Indian Ocean Region (IOR)
- These regions are vital for global trade and security, yet are vulnerable to illegal fishing, trafficking, and grey-zone maritime activities.

Objectives and Capabilities

- **Enhance Maritime Surveillance:** IPMDA seeks to provide near real-time monitoring of the region using commercial satellite radio frequency (RF) data and advanced analytics.
- **Support for Partner Nations:** The initiative is designed to help countries protect their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) by supplying actionable maritime intelligence.
- **Training and Technology Transfer:** By offering both hardware and training, IPMDA builds long-term capabilities in partner countries.

Recent U.S. Approval to India

- As part of this initiative, the U.S. Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) has notified Congress of a \$131 million military sale to India. The package includes:
- SeaVision software – a widely used platform for vessel tracking and maritime situational awareness.
- Technical Assistance Field Team (TAFT) for hands-on training.
- Remote analytics support and logistical documentation.
- This deal is significant in enhancing India's ability to monitor its coastline and EEZ, especially amid increasing maritime challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

3. WHO's 78th Assembly and the New Pandemic Treaty

Context: In a landmark development, the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA) of the World Health Organization (WHO) has formally adopted the world's first Pandemic Agreement under Article 19 of the WHO Constitution. This is only the second such international legal instrument, after the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2003), to be adopted through this route.

Legal Basis and Significance

- Article 19 of WHO Constitution empowers the World Health Assembly to adopt binding conventions or agreements by a two-thirds majority vote.
- The Pandemic Agreement sets a global framework for preparedness, prevention, response, and equitable access during public health emergencies.
- It underscores global solidarity and cooperation, lessons drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Features of the Pandemic Agreement

- **Strengthened Surveillance and Response**
 - ✓ Reinforces commitment to the International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005, which aim to detect, prevent, and respond to public health risks that cross borders.
 - ✓ Calls for timely data-sharing and early warning systems to contain outbreaks.
- **Global Supply Chain and Logistics Network**
 - ✓ Establishes a coordinated system for the timely supply of essential health products—vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics—during pandemics.
 - ✓ Ensures that all countries, especially low-income ones, have access to critical medical supplies during emergencies.
- **Sustainable Financing Mechanism**
 - ✓ Proposes a Coordinating Financial Mechanism to ensure predictable funding for implementation.
 - ✓ Aims to bridge the financing gaps identified during previous pandemics.
- **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS) System**
 - ✓ An Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) has been tasked with finalizing the framework for PABS.

- ✓ It will facilitate the rapid and transparent sharing of pathogen samples and genomic sequence data.
- ✓ Participating pharmaceutical companies will provide WHO with 20% of real-time production (10% donation + 10% at affordable prices) of pandemic-related health tools.

4. India-China Border Dispute over Arunachal Pradesh

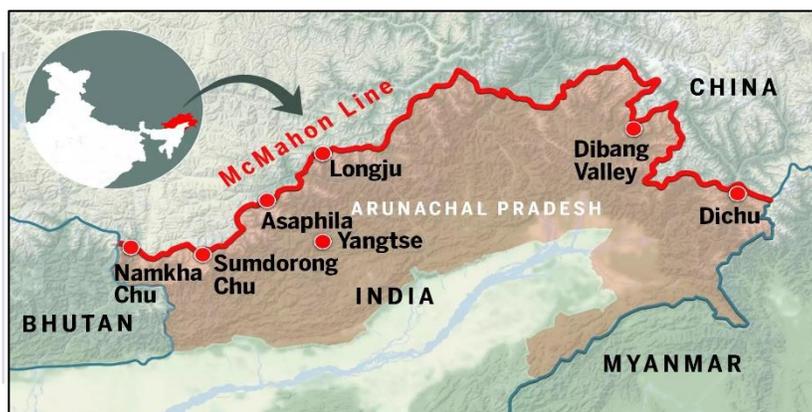
Context: India and China share a complex and contentious boundary, with Arunachal Pradesh at the heart of their dispute in the eastern sector. The recent renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh by China is the latest act of cartographic aggression, which India has firmly rejected, reaffirming its sovereignty over the region.

Understanding Cartographic Aggression

- Cartographic aggression involves the use of maps or place names by a country to assert territorial claims over areas not under its control. China has repeatedly renamed locations in Arunachal Pradesh since 2017, aiming to symbolically assert sovereignty and influence future negotiations or international perceptions.

Historical Context of the Dispute

- The origins of the dispute lie in the 1914 Simla Convention, where the McMahon Line was drawn between British India and Tibet. While India recognizes this as a legitimate boundary, China rejected it, arguing that Tibet was not sovereign and had no treaty-making authority.
- After the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950, Beijing began asserting claims over areas south of the McMahon Line. India integrated Arunachal Pradesh administratively in 1951, and it became a full state in 1987. However, China continues to claim the region, particularly Tawang, as part of "South Tibet."



Strategic and Cultural Significance of Tawang

- Tawang is of immense geopolitical and cultural value. It is located near the tri-junction of India, China, and Bhutan and houses the Tawang Monastery, which has historical ties to the Lhasa Monastery. It is also the birthplace of the 6th Dalai Lama, adding a spiritual dimension to China's claim.
- China views the possibility of the next Dalai Lama being identified from Tawang as a direct challenge to its authority over Tibetan affairs.

China's Tactics: Legal and Psychological Warfare

- China employs a multi-pronged strategy known as the "Three Warfares Doctrine"—legal warfare, psychological operations, and media manipulation. Through the periodic renaming of places, issuing maps, and protesting Indian developments, China attempts to:
 - ✓ Create a pseudo-legal claim.
 - ✓ Alter global perception.
 - ✓ Pressure India diplomatically.

- This approach is similar to China's tactics in the South China Sea and East China Sea.

India's Firm Rebuttal and Sovereign Actions

- India categorically rejects China's unilateral renaming of Arunachal Pradesh locations, calling them "baseless and preposterous." The government continues to invest in critical infrastructure in the region, such as the Sela Tunnel and other strategic roads and airstrips.
- India also maintains that the McMahon Line is the legally accepted boundary and has deployed military resources to ensure readiness in the eastern sector.

International Reactions and Strategic Implications

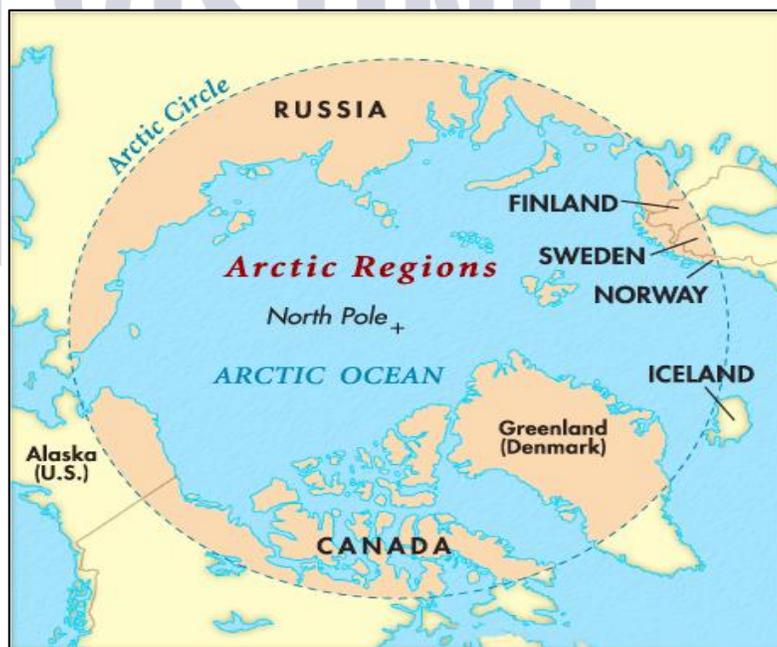
- China's aggression in Arunachal Pradesh has drawn international scrutiny. Countries like the United States, Australia, and France have supported India's stance and explicitly recognized Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory in joint statements.
- The dispute also impacts the Indo-Pacific strategic landscape. India's increasing alignment with the Quad is partly driven by Chinese provocations along its border, including in Arunachal.

5. India's Arctic Outlook

Context: The Arctic, once seen as a region of scientific inquiry and environmental collaboration, is undergoing a strategic transformation. As global powers reposition themselves in response to climate-induced changes and emerging geopolitical stakes, India must reassess its Arctic engagement to safeguard long-term interests.

The Changing Strategic Landscape of the Arctic

- The Arctic has become a hotspot for power rivalry, marked by an increasing military presence and strategic posturing. This evolution is driven by:
 - ✓ **Geopolitical Rivalries:** Russia is reinforcing its Arctic claims with military deployments and infrastructure development. China, though a non-Arctic state, brands itself as a "near-Arctic" power and seeks influence through investments and scientific missions. The United States, recognizing strategic vulnerabilities, has revived interest in Greenland and Arctic governance.
 - ✓ **Climate-Induced Accessibility:** Melting ice has unlocked the Northern Sea Route (NSR), which could alter global shipping patterns, reducing the reliance on traditional sea lanes like the Suez Canal and impacting Indian Ocean-centric trade.



India's Current Arctic Engagement

- India's Arctic presence began with the establishment of a research station in Svalbard and participation in scientific missions. The 2022 Arctic Policy emphasizes climate research,

sustainable development, and international cooperation. However, this science-centric approach overlooks the rapidly shifting power dynamics.

6. Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024

Context: The issue of internal displacement has emerged as a critical humanitarian and governance challenge worldwide. The Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024 (GRID-2024), released by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), highlights a worrying increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), underscoring the growing impact of conflicts and disasters on vulnerable populations.

About GRID-2024

- The GRID is an authoritative annual publication by the Geneva-based IDMC, a leading institution established in 1998 under the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The report provides comprehensive data and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict, violence, and disasters, serving as an evidence base for policy-making and humanitarian action.

Key Findings of GRID-2024

- The global number of IDPs rose to 75.9 million in 2023, up from 71.1 million in 2022.
- Of these, 68.3 million were displaced by conflict and violence, while 7.7 million were displaced due to natural disasters—about 25% of which were triggered by earthquakes.
- Sudan topped the list with 9.1 million IDPs—the highest ever recorded for a single country.
- Countries like Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Colombia, and Yemen hosted nearly half of the world's IDPs.
- Most new displacements occurred in Sudan, the Palestinian territories, and the DRC, together accounting for nearly two-thirds of new displacement globally.

Internal Displacement in South Asia

- South Asia continues to face significant challenges in managing internal displacement:
- As of 2023, around 5.3 million people in the region were living in displacement due to conflict and violence.
- Afghanistan accounted for 80% of these cases, highlighting its ongoing instability.
- India witnessed 69,000 displacements triggered by conflict and violence in 2023, with 67,000 attributed to the ethnic violence in Manipur—the highest such figure since 2018.
- On the disaster front, internal displacements in India sharply declined from 2.5 million in 2022 to 528,000 in 2023.

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)

- The IDMC is the global authority on data and analysis related to internal displacement.
- It defines internal displacement as the number of forced movements within a country's borders during a year.
- Established in 1998, the IDMC fills a critical knowledge gap by monitoring displacement patterns and informing humanitarian responses.
- It plays a pivotal role in influencing global policy through its evidence-based advocacy and partnerships with governments, UN bodies, and NGOs.

7. Global Report on Food Crises 2025

Context: The Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2025, released in May 2025, paints a grim picture of global food insecurity. Acute hunger has escalated to unprecedented levels, making it a critical concern for international humanitarian and development agencies. This crisis, now in its

sixth consecutive year of worsening trends, underscores the need for urgent policy action and global solidarity.

About the Global Report on Food Crises

- The GRFC is an annual, consensus-driven technical report coordinated by the Food Security Information Network (FSIN) under the umbrella of the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC). The report is produced through collaborative efforts of key stakeholders, including UN agencies such as FAO, WFP, and UNICEF, along with the European Union and various international NGOs.
- Its core mandate is to provide comprehensive analysis on acute food insecurity and malnutrition across global, regional, and country levels. It also identifies immediate and root causes to better inform humanitarian assistance and long-term development strategies.

Key Findings from the 2025 GRFC

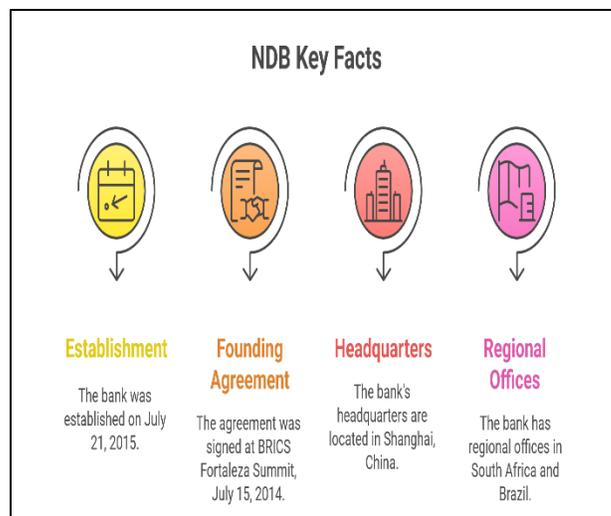
- **Record Acute Hunger:** In 2024, around 295.3 million people across 53 countries experienced acute food insecurity—an increase from 281.6 million in 2023. This is the highest level ever recorded since GRFC began and represents a sixth straight year of rising hunger.
- **Crisis Severity:** Nearly 25% of the population in the assessed countries suffered from food crises. Alarming, 1.9 million people were facing famine-like conditions (classified as IPC/CH Phase 5)—double the number from the previous year.
- **Humanitarian Funding Shortfalls:** The report warns of a significant reduction in humanitarian funding, with food-related allocations possibly falling by up to 45% in 2025. Such a decline could impact life-saving nutrition services for at least 14 million children, further exacerbating the crisis in vulnerable regions.
- **Impact on Children and Women:** In 2024, more than 37 million children under five in 26 countries suffered from acute malnutrition, with 10.2 million experiencing the most dangerous form—severe acute malnutrition. Women, too, remain disproportionately affected due to limited access to resources, healthcare, and social protection.

8. New Development Bank

Context: In a significant development, Algeria has formally joined the New Development Bank (NDB), becoming a full member upon submitting its instrument of accession on May 19, 2025. This move highlights the growing global relevance of the NDB as an alternative multilateral development institution for emerging economies.

About the New Development Bank (NDB)

- The New Development Bank is a multilateral financial institution established by the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—with the aim of financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects. It offers an alternative to traditional Western-led institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).
 - ✓ Establishment: July 21, 2015
 - ✓ Founding Agreement Signed: BRICS Fortaleza Summit, July 15, 2014
 - ✓ Headquarters: Shanghai, China



- ✓ Regional Offices: South Africa and Brazil

Membership

- The NDB began with the five BRICS nations but has gradually expanded its membership to include:
- Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Uruguay, and now Algeria (2025).
- Membership is open to all UN member states, with the condition that BRICS countries maintain a minimum 55% shareholding, ensuring their controlling stake.

Objectives and Core Functions

- Mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development in BRICS and other developing economies.
- Complement the efforts of global and regional financial institutions in financing developmental priorities.
- Focus areas include clean energy, transport, water management, urban development, public health, and education.

Governance and Structure

- **Board of Governors:** Typically comprises Finance Ministers of member countries.
- **Board of Directors:** Responsible for strategic policy direction.
- **Presidency:** Rotates among BRICS nations; currently held by Dilma Rousseff of Brazil.
- **Voting Power:** Proportional to equity contributions, with BRICS maintaining majority control.

9. Asian Productivity Organization (APO)

Context: In a significant diplomatic and developmental milestone, India has taken over the Chairmanship of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) for the 2025–26 term. The announcement was made during the 67th Governing Body Meeting of the APO, underscoring India's growing role in regional cooperation and productivity enhancement.

About the Asian Productivity Organization (APO)

- The Asian Productivity Organization is an intergovernmental organization committed to improving productivity across the Asia-Pacific region. It serves as a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange among its 21 member economies.
 - ✓ Established: 1961
 - ✓ Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan
 - ✓ Founding Members: India is among the original founding countries.

Membership and Reach

- APO currently includes 21 member economies such as India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Iran, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and others. These nations work together to formulate policies and implement initiatives aimed at boosting productivity across various sectors.

Objectives

- Promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by enhancing productivity levels.
- Support innovation-driven development in sectors such as industry, agriculture, services, and governance.
- Encourage environmentally sustainable practices through green productivity frameworks.

Core Functions and Initiatives

- **Policy Advisory:**
 - ✓ Provides technical guidance and policy frameworks to help member nations craft effective national productivity strategies.

- **Capacity Building:**
 - ✓ Organizes training programs, workshops, and collaborative research to build institutional and human resource capacity.
- **Centres of Excellence:**
 - ✓ Establishes knowledge hubs and best practice centers to promote innovation and skill development.
- **Green Productivity:**
 - ✓ Integrates environmental sustainability into productivity planning to balance growth with ecological concerns.
- **Digital and Innovation Ecosystem:**
 - ✓ Enhances cooperation among member countries in digital transformation and entrepreneurship, especially in MSMEs.

10. Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN)

Context: The Quad nations—India, the United States, Japan, and Australia—recently conducted a Tabletop Exercise (TTX) in Honolulu, Hawaii, simulating the launch of the Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN). This initiative marks a key step toward building a collaborative and resilient logistics infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region.

What is IPLN?

- The Indo-Pacific Logistics Network is a multilateral logistics coordination framework aimed at enhancing the speed and efficiency of humanitarian and disaster relief operations across the Indo-Pacific. It promotes the interoperability of logistics systems among Quad countries and facilitates civilian disaster response through shared infrastructure and digital tools.

Key Objectives and Features

- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR):**
 - ✓ IPLN prioritizes natural disaster response—covering cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes, and pandemics—through rapid and coordinated deployment of aid and resources.
- **Shared Logistics Coordination:**
 - ✓ Promotes integrated planning and execution of supply chain operations using a shared logistics mechanism.
- **Interoperability and Trust:**
 - ✓ Strengthens mutual support systems and builds operational coordination across national logistics platforms of Quad nations.
- **Technology-Driven Planning:**
 - ✓ Leverages digital logistics mapping, real-time tracking systems, and joint resource planning to improve response times and precision.
- **Scalable Architecture:**
 - ✓ Designed for flexibility, IPLN can be deployed across diverse geographies, from island nations to remote and coastal regions in need of urgent humanitarian support.

Strategic and Humanitarian Significance

- Strengthening Disaster Preparedness
- IPLN enhances regional resilience to natural disasters, contributing to the creation of a robust emergency response ecosystem in the Indo-Pacific.
- Reinforcing the Quad's Civilian Agenda

- By focusing on health, safety, and humanitarian needs, the initiative reaffirms the Quad's commitment to being a force for good, moving beyond military cooperation.
- Synergy with Other Quad Initiatives
- IPLN complements ongoing efforts like the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) and the Quad Pandemic Preparedness Program, creating an integrated humanitarian and health security architecture.

11. Group of Friends of Traditional Medicine (GFTM)

Context: India recently hosted the sixth meeting of the Group of Friends of Traditional Medicine (GFTM) in Geneva, reinforcing its leadership role in advocating for the integration of traditional medical systems into global health strategies.

About GFTM

- The Group of Friends of Traditional Medicine (GFTM) is an informal platform established by India in May 2023 under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO). It seeks to foster international collaboration on the promotion and scientific integration of traditional medicine within national health frameworks.
- Coordinated by India's Permanent Mission in Geneva, GFTM convenes member states and stakeholders to discuss strategies for the effective incorporation of traditional health systems into modern healthcare delivery.

Objectives and Functions of GFTM

- **Support for WHO Initiatives:**
 - ✓ GFTM aligns with the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034, which emphasizes evidence-based integration of traditional practices.
- **Policy Dialogue:**
 - ✓ The platform provides space for policy exchange, capacity building, and dialogue on the regulatory, scientific, and institutional development of traditional medicine.
- **Scientific Validation and Research:**
 - ✓ It encourages collaborative research, particularly in validating the efficacy and safety of traditional systems using modern tools.
- **Global Engagement:**
 - ✓ GFTM plays a key role in preparing for global events such as the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Summit and sessions of the World Health Assembly.

India's Role in Promoting Traditional Medicine

- India has been a global advocate for traditional health systems through initiatives like the National AYUSH Mission (NAM), which supports Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH). Key initiatives include:
 - ✓ Establishing Ayush Arogya Mandirs to offer holistic wellness care.
 - ✓ Expanding insurance coverage for AYUSH-based treatments.
 - ✓ Promoting collaborative research through partnerships with DBT, ICMR, DST, and CSIR.
 - ✓ Integrating AI, genomics, and bioinformatics to enhance scientific validation.
 - ✓ Strengthening global outreach via bilateral agreements, multilateral forums, and international events.

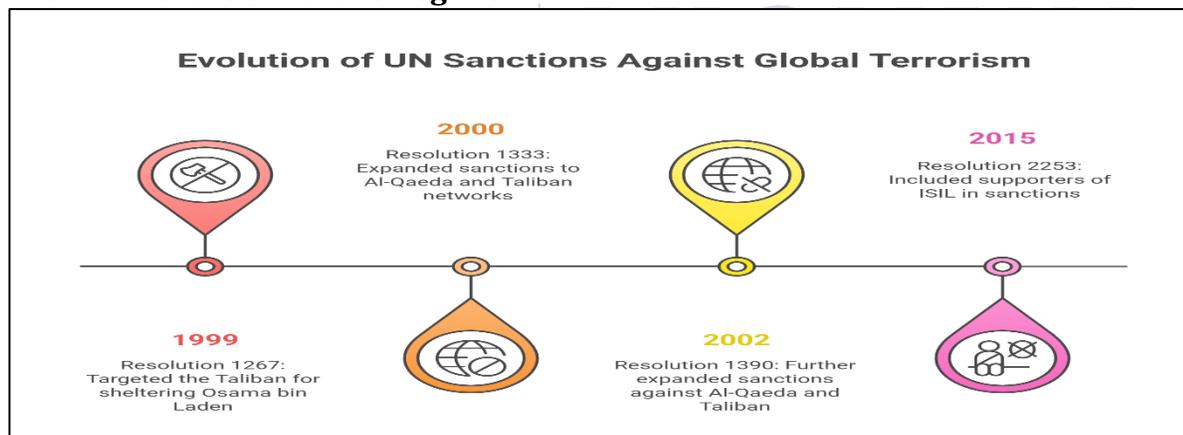
12. UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee and India's Push Against Terrorism

Context: India has recently sent a technical delegation to the United Nations to advocate for the designation of The Resistance Front (TRF) as a terrorist organization under the UN Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee framework.

About the 1267 Sanctions Committee

- The 1267 Sanctions Committee, established under UNSC Resolution 1267 (1999), plays a critical role in global counter-terrorism efforts. Initially created to monitor sanctions against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the committee has since expanded its scope significantly.
 - ✓ **Legal Basis:** The committee operates under Article 41 of the UN Charter, which empowers the Security Council to impose sanctions that do not involve the use of armed force.
 - ✓ **Composition:** It comprises all 15 members of the UN Security Council, including both permanent and non-permanent members.
 - ✓ **Mandate:** The committee maintains and updates the 1267 Sanctions List, which includes individuals, groups, and entities associated with terrorism. Sanctions include:
 - Asset Freezes
 - Travel Bans
 - Arms Embargoes

Evolution of the Sanctions Regime



- **Resolution 1267 (1999):** Targeted the Taliban for providing sanctuary to Osama bin Laden.
- **Resolution 1333 (2000) and 1390 (2002):** Expanded the sanctions to cover entities linked with Al-Qaeda and Taliban networks.
- **Resolution 2253 (2015):** Further widened the scope to include supporters of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), reflecting the changing nature of global terrorism.

India's Stand and Strategic Significance

- India has been proactive in utilizing the 1267 framework to highlight cross-border terrorism, particularly emanating from Pakistan. The recent move to designate The Resistance Front (TRF)—a Pakistan-backed proxy group operating in Jammu and Kashmir—demonstrates India's continued efforts to hold terror sponsors accountable on the global stage.
- Such actions:
 - ✓ Reinforce India's counter-terrorism diplomacy.
 - ✓ Seek international recognition of terror threats in South Asia.
 - ✓ Aim to isolate state-sponsored non-state actors globally.

ECONOMIC SCENARIO

1. WAVES 2025 and India's Creative Economy

Content: The inaugural World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025, held in Mumbai, witnessed the Prime Minister emphasizing the growing role of the creative economy in driving India's economic growth, innovation, and inclusive development. The summit envisions tapping into a \$50 billion market by 2029, positioning India as a leading force in the global entertainment space.

About WAVES 2025

- During the summit, the government announced the creation of the Indian Institute of Creative Technology (IICT) to strengthen the creative ecosystem.
- The institute will be developed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in partnership with FICCI and CII, and will serve as a National Centre of Excellence.

Understanding the Creative Economy

- The creative economy refers to the use of creative assets for generating economic value.
- It includes industries such as media and entertainment, advertising, animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, and extended reality (AVGC-XR).
- Recognizing its global relevance, the United Nations designated 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

India's Creative Economy

- **Economic Impact:** Contributes \$30 billion to the GDP and supports 8% of the national workforce.
- **Export Value:** Generates over \$11 billion in annual creative exports.
- **Key Issues:** The sector faces challenges like misinformation, IP and copyright violations, data privacy concerns, monopolistic practices, limited digital access in rural areas, and insufficient institutional financing.

Policy Initiatives

- **Creative Economy Fund:** A dedicated \$1 billion fund announced by the government to boost creative enterprises.
- **All India Initiative on Creative Economy (AIICE):** Rolled out by the Indian Chamber of Commerce to unlock the potential of India's diverse creative industries.

2. Cabinet Approves Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for Sugarcane

Context: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister, has approved the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane for the 2024–25 sugar season. This move aims to ensure a fair return to farmers while supporting the viability of the sugar industry.

About FRP:

- FRP is the minimum price at which sugar mills are legally obligated to purchase sugarcane from farmers.
- It is fixed by the Central Government under powers granted by the Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966.
- The price is determined based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), taking into account factors such as input costs, productivity, and profit margins.

State Advised Price (SAP)

- In addition to the centrally fixed FRP, certain states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Uttarakhand announce a State Advised Price (SAP).
- The SAP is generally higher than the FRP and is aimed at providing additional benefit to farmers in those regions.

3. NITI Aayog Report: Challenges and Strategies for MSME Competitiveness

Context: The NITI Aayog recently highlighted the critical role of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India's economic landscape. The Union Budget 2025-26 recognized MSMEs as key contributors to employment, economic growth, and exports. However, the sector grapples with several challenges that hinder its potential.

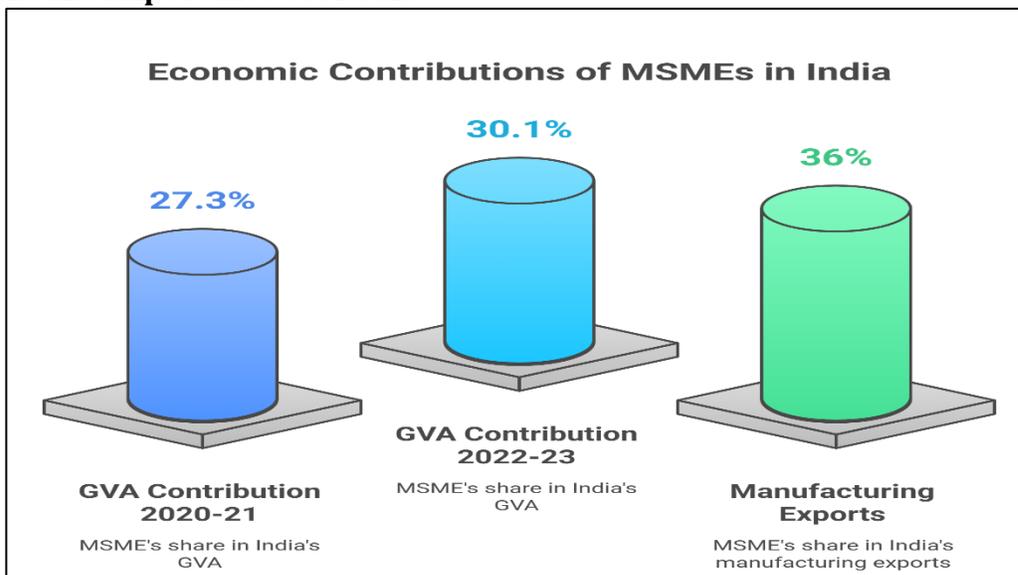
Challenges in MSME Competitiveness

- **Formalisation:** Around 90% of informal enterprises remain outside the formal economy (ILO, 2023).
- **Financial Access:** MSMEs face a credit gap of ₹80 lakh crore due to limited loan access and high credit risk (CRISIL).
- **Skill Gaps:** Only 13% of MSMEs engage in knowledge-based hiring, limiting innovation.
- **Data Deficiency:** Inadequate data on MSMEs, including employment statistics, affects policymaking.
- **Market and Product Issues:** Technological obsolescence, limited product diversity, and a lack of mid-sized firms restrict growth.

Recommendations for Improvement

- **Finance Accessibility:** Strengthen the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for MSMEs (CGTMSE) and enhance NBFC support.
- **Skill Development:** Provide industrial training and business literacy programs.
- **Data Enhancement:** Upgrade the UDYAM portal to improve policy planning.
- **Innovation and Technology:** Promote research and development through targeted initiatives and collaborations.

Economic Importance of MSMEs



- The MSME sector contributed 27.3%–30.1% to India's GVA (2020-21 to 2022-23) and 36% to manufacturing exports. Export growth reached ₹3.95 lakh crore in 2020-21 and is projected to hit ₹12.93 lakh crore by 2024-25.

4. Vizhinjam Port

Context: India has long depended on foreign ports for transshipment, with about 75% of such cargo being handled outside the country. The Vizhinjam Port project aims to reverse this trend by establishing a world-class transshipment hub within India.

About

- Located in Kerala, Vizhinjam Port is India's first dedicated container transshipment port, developed at a cost of ₹8,800 crore.
- Built under the Landlord Model on a PPP basis through DBFOT (Design, Build, Finance, Operate, and Transfer).
- It is the first greenfield port project in India initiated by a state government.

Significance

- **Strategic Location:** Near the East-West international shipping route connecting Europe, the Persian Gulf, and the Far East.
- **Natural Deep Draft:** Depth of ~20 meters, eliminating the need for capital dredging.
- **Curvilinear Coast:** Reduces tsunami impact and maintenance costs.

Need for Transshipment Hub

- Currently, ~75% of India's transshipment cargo is handled at foreign ports like Colombo, Singapore, and Klang.
- Developing Vizhinjam can reduce per-container costs by \$80–100 and annual revenue losses of up to \$220 million.
- Aligns with PM Gati Shakti, National Logistics Policy, and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.

Other Initiatives

- A deepwater port at Vadhvan in Maharashtra and a mega transshipment port at Great Nicobar Island are also planned.

5. Human Development Report 2025

Context: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released the Human Development Report (HDR) 2025, titled "A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of AI". The report focuses on the role of Artificial Intelligence in shaping human development and warns of stalled global progress due to trade tensions, debt crises, and jobless industrialisation.

India's HDI Performance

- India ranked 130th out of 193 countries, with an HDI value of 0.685 in 2023, up from 0.676 in 2022, remaining in the medium human development category.
 - ✓ Life Expectancy: Rose to 72 years (from 67.7 in 2022).

LEADERBOARD

HDI ranking and value (2023)

Rank	Country	HDI value
1	Iceland	0.972
2	Norway	0.970
2	Switzerland	0.970
4	Denmark	0.962
5	Germany	0.959
5	Sweden	0.959
7	Australia	0.958
8	Hong Kong, China (SAR)	0.955
8	Netherlands	0.955
17	United States	0.938
130	India	0.685

HDI: Human Development Index
Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2025

- ✓ Education: Expected schooling increased to 13 years; average years rose to 6.9.
- ✓ GNI per capita: Jumped to \$9,047 (PPP 2021) from \$6,951.
- ✓ India's HDI has increased by 53% since 1990, outpacing global and South Asian averages.

Comparative Rankings

- Above India: China (75), Sri Lanka (78), Bhutan (127).
- Equal: Bangladesh (130).
- Below: Nepal (145), Myanmar (149), Pakistan (168).
- Top: Iceland (0.972), followed by Norway and Switzerland.
- Bottom: South Sudan (0.388).

India's AI Edge

- India is the only low-/middle-income country in the Global AI Index top 10, leading in self-reported AI skills.
- Talent Retention: 20% of Indian AI researchers stayed domestically in 2023, up from near zero in 2019.

6. Revised SHAKTI Policy

Context: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the Revised SHAKTI Policy (Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala Transparently in India), originally launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Coal, to ensure transparent coal allocation to the power sector.

Key Features of the Revised Policy

- **Objective:** To meet dynamic coal demands, promote import substitution, and reduce reliance on imported coal.
- **Simplified Allocation:**
 - ✓ The earlier 8 categories have been merged into 2 streamlined windows:
 - **Window-I:** Coal linkages at notified prices for Central/State Government thermal power plants and their joint ventures.
 - **Window-II:** All thermal power producers, including those using imported coal, can bid through auction, paying a premium over notified prices.
- **PPA Requirement Removed:** Window-II no longer requires a Power Purchase Agreement, encouraging private sector participation.
- **Auction Flexibility:** Coal procurement allowed for periods ranging from 12 months to 25 years.
- **Support for Pithead Plants:** Preference given to setting up thermal plants near coal mines, reducing transport costs.

Related Reforms in the Coal Sector

- **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015:** Enabled transparent coal auctions and private sector participation.
- **MMDR Amendment Act, 2021:** Introduced PL-cum-ML to simplify mining processes.
- **Commercial Coal Mining (2020):** Allowed private mining without end-use restrictions.
- **Surveillance Tools:** CMSMS and Khanan Prahari App launched to monitor and curb illegal mining.

7. MFN Drug Pricing in the US and Its Impact on India's Pharma Sector

Context: The signing of an executive order by former U.S. President Donald Trump to enforce the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause in prescription drug pricing aims to reduce healthcare costs in

the U.S. This move, however, carries significant implications for India's pharmaceutical exports and global trade dynamics.

Understanding the MFN Clause:

- The MFN principle is foundational to the multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO). As per Article 1 of the GATT 1994, member countries are required to treat all trading partners equally by extending the same favorable conditions granted to one to all others. This ensures a rules-based, non-discriminatory trade environment.

U.S. MFN Drug Pricing Policy:

- Currently, the U.S. pays significantly more—nearly three times—for prescription drugs compared to other developed countries. The MFN executive order seeks to tie U.S. drug prices to the lowest rates paid by any developed nation, reducing costs for American consumers.

Implications for India's Pharma Industry:

- **Export Risks:**
 - ✓ The U.S. is India's largest pharmaceutical market, accounting for around \$10 billion annually—almost a third of India's drug exports. The new pricing policy could reduce revenues and affect the competitiveness of Indian generic drugmakers.
- **Impact on Innovation:**
 - ✓ With lower returns from the U.S. market, global pharma companies may slash research and development (R&D) investments, potentially slowing innovation and the development of new drugs.
- **Domestic Pricing Pressure:**
 - ✓ To recover losses from U.S. pricing reforms, companies may increase prices in domestic and other emerging markets, affecting affordability and access to essential medicines in India.

8. Revitalizing India's MSME Sector

Context: The 'Understanding Indian MSME Sector: Progress and Challenges' report, released by SIDBI, highlights persistent structural and operational issues affecting MSMEs across 19 sectors in manufacturing, services, and trading.

Economic Significance:

- MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing 30.1% to Gross Value Added (GVA) in FY 2022–23 and 45.79% to exports as of May 2024. However, the sector continues to face multiple constraints hampering its growth potential.

Key Challenges:

- **Credit Access:** Informality, insufficient credit history, and low awareness of schemes make formal financing difficult.
- **Technology Gap:** Lack of capital and technical know-how hinders adoption of modern technologies needed for competitiveness.
- **Regulatory Burdens and Infrastructure:** Complicated compliance requirements, poor infrastructure, and high input costs increase operational strain.
- **Workforce and Supply Issues:** Shortages of skilled manpower and supply chain inefficiencies further impede productivity.

Recent Government Measures:

- **Budget 2025–26:** Introduced revised MSME classification, Micro Enterprise Credit Cards, a new Fund of Funds, and the National Manufacturing Mission focusing on clean tech.

- **Credit Support Initiatives:** Strengthened Credit Guarantee Scheme and a digital credit assessment model to promote formal financing for micro and small enterprises.

9. NSO Introduces Reforms in PLFS for 2025

Context: The National Statistics Office (NSO) under MoSPI has introduced major reforms to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) from January 2025 to strengthen real-time labour market analysis.

What is PLFS?

- Launched in 2017, PLFS provides timely estimates of employment and unemployment indicators such as:
 - ✓ Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)
 - ✓ Worker Population Ratio (WPR)
 - ✓ Unemployment Rate (UR)
- It was designed to replace older, infrequent surveys and offer continuous labour statistics.

Key Changes from 2025

- **Monthly Labour Data (First Time):**
 - ✓ All-India level indicators (LFPR, WPR, UR) will now be released monthly, based on Current Weekly Status (CWS).
- **Quarterly Estimates for Rural Areas:**
 - ✓ Earlier limited to urban areas, quarterly labour estimates will now include rural India, enhancing data inclusiveness.
- **Calendar Year Reporting:**
 - ✓ Annual reports will now follow the January–December cycle, instead of July–June, aligning with international standards.
- **Larger Sample Size:**
 - ✓ Sample size has increased 2.65 times, improving data accuracy and representation.
- **District as Primary Unit:**
 - ✓ Geographical stratification is now district-based, offering more granular insights, especially in rural labour patterns.
- **Better Rural Stratification:**
 - ✓ Villages are stratified by distance from district HQs or towns with >5 lakh population, improving rural representation.

10. India's Rise as the World's 4th Largest Economy

Context: In early 2025, India has surpassed Japan to emerge as the fourth largest economy globally, with its GDP exceeding USD 4 trillion, signifying a significant milestone. In spite of global uncertainties, India's strong growth places it in the ranks just behind the United States, China, and Germany.

Historical Economic Trajectory:

- 2004–2014: Tripled GDP due to liberalization & IT boom.
- 2014–2024: Growth slowed due to demonetization, GST, COVID-19, inflation, and supply chain disruptions.

Key Drivers of Recent Growth:

- **Robust Services Sector:** Information Technology, financial technology, and telecommunications propelling growth.

- Expansion of the Digital Economy: Unified Payments Interface, Open Network for Digital Commerce, and the JAM Trinity enhancing financial inclusion.
- Government Initiatives: Production-Linked Incentive, Gati Shakti, Make in India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat fostering industrial development.

Challenges Hindering Growth:

- Agricultural Distress: Low productivity, poor monsoons, hidden unemployment.
- Manufacturing Weaknesses: Stagnant sector (~16% GDP), high logistics costs.
- Jobless Growth: Youth unemployment (~15–18%), dominance of informal jobs.
- Rising Inequality & Low Per Capita Income: India ranks 141st globally, stark wealth disparities.

FDI & R&D Concerns:

- Net FDI declined by 96% (2024–25) due to repatriation & policy uncertainties.
- India spends <0.7% of GDP on R&D, lagging behind China (2.4%), U.S. (3.5%), Israel (5%).

Global Economic Risks:

- Tariff wars, global slowdown (3% growth forecast), oil price volatility impact exports & fiscal stability.

11. Northeast India – A Frontrunner in Growth

Context: The Northeast Region (NER) is evolving from a frontier to a growth powerhouse, attracting ₹4.3 lakh crore in investment at the Rising Northeast Investors Summit 2025. Positioned as India's gateway to ASEAN and BBN trade, it plays a vital role in economic expansion, infrastructure development, and national security.

Growth Drivers:

- **Bio-economy & Natural Resources:** Renewable energy (62,000 MW hydro potential), agro-industries, bamboo-based manufacturing, tea production.
- **Tourism & Human Capital:** Eco-tourism hotspots (Kaziranga, Loktak Lake), high literacy (~80%), skilled workforce.
- **Gateway to Southeast Asia:** Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Transport Project enhancing regional trade links.
- **National Security:** 5,484 km border with five countries, strategic Siliguri Corridor linking India's mainland.
- **Infrastructure Push:** ₹1 billion NESIDS fund, major projects like Sela Tunnel, Assam semiconductor plant.

12. Bio-Input Resource Centres (BRCs) under the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)

Context: The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has issued operational guidelines for establishing Bio-Input Resource Centres (BRCs) under the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF), aiming to bolster grassroots-level support for natural farming practices.

What are Bio-Input Resource Centres (BRCs)?

- BRCs are envisioned as cluster-level enterprises that provide farmers with locally prepared, time-tested biological formulations for enhancing soil health, plant nutrition, and pest management. These centres act as decentralised hubs for the production and sale of bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides, and organic inputs.

Key Functions of BRCs:

- Supply and maintain cultures of bio-inputs for farmer use and multiplication.
- Prepare ready-to-use natural inputs tailored to regional agro-ecological conditions.

- Conduct hands-on training for farmers in preparing plant-based and animal-based formulations.
- Serve as knowledge dissemination centres for natural farming practices.

Highlights of the Operational Guidelines

- **Financial Support:** One-time assistance of ₹1 lakh per BRC for input preparation. Costs for infrastructure like sheds and premises are excluded.
- **Convergence Approach:** BRCs will synergise with ongoing initiatives such as the Formation of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and the National Mission on Edible Oils.
- **Eligibility for Operation:** FPOs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Natural Farming Practitioners, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), and Gram Panchayat-level Goshalas are eligible to run BRCs.
- **Localized Input Formulation:** Inputs will be prepared based on local soil types, cropping patterns, and land-use systems.

About National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)

- **Launch:** Announced in Union Budget 2023–24.
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- **Funding Pattern:** 90:10 for NE and Himalayan States; 60:40 for others.
- **Duration:** Till 2025–26.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare.
- **Governance:** A National Steering Committee chaired by the Union Agriculture Minister oversees mission implementation.
- **Mission Targets:**
 - ✓ Promote natural farming in 15,000 Gram Panchayat clusters.
 - ✓ Reach over 1 crore farmers, covering 7.5 lakh hectares.
 - ✓ Establish around 2,000 model natural farms at KVKs, Agricultural Universities, and farmer fields.
 - ✓ Train 30,000 Krishi Sakhis (CRPs) to facilitate knowledge transfer and practice adoption.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. Road Accident Victim Cashless Treatment Scheme

Context: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) launched the Road Accident Victim Cashless Treatment Scheme under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to ensure timely and accessible medical care for road accident victims.

Key Provisions

- **Eligibility:** Any person injured in a road accident involving a motor vehicle.
- **Coverage:** Cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh for 7 days at designated hospitals.
- **Nodal Agency:** State Road Safety Council.
- **Hospital Network:** Includes all capable hospitals, including those under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY.
- **Claim Settlement:** Verified by the State Health Agency, with payments made from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund within 10 days.
- **Monitoring:** A committee headed by the Secretary, MoRTH oversees implementation.

Significance

- India reported ~4.6 lakh road accidents and ~1.68 lakh deaths in 2022, the highest globally. The scheme aligns with the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety to halve traffic deaths by 2030.

Complementary Measures

- **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019:** Strengthens enforcement and penalties.
- **Road Safety Audits:** Mandatory for National Highways.
- **e-DAR Project:** Creates a central database on accidents.
- **Good Samaritan Award:** Encourages timely assistance during the Golden Hour.

2. India's Demographic Transition

Context: The Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021, released by the Office of the Registrar General of India, offers crucial insights into India's demographic health. The findings point towards a steady demographic transition marked by declining fertility and mortality rates, enhanced maternal and child care, and improvements in health service accessibility.

Key Demographic Indicators

1. Crude Birth and Death Rates

- The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) at the national level stands at 19.3 per 1,000 population, reflecting a gradual decline from 19.5 in 2020.
 - ✓ Kerala has the lowest CBR at 12.9, while Bihar records the highest at 25.6, indicating wide inter-state variations.
- The Crude Death Rate (CDR) is 7.5 per 1,000 population.
 - ✓ Chhattisgarh has the highest mortality at 10.1, whereas Delhi records the lowest at 5.4, likely due to better urban healthcare infrastructure.

2. Child Mortality Trends

- Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has improved significantly, declining to 27 per 1,000 live births, from 34 in 2016.
 - ✓ Kerala leads with the lowest IMR at 6, while Madhya Pradesh fares the worst at 41.
- Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) is 31 per 1,000 live births, with Kerala again reporting the lowest at 8.
 - ✓ A noteworthy improvement in female U5MR, which has seen a two-point decline, points to better gender-based health outcomes.
- Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) has reduced to 19, down from 26 in 2014, showing improved neonatal care services.

3. Fertility and Population Stabilization

- The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped to 2.0, falling below the replacement level of 2.1.
 - ✓ States like Delhi and West Bengal have even lower rates at 1.4, indicating that many Indian states are on the verge of or already experiencing population stabilization.

4. Sex Ratio at Birth

- The Sex Ratio at Birth has improved to 913 females per 1,000 males, up from 899 in 2014, indicating gradual progress in addressing gender-based prenatal discrimination.
 - ✓ Kerala has the best ratio at 962, while Uttarakhand records the lowest at 852, reflecting regional disparities that still need attention.

5. Access to Medical Care

- Medical attention during delivery has reached 91.1%, demonstrating near-universal institutional childbirth coverage.
- However, only 39.3% of deceased individuals reportedly received medical attention before death, highlighting a gap in terminal healthcare access, especially in rural and underserved regions.

3. Bonded Labour in India

Context: International Labour Day (May 1st) serves as a reminder of workers' rights and dignity. Yet, for millions of Indians trapped in bonded labour, the day remains symbolic of ongoing exploitation rather than empowerment.

What is Bonded Labour?

- Bonded labour is a form of forced labour where individuals work under coercion due to debt, social obligations, or advance payments, often for nominal or no wages. According to the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, it includes service rendered under any agreement for a specified or unspecified period in lieu of a debt.

Traditional and Modern Forms

- India's deep-rooted feudal practices have historically manifested in systems like Adiyamar, Munjhi, Vetti, Sewakia, among others. Today, these practices have evolved into modern forms, including debt bondage, forced domestic service, exploitative labour in kilns, agriculture, and textiles, and trafficking for labour or marriage.

Magnitude of the Problem

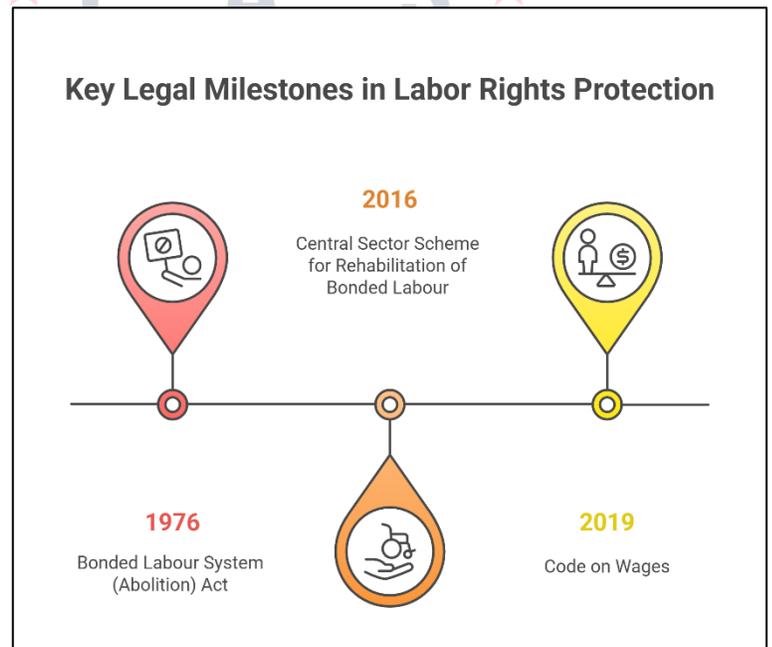
- **Global Slavery Index (2021):** Over 11 million people in India live under modern slavery.
- **NCRB Data (2021):** 592 cases reported under the 1976 Act, 96% involving SC/ST victims.
- **States with High Incidence (MoLE 2018):** Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh top the list.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Constitutional Provisions**
 - ✓ Article 21: Guarantees the right to life with dignity.
 - ✓ Article 23: Prohibits forced labour and human trafficking.
 - ✓ Article 39: Directs the State to secure a just and humane work environment.
- **Major Legal Measures**
 - ✓ **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976:** Declares bonded labour illegal and mandates rehabilitation.
 - ✓ **Code on Wages, 2019:** Ensures minimum wages and timely payment across sectors.
 - ✓ **Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour (2016):**
 - ₹30,000 immediate support; ₹1–3 lakh depending on the victim's profile.
 - Non-financial support: land, housing, skill training.

Institutional Support

- Vigilance Committees at the local level.
- National Human Rights Commission-led awareness and monitoring programmes.
- India's ratification of the ILO Convention on Forced Labour (1957).



Government's Vision and Strategy

- **Vision Document 2030:** Targets 1.84 crore releases, 100% conviction rate, and legal reform to cover emerging exploitative forms.
- **Three-Year Action Plan (2017–20) and Seven-Year Strategy (2017–24):** Holistic approach to identification, rescue, and reintegration.
- **Monitoring Mechanisms:** Proposal for a National Portal to track entitlements and case progress.

Judicial Observations

- In *Neerja Chaudhary vs State of M.P (1984)*, the Supreme Court emphasised the importance of post-release rehabilitation, stating that release without support is equivalent to releasing into poverty again.

4. Jenu Kuruba Tribe

Context: Recent clashes in the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve (Karnataka) have brought the spotlight on the Jenu Kuruba tribe, as 52 evicted families attempted to reclaim ancestral land under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. This incident underlines the broader challenges faced by tribal communities in asserting their rights over traditional forest habitats.

Who are the Jenu Kurubas?

- The Jenu Kuruba, literally translating to "honey gatherers" in Kannada, are an indigenous forest-dwelling tribe predominantly residing in the Mysuru and Kodagu districts of Karnataka. They are one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) recognized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Also known regionally as Then Kurumba or Kattu Naikar, they inhabit forest belts across Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, living in small forest hamlets called Hadi.

Livelihood and Socio-Economic Profile

- Traditionally, the Jenu Kurubas sustained themselves through:
 - ✓ Honey collection
 - ✓ Harvesting of wild tubers
 - ✓ Minor forest produce gathering
- However, large-scale evictions from protected forest areas under wildlife conservation efforts have displaced them. As a result, many now work as marginalised plantation labourers in coffee estates and face acute poverty, food insecurity, and lack of access to education and healthcare.

Social Structure and Leadership

- Their social organisation is semi-nomadic and decentralised, guided by two key figures:
 - ✓ Yajamana (community head) – handles leadership and conflict resolution.
 - ✓ Gudda (ritual chief) – presides over ceremonies and spiritual matters.
- They maintain autonomy in governance, with minimal reliance on external religious or political institutions.

Cultural Practices and Belief System

- The Jenu Kuruba culture is rooted in:
 - ✓ Oral traditions, including songs, dances, and myths centered on forest life, marriage, and ancestral tales.
 - ✓ Animistic belief systems, worshipping nature spirits, forest deities, and ancestral forces.

- ✓ Although they celebrate festivals like Holi, Diwali, and Navratri, their spiritual practices remain distinct from mainstream Hinduism, focusing instead on sylvan divinities and ritual harmony with the natural world.

Issues and Concerns

- **Displacement and Eviction:** Conservation policies often prioritize wildlife protection over indigenous rights, leading to forced evictions from traditional forest lands.
- **Neglect of Forest Rights Act, 2006:** Despite legal provisions for individual and community forest rights, implementation remains poor in several regions.
- **Loss of Livelihoods:** Evicted families lose access to forest produce, which is central to their economy and food security.
- **Identity Erosion:** Displacement undermines their cultural identity and traditional knowledge systems.

5. Dongria Kondh

Context: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recently sought an Action Taken Report from the Chief Secretary of Odisha regarding the poor living conditions and lack of basic amenities for more than 10,000 families belonging to the Dongria Kondh community. This brings renewed focus to the rights and challenges faced by one of India's most distinct tribal groups.

Who are the Dongria Kondhs?

- The Dongria Kondh is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) native to the Niyamgiri Hills spread across Kalahandi and Rayagada districts in Odisha. The community derives its name from dongar, meaning 'hill' in their dialect, and refers to themselves as Jharnia, or "protectors of streams."

Cultural and Religious Beliefs

- The Dongria Kondhs follow a polytheistic animist belief system deeply intertwined with nature. They regard hilltops and forests as sacred and believe that Niyamgiri Hills are the abode of Niyam Raja, a mythical god-king and creator deity. This sacred bond shapes their identity, worldview, and socio-cultural practices.
 - ✓ Their villages feature triangular mountain motifs in shrines, reflecting reverence for Niyamgiri.
 - ✓ Beju and Bejuni serve as male and female ritual priests in the absence of a central religious authority.
 - ✓ Their religious system is decentralised, with each clan and village having distinct ceremonial roles and leaders.

Language and Identity

- The Dongria Kondhs speak Kuyi and Kuvi, languages that are linguistically unrelated to Odia, the official state language. This linguistic isolation further accentuates their cultural uniqueness.
- Their appearance is also distinctive:
 - ✓ Men and women adorn elaborate jewellery, with women wearing multiple earrings and nose rings.
 - ✓ Tattoos and hairstyles are traditional markers of identity and beauty.

Livelihood and Economic Practices

- The Dongria Kondh community primarily relies on:
 - ✓ Podu cultivation (shifting agriculture) on the forest slopes.

- ✓ Collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) such as fruits, honey, herbs, and medicinal plants.
- ✓ Horticulture, including growing pineapples, bananas, turmeric, and other crops, is central to their subsistence economy.
- Their economic and ecological practices have traditionally been sustainable and adapted to the hilly terrain of Niyamgiri.

Challenges Faced by the Community

- Despite constitutional protections, the Dongria Kondh continue to face serious threats and systemic neglect:
- Lack of basic infrastructure: Reports highlight the absence of clean water, healthcare, and education in tribal hamlets.
- Eviction and displacement risks due to industrial and mining interests in the ecologically sensitive Niyamgiri Hills.
- Cultural marginalisation: Limited recognition of their language, traditions, and governance structures leads to alienation.
- Rights under Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006: Although the Dongria Kondhs are eligible for both individual and community forest rights, implementation has been inconsistent.

GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Hesaraghatta Grassland Conservation Reserve

Context

Government of Karnataka notified Hesaraghatta Grassland Conservation Reserve under Section 36A of Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972.

Conservation Reserve

- Protected area category under WPA 1972.
- Declared by State or Central Governments for protecting landscapes, seascapes, flora, and fauna.
- Acts as buffer zones or migration corridors connecting national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserved/protected forests.
- Managed by Conservation Reserve Management Committee appointed by State Government.

About Hesaraghatta Grassland

- Located near Hesaraghatta Lake, Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Last remaining grassland habitat in Bengaluru region.
- Grasslands: dominated by grasses, warm dry climate.
- Globally cover 20–40% of land area; about 24% of India's geographical area.
- Classified into Tropical Savannas, Temperate grasslands, and Steppes.

2. Gully Erosion

Context: A recent study has identified gully landforms in 19 states and the National Capital Region (NCR), highlighting the widespread impact of gully erosion across India. Notably, six states—Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, and Chhattisgarh—which together account for 38% of India's land area, are responsible for 92% of the country's total gullied area.

What is Gully Erosion?

- Gully erosion is caused by the formation and expansion of deep, narrow channels in the soil due to concentrated surface water runoff, especially during heavy rainfall. It is one of the most severe forms of soil erosion and land degradation.

Impacts of Gully Erosion:

- **Loss of productive land:** Reduces arable land availability for farming.
- **Destruction of vegetation:** Leads to the loss of trees and crops.
- **Altered hydrology:** Changes the natural water flow in catchment areas.
- **Land degradation:** Contributes significantly to desertification processes.

3. CAQM's Directives to Curb Stubble Burning in NCR States

Context: The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has issued directives to Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh to control paddy stubble burning, in line with the Supreme Court's judgment in M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India.

About CAQM:

- The CAQM was established for integrated air quality management in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas, aiming to coordinate pollution control strategies effectively.
- **Key Directions Issued:**
 - ✓ **Parali Protection Force:** States are to constitute teams comprising police and agricultural officers to enforce stubble management rules.
 - ✓ **Use in Brick Kilns:** Paddy straw pellets/briquettes are to be co-fired in brick kilns, as done in thermal plants.
 - ✓ **Farm Mapping:** Villages must map each farm to identify the suitable method for managing paddy residue.
 - ✓ **Straw Procurement Rates:** Punjab and UP are directed to fix straw procurement rates akin to Haryana.
 - ✓ **Ex-situ Management:** States must promote equipment like balers and rakers for effective stubble handling.
 - ✓ **Real-Time Monitoring:** An online platform for live data tracking and updated CRM machinery inventories is to be established.
- These measures aim to address winter air pollution and promote sustainable agricultural practices in the region.

4. 16th Lion Census (2025)

Context: The 16th Lion Population Estimation, carried out in May 2025, indicates a significant rise in the population of Asiatic lions in Gujarat, increasing from 674 in 2020 to 891 in 2025, which represents a growth of 32%.

Key Findings:

- **Population Growth:**
 - ✓ An increase of 217 lions has resulted in a total of 891 individuals.
 - ✓ This population comprises 196 males, 330 females, 140 sub-adults, and 225 cubs, indicating a robust reproductive capacity.
- **Expansion beyond Protected Areas:**
 - ✓ A total of 507 lions have been identified outside Gir National Park and its adjacent sanctuaries, showcasing their dispersal into new territories.

- ✓ Three new satellite populations have been documented, particularly in Barda Wildlife Sanctuary, which has re-emerged as a lion habitat after 1879.
- **District-wise Lion Distribution:**
 - ✓ Amreli, with 339 lions, has the largest population.
 - ✓ Significant numbers are also reported in Gir-Somnath (222), Junagadh (191), and Bhavnagar (116).
- **Land-use Trends:**
 - ✓ 55.78% of lions inhabit forested areas;
 - ✓ 44.22% are found in non-forested regions (including agricultural land, wasteland, and riverine zones), underscoring their adaptability.
- **Conservation Efforts & Ecological Impact:**
 - ✓ Agriculturalists appreciate the presence of lions, as these predators assist in managing the populations of blue bulls and wild boars, thereby minimizing damage to crops.
 - ✓ Initiatives aimed at enhancing habitats are being developed to increase the capacity of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
 - ✓ A methodical approach to data collection was employed, engaging 3,254 individuals, which included both specialists and local volunteers.

5. Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) COP 2025

Context: India recently participated in the 2025 Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions, held in Geneva, Switzerland. The Indian delegation was led by the Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.

About BRS COPs

- The BRS COPs are key international forums where member countries to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions convene to review the implementation of global agreements focused on hazardous chemicals and waste management. These COPs are convened biennially to strengthen environmental governance and cooperation.
 - ✓ Venue: Geneva, Switzerland
 - ✓ Theme: “Make visible the invisible: Sound management of chemicals and wastes”

Overview of the BRS Conventions

- **Basel Convention (1989; in force since 1992)**
 - ✓ **Purpose:** Controls the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and ensures their environmentally sound disposal.
 - ✓ **Key Provisions:**
 - Prior Informed Consent (PIC) for cross-border waste shipments.
 - Promotion of waste minimization and recycling.
 - Prohibition on export of hazardous waste to countries lacking the capacity to handle it safely.
- **Rotterdam Convention (1998; in force since 2004)**
 - ✓ **Objective:** Facilitates informed decision-making in international trade of hazardous chemicals and pesticides.
 - ✓ **Mechanism:** Requires exporters to seek consent before shipping certain chemicals to other countries.
 - ✓ **Goal:** Promotes transparency, shared responsibility, and environmental protection in chemical trade.

- **Stockholm Convention (2001; in force since 2004)**
 - ✓ **Focus:** Addresses Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)—toxic substances that bioaccumulate, persist in the environment, and harm human and ecological health.
 - ✓ **Mandate:**
 - Eliminate or restrict POPs.
 - Promote alternatives.
 - Manage and dispose of POPs stockpiles safely.

India's Key Interventions at COPs 2025

- India emphasized the need for:
 - ✓ Equitable access to finance for developing countries.
 - ✓ Technology transfer to enhance sustainable practices.
 - ✓ Capacity-building and technical assistance.
 - ✓ Strengthening global cooperation to ensure effective implementation of the BRS conventions.
- India also showcased its national efforts through:
 - ✓ **Legislative Framework:**
 - Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
 - Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules
 - E-Waste Management Rules, 2016
 - ✓ **Best Practices Shared:**
 - Nationwide ban on select single-use plastic items.
 - Implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for plastic packaging to enforce accountability on producers and recyclers.

6. India's Climate Finance Taxonomy

Context: To channel investments into genuinely sustainable projects and bolster its climate ambitions, the Ministry of Finance has published a draft Framework of India's Climate Finance Taxonomy. This initiative aims to set clear, nationally calibrated definitions and criteria that distinguish environmentally beneficial economic activities from those that merely pay lip service to "green" credentials.

Why a Taxonomy?

- **Prevent Greenwashing:** By laying down precise eligibility criteria, the taxonomy curbs misleading claims of environmental performance.
- **Align Finance with Policy Goals:** It directly supports India's pledge to reach Net Zero by 2070 and build a Viksit Bharat by 2047.
- **Inform Global Negotiations:** A transparent, homegrown standard strengthens India's position in multilateral climate finance discussions and addresses disagreements over developed countries' funding commitments.

Categories of Activities

- **Climate Supportive:** Projects directly cutting greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., solar and wind farms) or enhancing resilience (e.g., urban flood management).
- **Climate Transition:** Initiatives reducing emission intensity in difficult-to-abate sectors such as iron & steel, cement, and petrochemicals through fuel switching or efficiency gains.

Priority Sectors

- **Power Generation:** Scale up from 470 GW to 777 GW by 2030–49, with advanced ultra-supercritical thermal plants (46% efficiency) alongside renewables.
- **Buildings & Infrastructure:** Green building materials, resilient design, and energy retrofits.
- **Transport:** Electrification, mass transit, and logistics optimisation.
- **Agriculture & Food Systems:** Climate-smart irrigation, precision farming, and supply-chain resilience.
- **Water Security & Ecosystems:** Watershed management, urban storm-water systems, and wetlands restoration.

Investment Needs

- According to India’s Initial Adaptation Communication (December 2023), ₹56.68 trillion (≈ USD 648 billion) is required by 2030 across agriculture, forestry, fisheries, infrastructure, water resources, and ecosystems to shore up climate resilience.

7. Primates in Peril Report: The World’s 25 Most Endangered Primates 2023–2025

Context: A global team of primate researchers has released the Primates in Peril: The World’s 25 Most Endangered Primates 2023–2025, highlighting the grave threats faced by some of the world's most vulnerable primate species. Although two Indian species — Phayre’s Langur and the Western Hoolock Gibbon — were considered, they did not feature in the final list, emphasizing the growing concern over their conservation status.

About Primates

Core Principles	
Principle	Description
 National Priorities	Reflects India's development and climate goals
 Country Pathways	Context-sensitive, avoids universal benchmarks
 Interoperability	Harmonises with global taxonomies
 Transition Support	Recognises shifts in heavy industries
 Indigenous Technologies	Credits home-grown innovations
 Transparency	Requires data disclosure, verification
 Proportionality	Calibrates MSME participation requirements
 No Significant Harm	Advances climate goals sustainably

- Primates, the mammalian group that includes monkeys, apes, and humans, are categorized into two major groups:
 - ✓ Strepsirrhines (wet-nosed primates): Includes lemurs, lorises, and galagos.
 - ✓ Haplorhines (dry-nosed primates): Includes monkeys, apes, tarsiers, and humans.
- **Key Traits:**
 - ✓ Large brains enabling complex social behavior and problem-solving.
 - ✓ Binocular and color vision aiding depth perception.
 - ✓ Flexible limbs and opposable thumbs (in most species) for adept movement and manipulation.
 - ✓ Size variation ranges from the tiny Madame Berthe's mouse lemur (~30g) to the massive Eastern gorilla (over 200 kg).

Highlights of the 'Primates in Peril 2023–2025' Report

- The report identifies 25 primate species globally as the most endangered.
- **Top endangered species:**
 - ✓ Cross River Gorilla (Cameroon, Nigeria)
 - ✓ Tapanuli Orangutan (Sumatra, Indonesia)
- **Geographical distribution:**
 - ✓ Africa: 6 species
 - ✓ Asia: 9 species
 - ✓ Madagascar: 4 species
 - ✓ South America: 6 species

India's At-Risk Primates

- **Phayre's Langur (*Trachypithecus phayrei*)**
 - ✓ **Range:** Northeast India, eastern Bangladesh, western Myanmar.
 - ✓ **Status:** Endangered (IUCN)
 - ✓ **Threats:** Severe population decline (50%–80% in three generations) due to habitat loss and fragmentation.
- **Western Hoolock Gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*)**
 - ✓ **Range:** Northeastern India, eastern Bangladesh, western Myanmar.
 - ✓ **Status:** Endangered (IUCN), Schedule I of WPA, Appendix II of CITES.
 - ✓ **Threats:** Habitat destruction from agriculture, encroachment, and infrastructure expansion.

Recommendations for Conservation

- **Integrated Conservation Action Plans:** Comprehensive population assessments, genetic studies, and viability analysis of small populations are essential for informed conservation.
- **Habitat Connectivity:** Enhancing forest corridors and facilitating transboundary conservation efforts can mitigate habitat fragmentation.
- **Legal and Community Engagement:** Strengthening implementation of environmental laws, coupled with public awareness and local participation, can reduce poaching and habitat destruction.
- **Translocation and Rewilding:** Carefully planned animal translocations and reintroduction of rescued or confiscated individuals into natural habitats can support population recovery.

8. Saola

Context: The Saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*), one of the rarest large land mammals, is often referred to as the "Asian Unicorn" due to its elusive nature. First discovered in 1992, it inhabits the Annamite Mountains along the Vietnam–Laos border. A recent scientific breakthrough has successfully mapped its genome, offering renewed hope for its conservation.

Physical and Ecological Characteristics

- Saolas are known for their long, straight, parallel horns and white facial markings, seen in both sexes. They inhabit moist evergreen forests with little to no dry season. As a unique herbivore, the Saola represents an ancient evolutionary lineage and serves as a flagship species for Annamite biodiversity.

Conservation Status and Threats

- IUCN Status: Critically Endangered
- Estimated Population: 50 to 300 (as of 2015)
- Major Threats:
 - ✓ Snaring and Illegal Hunting: Primary cause of mortality, with traps set for other animals.
 - ✓ Habitat Loss: Due to agriculture and infrastructure development.
 - ✓ Habitat Fragmentation: Prevents breeding and genetic exchange.
 - ✓ Low Reproductive Rate: Increases extinction risk under pressure.



Genetic Insights and Conservation Potential

- Researchers found two genetically distinct Saola populations, diverged 5,000–20,000 years ago, likely due to habitat changes post-Last Glacial Maximum.
- Human agricultural expansion (~4,000 years ago) led to genetic isolation.
- Interestingly, both groups lost different genetic traits; their complementary gene pools offer hope. Genome mapping could help restore genetic diversity through future breeding programs.

DEFENSE & INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Civil Defence Exercise in India: Preparedness for Hostile Emergencies

Context: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has decided to conduct a Civil Defence Exercise across 244 Civil Defence Districts, which are strategically vulnerable areas identified from the perspective of enemy attacks.

Objective of the Exercise

- The primary goal is to assess preparedness and coordination among civilians and authorities during emergencies such as wars, missile strikes, and aerial attacks. The last such exercise was held during the build-up to the 1971 Indo-Pak war, highlighting its strategic importance.

Key Components

- Testing air raid warning systems and control room functionality.
- Activating Hotline and Radio Communication Links with the Indian Air Force.
- Training civilians and students in self-protection during hostile situations.
- Practicing evacuation drills and camouflaging vital installations.

Legal Framework

- India's Civil Defence mechanism is governed by the Civil Defence Act, 1968, enacted post the 1962 and 1965 wars. The Act empowers the government to implement protective measures and raise a Civil Defence Corps.

2. Operation Sindoor

Context: India launched Operation Sindoor on 7th May 2025 in retaliation to the Pahalgam terrorist attack. Conducted from Indian territory, the coordinated mission involved the Army, Navy, and Air Force, targeting nine terrorist infrastructure sites in Pakistan and PoJK linked to JeM, LeT, and Hizbul Mujahideen.

- Unlike previous offensives with aggressive names, "Sindoor" symbolically honours victims' families, especially the widows of the Pahalgam attack. The operation was led by Wing Commander Vyomika Singh and Colonel Sofiya Qureshi during the official briefing.

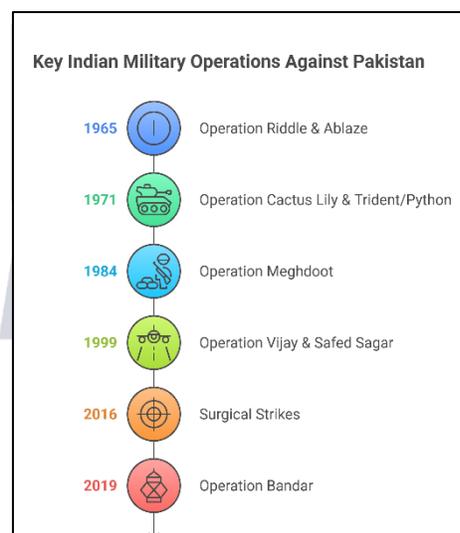
High-Precision Weapons Used

- **SCALP Cruise Missiles (from Rafale jets):** Long-range, air-launched missiles for deep strikes.
- **HAMMER Bombs:** Medium-range guided munitions adaptable to varied targeting needs.
- **Loitering Munitions:** Surveillance-enabled kamikaze drones for real-time, precise engagements.

Past Indian Military Operations Against Pakistan

- **Operation Riddle & Ablaze (1965):** Responses to Pakistani incursions, showcasing military preparedness.
- **Operation Cactus Lily & Trident/Python (1971):** Decisive actions in the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- **Operation Meghdoot (1984):** Secured strategic positions in Siachen Glacier.
- **Operation Vijay & Safed Sagar (1999):** Recaptured Kargil peaks and used air power effectively.
- **2016 Surgical Strikes & Operation Bandar (2019):** Targeted terror camps across the LoC after Uri and Pulwama attacks.

Operation Sindoor signifies India's evolving capability in using precision weaponry and coordinated responses to neutralize cross-border terror threats.



3. India's Air Defence System

Context: India's Air Defence System (ADS) is evolving into a robust, multi-layered shield designed to neutralize aerial threats ranging from unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and drones to ballistic missiles and fighter aircraft. At the heart of this defence is an Integrated Counter-UAS Grid, supported by a network of Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) systems. These systems form the backbone of India's capability to secure its skies across short, medium, and long ranges.

Key SAM Systems in India's ADS

1. S-400 Triumph

- **Origin:** Russia (Indian name: Sudarshan Chakra)
- **Type:** Long-range SAM system
- **Features:**

- ✓ Provides 360° radar and missile coverage.
- ✓ Integrates phased-array radars, command-and-control units, and electronic warfare countermeasures.
- ✓ Compatible with multiple missile types for layered defence.
- **Capabilities:**
 - ✓ Detection Range: Up to 600 km
 - ✓ Engagement Range: Up to 400 km
 - ✓ Altitude Coverage: 30 m to 30 km
 - ✓ Can track and engage multiple targets simultaneously, including aircraft, drones, and ballistic missiles.

2. Barak 8

- **Origin:** Jointly developed by India and Israel
- **Type:** Medium to Long-Range SAM
- **Features:**
 - ✓ High-speed interception at Mach 2
 - ✓ Suitable for both naval and land platforms
 - ✓ Capable of engaging multiple aerial threats concurrently
 - ✓ Range: Up to 100 km

3. Akash Weapon System

- **Origin:** Indigenously developed by India
- **Type:** Short-Range SAM
- **Features:**
 - ✓ Equipped with Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM)
 - ✓ Capable of operating in autonomous or group modes
 - ✓ Fully automatic with rapid reaction from target detection to interception
- **Capabilities:**
 - ✓ Range: 4.5 km to 25 km
 - ✓ Altitude Coverage: 100 m to 20 km
 - ✓ High resistance to jamming
 - ✓ Uses command guidance for accuracy

4. BrahMos Testing Facility Boosts Defence Manufacturing in UP

Context: The Defence Minister inaugurated the BrahMos Aerospace Testing Facility in Lucknow, a key part of the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor.

About BrahMos Missile:

- It is a long-range supersonic cruise missile, jointly developed by India's DRDO and Russia's NPOM.
- Named after Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers, it operates on a "fire and forget" principle. It is a two-stage missile—first stage uses solid propellant; second stage uses a liquid ramjet engine, achieving speeds up to Mach 3. It has a range of 290 km.
- BrahMos NG is a smaller, more lethal variant.
- Key features include stealth, pinpoint accuracy, and ability to engage various targets.

Advantages:

- It is a universal missile deployable from land, sea, and air. It has export potential, with delivery to the Philippines in 2024. It ensures faster response and reduced target dispersion.

Defence Industrial Corridors:

- India is developing two such corridors—one in Uttar Pradesh (Agra, Aligarh, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kanpur, Lucknow) and the other in Tamil Nadu (Chennai, Coimbatore, Hosur, Salem, Tiruchirappalli)—to boost domestic defence and aerospace production.

5. India's Largest Anti-Naxal Operation

Context: In May 2025, Indian security forces executed "Operation Black Forest," the largest anti-Naxal operation in the country's history. Conducted over 21 days, the operation targeted the Karreguttalu Hills (KGH) on the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border — a long-time bastion of the Communist Party of India (Maoist). It resulted in the elimination of 31 Naxalites, including 16 women cadres, with no casualties among security personnel.

Key Achievements

- **High-Value Neutralization:** The operation dismantled key leadership of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) Battalion No. 1. Security forces also recovered a large cache of weapons and explosives and destroyed 214 hideouts, striking a major blow to Maoist infrastructure and morale.
- **Tactical Victory:** The operation led to a strategic disruption of the CPI (Maoist) command structure, significantly limiting their ability to regroup or coordinate across multiple states.

The Decline of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)

- Left-Wing Extremism, rooted in the 1967 Naxalbari uprising, has long plagued central and eastern India. However, recent data indicates a marked decline:
 - ✓ The number of LWE-affected districts has decreased from 126 (2014) to 18 (2025).
 - ✓ 'Most affected' districts have reduced from 35 to just 6.
 - ✓ Violence has dropped significantly, with an 81% reduction in incidents and 85% reduction in deaths since 2010.
 - ✓ In 2024 alone, 290 Naxals were neutralized, 1,090 arrested, and 881 surrendered.

Government Strategy Against LWE

- India's approach to tackling Naxalism has been multi-pronged, combining security operations with socio-economic development:
 - ✓ **National Policy and Action Plan (2015):** This comprehensive framework emphasizes a zero-tolerance approach to violence while promoting development and good governance.
 - ✓ **'SAMADHAN' Doctrine:** It represents a coordinated effort with Smart leadership, Aggressive strategy, Motivation and training, Actionable intelligence, Dashboard-based performance, Harnessing technology, and No access to financing for Naxalites.
 - ✓ **Developmental Push:** Initiatives like the construction of highways through inaccessible regions (e.g., NH-130D through Abujhmarh) aim to integrate remote areas into the mainstream. Programs such as the Aspirational District Programme and Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan focus on improving basic services and livelihoods.

6. Vikasit Bharat 2047: NITI Aayog Paper

Context: Geopolitical tensions, disruptions in global supply chains, and threats to cybersecurity have progressively revealed vulnerabilities in India's defense logistics. To safeguard its strategic interests and reach the target of ₹3 lakh crore in domestic defense production by 2029, India is required to enact comprehensive reforms aimed at fortifying its defense infrastructure and improving national security.

Key Challenges in Defense Supply Chains:

- **Import Dependence & Geopolitical Risks:** Dependence on international suppliers for essential components renders India susceptible to trade restrictions and interruptions.
- **Cybersecurity Threats:** Espionage activities and data breaches have the potential to jeopardize sensitive military data.
- **Modernization Challenges:** Swift technological progress results in obsolescence, which impacts operational effectiveness.
- **Procurement & Budget Constraints:** Poor inventory management, regulatory holdups, and financial restrictions impede the advancement of defense.

Current Status of India's Defense Production:

- **Indigenous Production:** Witnessed a remarkable increase of 174% since the fiscal year 2014-15, culminating in a total of ₹1,27,000 crore for the year 2023-24.
- **Defense Exports:** Achieved an unprecedented milestone of ₹23,000 crore in the fiscal year 2024-25, reflecting India's expanding influence on the global stage.
- **Private Sector Participation:** Private enterprises contributed ₹15,233 crore to defense exports in 2024-25, highlighting the growth of this sector.

Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Defense Supply Chains:

- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Improving research and development collaboration, outsourcing maintenance tasks, and utilizing the Government-Owned, Corporate-Operated (Go-Co) model.
- **Cybersecurity Enhancements:** Establishing blockchain security frameworks, conducting cybersecurity audits, and integrating smart contracts into procurement processes.
- **Legal & Policy Reforms:** Revising defense legislation (such as the Defense of India Act, 1962) to bolster domestic manufacturing capabilities.
- **International Defense Cooperation:** Engaging in strategic technology transfers, forming global alliances (with the US, Russia, Israel), and diversifying suppliers.

7. Bhargavastra

Context: India has successfully test-fired Bhargavastra, an indigenously developed low-cost anti-drone system, enhancing its defense capabilities against rising aerial threats.

About:

- Developed by Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited (SDAL), Bhargavastra is a 'hard kill' system designed to neutralize drone swarms through physical destruction.
- **Key Features:**
 - ✓ **Two-layer Defense:**
 - Layer 1: Unguided micro-rockets with a 20-meter lethal radius.
 - Layer 2: Guided micro-missiles for precise targeting.
 - ✓ **Detection Range:** Detects drones up to 2.5 km; radar coverage extends to 10 km.
 - ✓ **Terrain Adaptability:** Operates above 5,000 meters altitude.
 - ✓ **Modular Design:** Supports soft-kill tech like jamming and spoofing.
 - ✓ **C4I Enabled:** Integrates with network-centric warfare systems.

8. National Security Advisory Board (NSAB)

Context: The Government of India has recently reconstituted the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), appointing former R&AW Chief Alok Joshi as Chairman. The move comes amid growing national and global security challenges.

What is NSAB?

- The NSAB is an advisory body under the National Security Council (NSC), offering long-term strategic insights on national security. It was established in December 1998, under NSA Brajesh Mishra, to incorporate expert knowledge from outside the government.

Objectives and Role

- Provide independent and non-partisan analysis on security issues.
- Suggest policy options and strategic perspectives to the NSC.
- Contributed to drafting India's Nuclear Doctrine (2001) and National Security Review (2007).

Tenure and Composition

- Initially, members served for one year, but since 2004-06, it has adopted a two-year term system.
- Presently, NSAB has 16 members, including retired military officers, diplomats, IPS officers, academics, and civil society experts.

Structure and Functioning

- Functions under the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS).
- Subordinate bodies:
 - ✓ National Information Board (NIB)
 - ✓ Technology Coordination Group (TCG)
- Holds monthly or emergency meetings to assess threats.
- Advises the National Security Adviser (NSA) through independent reports.
- Recommends measures in defence, cyber, internal security, and diplomacy.
- Acts as a bridge between government mechanisms and strategic academia.

9. Supreme Court Recognises CAPF Officers as Organised Services

Context: On May 23, 2025, the Supreme Court delivered a significant verdict declaring that Group A officers of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), including those from 1986 batches onwards, are to be recognised as part of Organised Group A Services (OGAS) for all service-related matters.

About CAPFs

- The CAPFs are India's key paramilitary forces tasked with internal security and border management. They include:
 - ✓ Assam Rifles (AR) – Indo-Myanmar border
 - ✓ Border Security Force (BSF) – Pakistan and Bangladesh borders
 - ✓ Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) – Law and order, anti-Naxal operations
 - ✓ Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) – Security to industrial and government infrastructure
 - ✓ Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) – India-China border
 - ✓ Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) – Nepal and Bhutan borders

Background of the Case

- For years, CAPF officers faced promotion stagnation, largely due to lateral induction of IPS officers, which limited career growth and undermined morale. Officers demanded cadre restructuring, Non-Functional Financial Upgradation (NFFU), and the phasing out of IPS deputation.

Supreme Court's Key Directions

- Recognition of CAPF Group A officers as OGAS since 1986 batches
- Reduction of IPS deputation at senior levels within two years

- Completion of cadre restructuring within six months
- Amendment of recruitment rules to ensure timely promotions

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. Gaganyaan Mission: India's Human Spaceflight Programme

Context: ISRO has rescheduled the Gaganyaan mission to the first quarter of 2027. This marks a major milestone in India's ambition to send humans to space.

Mission Objective

- To demonstrate India's human spaceflight capability by launching three astronauts into a 400 km Low Earth Orbit for three days, followed by a sea-based return.

Progress and Upcoming Tests

- TV-D1 (Test Vehicle Abort Mission-1) was successfully completed.
- TV-D2 will precede uncrewed orbital flights.
- Vyommitra, a female robot (gynoid), will be aboard the first uncrewed mission.

Components of Gaganyaan

1. Launch Vehicle – LVM-3

- Formerly GSLV Mk-III; a three-stage rocket:
 - ✓ Stage 1: Solid-fuel boosters
 - ✓ Stage 2: Two liquid-fueled Vikas 2 engines
 - ✓ Stage 3: CE-20 cryogenic engine (liquid hydrogen + oxygen)

2. Orbital Module (8.2 tonnes)

- Includes:
 - ✓ Crew Module:
 - Accommodates 3 astronauts
 - ECLSS for life support
 - Parachutes for descent, escape system for safety
 - ✓ Service Module:
 - Provides propulsion and power
 - Assists altitude correction and return journey

2. Lafora Disease

Context: A recent breakthrough study has sparked renewed hope in the treatment of Lafora Disease, a rare and fatal genetic neurological disorder.

What is Lafora Disease?

- Lafora Disease is a progressive condition classified under autosomal recessive progressive myoclonus epilepsy (PME). It severely affects the brain and nervous system, leading to recurrent seizures, cognitive decline, and loss of motor coordination.

Genetic Basis:

- The condition is caused by mutations in either the EPM2A or EPM2B (NHLRC1) genes. Inheriting defective copies from both parents results in the onset of the disease, typically in adolescence.

Prevalence and Risk Factors:

- Lafora Disease is more prevalent in areas with higher rates of consanguineous marriages. Affected regions include parts of the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, France), Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Southern India.

3. Samudrayaan Mission

Context: The Samudrayaan Mission, a key component of India's Deep Ocean Mission (DOM), is set to be launched by the end of 2026. Spearheaded by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai, this mission aims to send Indian scientists 6,000 metres below sea level in a manned submersible named MATSYA 6000, marking India's entry into an elite group of nations capable of deep-sea human exploration.

Objectives and Significance:

- Samudrayaan is designed to:
 - ✓ Facilitate deep-sea research and exploration of marine biodiversity.
 - ✓ Assess non-living resources like polymetallic nodules, hydrothermal sulphides, and rare earth elements.
 - ✓ Promote comprehensive ocean observation systems.
 - ✓ Lay groundwork for future deep-sea tourism in India.
- Globally, only a few countries—the U.S., Russia, China, France, and Japan—have achieved such feats, making Samudrayaan a major step in India's scientific and technological advancement.

About MATSYA 6000:

- It is a 4th Generation human-crewed submersible, being indigenously developed.
- Designed to operate up to 6,000 metres depth.
- Has completed successful wet testing.
- Endurance: 12 hours operational, and 96 hours in emergency mode.
- Built to carry 3 persons, ensuring both safety and scientific efficiency.

Deep Ocean Mission (DOM):

- Launched: 2021
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Earth Sciences
- Timeline: 5 years
- Aim: To develop deep-sea technologies and promote sustainable utilization of oceanic resources, contributing to India's Blue Economy.

Blue Economy in India:

- Encompasses sectors like fisheries, maritime transport, coastal tourism, and seabed mining.
- Accounts for approximately 4% of India's GDP.
- Plays a vital role in employment, energy security, and environmental sustainability.

4. India's First Biological Experiments aboard ISS

Context: India is set to conduct first-ever biological experiments aboard the International Space Station (ISS) under the AXIOM-4 mission, featuring Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla. Led by ISRO & DBT, these experiments aim to study the sustainability of human life in space.

Key Experiments:

- **Microalgae Study:** Examines effects of microgravity & radiation on nutrient-rich edible microalgae, crucial for space nutrition.

- **Cyanobacteria Study:** Explores growth & proteomic responses of Spirulina & Synechococcus under space conditions, assessing Spirulina as a superfood.

BioE3 Policy:

- **Implemented by:** DBT, Ministry of Science & Technology.
- **Objective:** Drive high-performance biomanufacturing using advanced biotech innovations.

Significance:

- Advances India's space research in astrobiology & sustainable space habitation.
- Strengthens global collaborations, including NASA participation.
- Positions India as a leader in biotechnology & space exploration.

5. ICAR Develops World's First Genome-Edited Rice Varieties

Context: In a major scientific breakthrough, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed the world's first genome-edited rice varieties—DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala) and Pusa DST Rice 1. These varieties promise higher yields, enhanced drought and salinity tolerance, and better nitrogen-use efficiency, supporting climate-resilient agriculture.

What is Genome Editing?

- Genome editing involves precise changes to a plant's native DNA using tools like CRISPR-Cas9, without introducing foreign genes. Unlike genetically modified (GM) crops, which involve inserting external DNA, genome editing targets and modifies existing genetic material. India exempts genome-edited crops (under SDN1 and SDN2 categories) from stringent GMO regulations under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Details of the New Varieties

- **DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala)**
 - ✓ Developed by: ICAR-IIRR, Hyderabad
 - ✓ Parent: Samba Mahsuri
 - ✓ Trait Edited: CKX2 gene (Gn1a)
 - ✓ Technology: Site Directed Nuclease 1 (SDN1)
 - ✓ Benefits:
 - Early maturity (130 days)
 - 19% yield increase over parent (5.37 t/ha vs. 4.5 t/ha)
 - Drought tolerance and nitrogen-use efficiency
 - Maintains grain quality
- **Pusa DST Rice 1**
 - ✓ Developed by: ICAR-IARI, New Delhi
 - ✓ Parent: MTU1010
 - ✓ Trait Edited: DST gene
 - ✓ Technology: SDN1
 - ✓ Benefits:
 - Enhanced salinity and drought tolerance
 - Up to 30% higher yield in stress conditions
 - Comparable to conventional rice in safety and nutrition

National Significance

- **Yield Boost & Food Security:** Cultivating these varieties on 5 million ha could raise paddy output by 4.5 million tonnes.

- **Climate Resilience:** Greater stress tolerance and early maturity reduce water use and emissions.
- **Water Savings:** Kamala needs three fewer irrigations, saving 7,500 million cubic metres of water.
- **Economic Impact:** Genome-edited rice can help bridge India's yield gap with countries like China and Indonesia.

Regulatory & Policy Backing

- Cleared by Institutional Biosafety Committees and RCGM in 2023
- Exempt from GMO rules (Rules 7–11 of 1989 rules)
- Supported by a ₹500 crore government fund for genome-editing research
- IPR issues are being actively addressed by ICAR

6. India to Host Global Space Exploration Summit (GLEX) 2025

Context: India is set to host the 12th edition of the Global Space Exploration Conference (GLEX 2025) from 7th to 9th May 2025 in New Delhi, marking a significant milestone in its ascent as a global space power.

About GLEX 2025

- Themed “Reaching New Worlds: A Space Exploration Renaissance”, GLEX 2025 will focus on innovation, inclusivity, and international cooperation in space exploration. The event is being jointly organized by:
 - ✓ International Astronautical Federation (IAF) – the premier global space advocacy organisation
 - ✓ Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) – as the main host
 - ✓ Astronautical Society of India (ASI) – as the co-host
- This conference positions India as a rising leader in global space diplomacy and technological collaboration, reflecting its evolution from a regional space participant to a prominent international stakeholder.

Significance of the IAF

- Founded in 1951, the International Astronautical Federation connects over 500 members across 78 countries, including leading space agencies, industries, research institutions, and universities.
- With its motto “Connecting @ll Space People”, the IAF promotes collaborative space exploration efforts, sharing policy, scientific, and technical knowledge across nations.

Importance for India

- Hosting GLEX 2025 signals India's growing credibility in the space sector. It offers an opportunity to:
 - ✓ Showcase indigenous achievements in space missions
 - ✓ Foster international partnerships
 - ✓ Promote peaceful and cooperative uses of outer space
 - ✓ Influence future global space governance and policy frameworks

7. AI Agents – The Next Leap in Artificial Intelligence

Context: Artificial Intelligence is evolving rapidly, and the rise of AI agents such as GPT-4o and Google's Project Astra marks a significant technological leap. These systems go far beyond

traditional voice assistants like Siri or Alexa, offering real-time, intelligent, and multi-sensory interaction capabilities.

What are AI Agents?

- AI agents are advanced systems designed to interact with humans in a more natural and intuitive manner. They operate across multiple modes—text, voice, image, and environmental inputs. These agents can perceive their surroundings using sensors, process data through sophisticated algorithms, and respond intelligently, often with autonomy.

How Are AI Agents Different from Language Models?

- Unlike conventional large language models (LLMs) like GPT-3 or GPT-4, which work only with text inputs and outputs, AI agents are multi-modal. They can handle speech, images, and real-time interactions, making conversations more natural and dynamic.
- Moreover, AI agents are context-aware. They learn from ongoing interactions and can offer personalised responses. While LLMs simply generate text outputs without decision-making abilities, AI agents can autonomously perform tasks like coding, data analysis, and even physical actions when integrated with robotics.

Potential Applications

- AI agents hold immense promise across various sectors:
 - ✓ Customer Service: They can resolve queries instantly through natural conversation, reducing dependency on human support.
 - ✓ Education: These agents can function as personal tutors, adapting to individual learning styles and needs.
 - ✓ Healthcare: They assist doctors with real-time diagnostics, patient monitoring, and decision support systems.
 - ✓ Workplace Productivity: From managing calendars to generating reports, AI agents can serve as highly efficient digital assistants.

Opportunities and Benefits

- Enhanced human-machine interaction
- Automation of complex and repetitive tasks
- Personalised services in education and healthcare
- Improved efficiency and reduced operational costs

8. Super-Fast Charging Sodium-Ion Battery

Context: In a significant scientific breakthrough, Indian researchers at the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru, have developed an indigenous sodium-ion battery with ultra-fast charging capability. This innovation has the potential to reshape India's energy storage ecosystem and reduce dependence on imported lithium-based technologies.

What is the Innovation?

- The newly developed battery is a next-generation sodium-ion battery (SIB) that can charge up to 80% within just six minutes and endure more than 3,000 charge-discharge cycles, making it highly suitable for high-demand applications such as electric vehicles (EVs), solar grids, and rural energy systems.

Key Technological Features

- NASICON Framework: The battery utilises a stable crystal structure known as NASICON, which enables swift sodium-ion movement across both electrodes.

- **Advanced Anode Material:** A specially engineered compound— $\text{Na}_{1.0}\text{V}_{0.25}\text{Al}_{0.25}\text{Nb}_{1.5}(\text{PO}_4)_3$ —enhances ion conductivity and energy storage performance.
- **Nanotechnology Integration:** Nanoscale particle design increases surface area, accelerating ion movement and reducing charge time.
- **Carbon Coating:** A protective carbon layer improves electrical conductivity and minimizes material degradation.
- **Aluminium Doping:** Inclusion of aluminium enhances the structural integrity of the battery, promoting long-term efficiency.

Distinctive Advantages

- **Ultra-Fast Charging:** Achieves 80% charge in just six minutes, vital for EV infrastructure.
- **High Durability:** Surpasses 3,000 life cycles, reducing the need for frequent replacements.
- **Enhanced Safety:** Minimises thermal risks associated with lithium-ion batteries, improving safety standards.
- **Tested and Proven:** The battery has been validated using advanced electrochemical testing and quantum simulations.

Superiority Over Lithium-Ion Technology

- **Abundant Raw Material:** Sodium is widely available in India, unlike lithium which is largely imported.
- **Economic and Strategic Benefit:** Reduces foreign dependence and aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat mission.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Sodium extraction involves less ecological damage compared to lithium mining.
- **Versatile Applications:** Can be deployed across electric vehicles, drones, solar energy systems, and rural electrification projects.
- **Geopolitical Stability:** Reduces India's vulnerability to international supply chain disruptions.

9. Understanding the Moon's Two Faces: Insights from NASA's GRAIL Mission

Context: The Moon, Earth's only natural satellite, presents a striking contrast between its two hemispheres—the nearside and the farside. Recent findings from NASA's Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory (GRAIL) mission have shed new light on the underlying reasons behind this lunar asymmetry, offering deeper insight into the Moon's geological history and structure.

The Two Hemispheres of the Moon

- **Nearside:** This is the hemisphere that always faces the Earth. It is characterised by large, dark plains called mare, formed from ancient volcanic activity. The nearside's crust is thinner, allowing magma to emerge more readily, leading to smoother and more uniform terrain.
- **Farside:** The hemisphere that remains hidden from Earth's view. It has a much more rugged and heavily cratered surface. The farside's crust is significantly thicker, which restricted volcanic eruptions, preventing the formation of extensive plains.

GRAIL Mission: An Overview

- The Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory (GRAIL) was a NASA lunar science mission launched in 2011. It involved two spacecraft—Ebb and Flow—which orbited the Moon to map its gravitational field with high precision. The mission's key objective was to understand the Moon's internal structure and geological evolution.

- Scientific Value: GRAIL's data has enhanced models of planetary formation and has also contributed to understanding other celestial bodies like Enceladus (Saturn) and Ganymede (Jupiter).

Reasons Behind Lunar Asymmetry

- **Tidal Forces and Gravitational Effects**

- ✓ The Earth's gravity exerts a stronger influence on the Moon's nearside. This has made the nearside more geologically flexible, allowing greater internal movement and surface deformation.

- **Volcanic Activity and Heat Concentration**

- ✓ The nearside experienced intense volcanic activity in the past, leading to the creation of basaltic plains. Additionally, it harbours higher concentrations of radioactive elements like thorium and titanium, which produce internal heat. This has made the nearside hotter by approximately 100–200°C compared to the farside.

- **Crust Thickness and Material Distribution**

- ✓ GRAIL's findings confirm that the Moon's nearside has a thinner crust, which facilitated magma flow and volcanic activity. In contrast, the farside's thicker crust hindered such processes, resulting in its rough, cratered appearance.

10. ISRO's Advancements: EOS-09 Launch and Chandrayaan-5 Mission Collaboration

Context: India's space programme continues to make significant strides with upcoming satellite launches and international collaborations. Two recent developments—the launch of EOS-09 and preparations for Chandrayaan-5 / LUPEX—highlight ISRO's growing capabilities in Earth observation and deep space exploration.

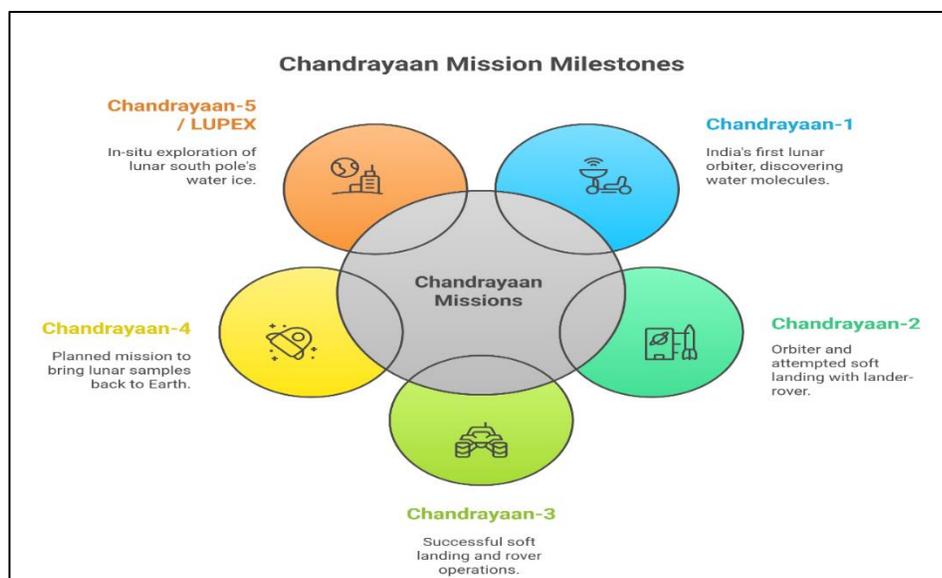
EOS-09 Earth Observation Satellite

- ISRO is set to launch the EOS-09 satellite aboard PSLV-C61 on May 18 from Sriharikota. This will be ISRO's 101st mission, reinforcing its expertise in satellite deployment and remote sensing.
- **Key Features of EOS-09:**
 - ✓ Earth Observation Capability: Designed to monitor Earth's surface under all-weather and day-night conditions.
 - ✓ C-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR): Enables high-resolution imaging through cloud cover and darkness, making the satellite extremely versatile.
 - ✓ Applications:
 - Disaster management and flood mapping
 - Agricultural monitoring
 - Border surveillance
 - Urban and environmental planning
- This satellite will strengthen India's remote sensing infrastructure, vital for national security, environmental monitoring, and climate change adaptation.

Chandrayaan-5 / LUPEX: A Global Lunar Collaboration

- ISRO and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) have intensified cooperation for the upcoming Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission, also referred to as Chandrayaan-5. The third Technical Interface Meeting (TIM-3) was held in Bengaluru on May 13–14, indicating significant progress in mission planning.

Evolution of Chandrayaan Missions



- Chandrayaan-1: Achieved India's first lunar orbital mapping and discovered water molecules on the Moon.
- Chandrayaan-2: Included an orbiter and attempted a soft landing with a lander-rover system.
- Chandrayaan-3: Successfully demonstrated India's soft landing and rover operations on the Moon.
- Chandrayaan-4 (Upcoming): Targeted at bringing lunar samples back to Earth.
- Chandrayaan-5 / LUPEX: Aimed at in-situ exploration of water ice and other volatiles at the lunar south pole.

LUPEX Mission Details

- Launch Vehicle: Japan's H3-24L rocket.
- Mission Components:
 - ✓ Lander: Developed by ISRO
 - ✓ Rover: Developed by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (Japan)
- International Collaboration:
 - ✓ Scientific payloads from ISRO, JAXA, ESA, and NASA
 - ✓ Focused on analysing volatile elements in the Moon's Permanently Shadowed Regions (PSRs)
- This joint mission will deepen scientific understanding of lunar resources, especially water ice, which is critical for future human exploration and potential lunar habitation.

HISTORY & CULTURE

1. Discovery of Vikramaditya I Inscription at Madapura Lake, Davangere

Context: A newly discovered inscription from the era of Vikramaditya I, a prominent ruler of the Badami Chalukya dynasty, has been unearthed near Madapura Lake in Davangere district, Karnataka. This archaeological find adds valuable context to the political resurgence and cultural developments under the Chalukyas.

Vikramaditya I

- **Reign Period:** He ruled between 644 CE and 681 CE.

- **Rise to Power:** Vikramaditya I came to the throne after the fall of his father, Pulakeshin II, who was defeated by Pallava ruler Narasimhavarman I.
- **Military Achievements:** His most remarkable feat was the restoration of Chalukya authority through the retaking of Vatapi (modern-day Badami), which had been captured by the Pallavas.
- **Cultural Contributions:** Vikramaditya I is credited with encouraging temple construction in freestanding form, a feature that became emblematic of early Chalukyan architecture.

2. Lakkundi Temples Set for UNESCO Tentative Listing

Context: The historic temple town of Lakkundi in Gadag district, Karnataka, is poised to be included in the UNESCO Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. The site represents a remarkable blend of early Chalukyan architecture, water conservation systems, and religious harmony.

About Lakkundi Temples

- Referred to in ancient inscriptions as 'Lokki Gundi', Lakkundi flourished during the rule of the Kalyana Chalukyas (Western Chalukyas). The village is home to more than 50 ancient temples, showcasing intricate craftsmanship and regional styles of temple construction.
- One of the most notable monuments is the Kasi Vishwanatha Temple, famed for its ornate design and elaborate detailing, reflecting the artistic zenith of Chalukyan architecture.

Ingenious Water Architecture

- Lakkundi also features 101 stepped wells, locally known as 'Kalyanis', that highlight the community's advanced understanding of water conservation and engineering in temple complexes.

Jain Heritage

- Beyond its Hindu temples, Lakkundi is an important Jain religious center. It houses a significant temple dedicated to Mahavira, regarded as one of the largest and oldest Jain shrines in the region, illustrating the town's multi-religious character.

3. Ramman Festival: Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage

Context: The Ramman Festival, celebrated in Uttarakhand, is inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

About the Festival

- **Location:** Celebrated in the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand.
- **Timing:** Held annually in late April after the harvest season.
- **Religious Significance:** Dedicated to Bhumiyal Devta, the village deity regarded as the guardian spirit.

Key Features

- **Rituals:** Includes elaborate ceremonies and traditional rituals.
- **Cultural Elements:**
 - ✓ Recitation of the local version of the Ramayana.
 - ✓ Masked Dances and folk performances.
 - ✓ Jagar Singing – a unique musical form narrating local legends and spiritual lore.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Dr. M.R. Srinivasan

Context: Dr. Malur Ramasamy Srinivasan, renowned nuclear physicist and former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), recently passed away. His demise marks the end of a defining era in India's atomic energy development.

About

- A key architect of India's nuclear energy programme, Dr. Srinivasan joined the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in 1955 and worked closely with Dr. Homi J. Bhabha. He played an instrumental role in commissioning India's first reactor, Apsara, and spearheaded major projects like the Tarapur and Madras Atomic Power Stations.
- He became the founding Chairman of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), under whose leadership 18 nuclear power units were developed. Internationally, he served as a Senior Advisor to the IAEA and held positions in the Planning Commission and National Security Advisory Board.
- **Awards and Recognition**
 - ✓ His exceptional service earned him the Padma Shri (1984), Padma Bhushan (1990), and Padma Vibhushan (2015).

2. Ahilyabai Holkar

Context: To commemorate the 300th birth anniversary of Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar, the Prime Minister participated in the Mahila Sashaktikaran Maha Sammelan in Bhopal, highlighting her enduring legacy of good governance and women's empowerment.

About

- Born on 31 May 1725, Ahilyabai Holkar ruled the Malwa region under the Maratha Confederacy from 1767 until her death in 1795. Initially serving as regent after the death of her husband, she later became the sovereign of the Holkar dynasty, with Maheshwar and Indore as her power centers.
- Known for her administrative acumen and humanitarian approach, she transformed Maheshwar into a hub of culture and commerce. Her reign marked the golden era of Holkar rule.

Administrative Reforms and Governance

- Instituted fair and impartial justice; even ordered the execution of her own son for a capital offense.
- Established accessible judicial systems and ensured daily public hearings.
- Abolished outdated practices like confiscating the property of childless widows.
- Did not follow purdah, thereby setting a precedent for women's visibility in leadership.

Military Acumen

- Trained under her father-in-law Malhar Rao Holkar and led military campaigns personally.
- Appointed Tukoji Rao Holkar as army commander and hired Frenchman Chevalier Dudrenec to modernize the military.

Cultural and Religious Contributions

- Patronized poets, scholars, and artists, turning Maheshwar into a center of learning and art.
- Rebuilt and renovated several sacred temples, including the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in 1780.
- Constructed roads, dharmashalas, wells, forts, and rest houses across India.

- Promoted traditional crafts by setting up a textile industry that led to the famed Maheshwari sarees.

Legacy and Titles

- Revered as Punyashlok for her virtuous life and governance.
- Called the Philosopher Queen by historian John Keay for her wisdom and enlightened rule.

3. Pope Leo XIV

Context: Robert Francis Prevost, aged 69, has been elected as the 267th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and will be known as Pope Leo XIV. Notably, he is the first American to ascend to the papacy, marking a historic moment for the global Christian community. Though born in the United States, he shares deep ties with Latin America, especially Peru, where he served as a missionary and church leader for decades.

Significance of the Papacy

- The Pope is the supreme spiritual leader of over 3 billion Roman Catholics worldwide.
- He also serves as the Bishop of Rome and is regarded as the successor to Saint Peter, one of Jesus's apostles.
- As the head of the Holy See and sovereign of Vatican City, the Pope holds ultimate authority on matters of doctrine, faith, and Church governance.

Election Process

- Popes are chosen by a conclave of cardinals, who gather in the Sistine Chapel under strict secrecy.
- Upon election, the new pope adopts a papal name, symbolising a new spiritual mission and continuity with Church traditions.

Global and Religious Impact

- The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination, making the papacy a globally influential religious and moral authority.
- The appointment of an American pope reflects the growing importance of the Church in the Western Hemisphere, especially Latin America.

4. Exercise Nomadic Elephant 2025

Context: The Indian Army has departed for the 17th edition of the India–Mongolia Joint Military Exercise 'Nomadic Elephant', being held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

About the Exercise

- Nomadic Elephant is a bilateral, annual military exercise held alternately in India and Mongolia.
- The 2024 edition was conducted at Umroi, Meghalaya.
- The 2025 Indian contingent includes 45 personnel, primarily from the Arunachal Scouts.

Objective and Scope

- The exercise aims to enhance interoperability between the two armies for joint operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain under UN peacekeeping mandates.
- It includes platoon-level field training, along with focus areas like counter-terrorism and cyber warfare for added complexity.

5. Exercise Teesta Prahar

Context: The Indian Army recently conducted Exercise Teesta Prahar, a large-scale integrated field training exercise, at the Teesta field firing range in West Bengal, near the strategically crucial Siliguri Corridor—commonly known as the “Chicken’s Neck.”

Key Highlights

- **Location:** Teesta field range, close to the Siliguri corridor, the narrow stretch connecting mainland India with the Northeast.
- **Objective:** To validate operational readiness, jointness, and modern warfare capabilities in riverine and adverse terrain.

Features and Participation

- Involved various combat and support arms: Infantry, Artillery, Armoured Corps, Mechanised Infantry, Para SF, Engineers, Signals, and Army Aviation.
- Included tactical drills, battlefield rehearsals, and adaptive manoeuvres to simulate real-time combat scenarios.

Modernisation and Technology

- Marked the deployment and testing of next-gen weapon systems, advanced military platforms, and cutting-edge battlefield technologies.
- Reflected the Indian Army’s focus on technological upgradation and network-centric warfare.

6. 58th Jnanpith Award

Context: The President of India recently conferred the 58th Jnanpith Award upon Jagadguru Rambhadracharya, an eminent Sanskrit scholar, at a ceremony held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

About the Jnanpith Award

- India’s highest literary honour, instituted in 1961 by the Bharatiya Jnanpith, a premier literary and cultural organisation established in 1944.
- Awarded annually to living Indian authors for their outstanding contribution to Indian literature in Schedule VIII languages and English.
- The award comprises a cash prize, citation, and a bronze idol of Goddess Saraswati (Vagdevi).

Key Features

- The first recipient was Malayalam poet G. Sankara Kurup (1965) for Odakkuzhal.
- Only one award per language every three years, ensuring linguistic diversity.
- A previous awardee is not eligible for reconsideration.
- The award may be withheld in a year if no deserving candidate is found.

7. International Booker Prize 2025

Context: Indian author Banu Mushtaq has become the first Kannada writer to win the prestigious International Booker Prize for her short story collection Heart Lamp, translated into English by Deepa Bhashti.

About the Prize

- The International Booker Prize is an annual literary award that honours the best translated works of long-form fiction or short stories published in the UK or Ireland.
- Established in 2005 as a biennial award for lifetime contribution to world literature, it was restructured in 2015 to be awarded annually for a single translated work.
- Eligibility: Open to authors of any nationality, as long as the original work is not in English and is translated into English.

- The £50,000 prize is shared equally between the author and the translator, recognising the collaborative nature of literary translation.

2025 Award Highlights

- Winning Book: Heart Lamp, a collection of short stories originally written in Kannada between 1990 and 2023.
- Theme: Offers poignant narratives depicting the lives and challenges of Muslim women in southern India.
- This marks the first time a Kannada work and a short story collection have received the award.

TELANGANA CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. Telangana Launches Sarathi Portal for Driving Licence Services

Context: The Government of Telangana has launched the Sarathi portal—a centralized digital platform developed under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways—to modernize and streamline transport-related services.

Key Features:

- **Comprehensive Digital Services:** Citizens can apply online for driving licences, learner's permits, conductor licences, and request services such as renewal, address change, and addition of new vehicle classes.
- **Integration with Vahan:** The portal is linked to the national Vahan system, enabling unified access to vehicle and licence data across states, ensuring real-time verification and reducing document forgery.
- **Cashless Transactions:** The portal supports digital payments, promoting transparency and ease of use.
- **Nationwide Accessibility:** Key services like vehicle registration transfer and licence renewal can be accessed from anywhere in India.

2. Neolithic Rock Art Discovered in Telangana's Nalgonda District

Context: A significant Neolithic rock art site, dating back to 6000–4000 BCE, was recently discovered near Ramalingalagudem village in Tipparthi mandal of Nalgonda district, Telangana.

Key Highlights of the Discovery:

- **Discovery Date:** May 4, 2025, by archaeologist Dr. E. Sivanagireddy and enthusiast Silpi Venkatesh.
- **Rock Art Imagery:** Pictographs depict bulls, stags, dogs, human figures, and a rare hunting scene featuring a man fighting a tiger.
- **Technique:** The art was created using a striking method with stone tools, typical of Neolithic practices.
- **Shelters and Tools:** Nearby rock shelters served as temporary campsites, containing grooves used for sharpening stone axes.

3. Hyderabad Police Wins Global Award for Anti-Narcotics Efforts

Context: At the World Police Summit 2025 held in Dubai, the Hyderabad Narcotics Enforcement Wing (H-NEW) secured the top honour in the 'Excellence in Anti-Narcotics' category, marking global recognition for India's anti-drug strategies.

About the Award:

- Event: World Police Summit 2025 (May 13–15), organised by Dubai Police.
- Participants: 138+ countries, including premier law enforcement agencies like the FBI, NYPD, LAPD, UK's Metropolitan Police, and the Australian Federal Police.
- Evaluation Parameters: Drug supply reduction, substance abuse control, public awareness, inter-agency coordination.

Why H-NEW Was Recognised:

- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** Worked closely with NCB, DRI, ED, GST Dept, Excise Dept, Drugs Control, FRRO, and Counter Intelligence.
- **Effective Crackdown:**
 - ✓ Targeted international and interstate drug networks.
 - ✓ Monitored dark web drug trafficking.
 - ✓ Facilitated deportation of foreign offenders.
- **Community Engagement:**
 - ✓ Awareness drives in schools and colleges.
 - ✓ Created volunteer networks for early intervention.
 - ✓ Promoted public reporting on drug abuse.
- **Focus on Rehabilitation:**
 - ✓ Treated addiction as a health issue.
 - ✓ Linked users with de-addiction and rehabilitation centres.
 - ✓ Ensured balance between enforcement and social support.

Operation Chabutra – Complementary Policing Model:

- **Objective:** Reform youth behavior and prevent night-time public nuisance in Hyderabad's Old City areas.
- **Approach:**
 - ✓ Youth are counseled, not penalized.
 - ✓ Sessions held in community halls; families are involved.
 - ✓ Encourages education, employment, and discipline.

4. Indira Solar Giri Water Development Scheme

Context: The Telangana government has launched the Indira Solar Giri Water Development Scheme to empower tribal farmers through solar-powered irrigation and sustainable agriculture.

Objective:

- The scheme aims to bring forest lands allotted under the Forest Rights Act (2006) into productive use, ensuring water access and promoting economic upliftment among Scheduled Tribes.

Key Features:

- **Solar-Powered Irrigation:** Installation of borewells and solar pump sets to ensure reliable, eco-friendly water supply.
- **Coverage:** Targets 6 lakh acres, benefiting over 2.1 lakh tribal farmers in five years.
- **High-Value Crops:** Focus on profitable crops like avocado, pomegranate, bamboo, and dragon fruit, along with short-term income-generating crops.
- **Infrastructure:** Includes drip irrigation to ensure efficient water usage and minimize wastage.

Implementation Mechanism:

- **Agencies Involved:** ITDA, Horticulture Department, Electricity Department, and Forest Department.

- **Land Selection:** Only RoFR Act-recognized tribal lands to be surveyed for feasibility.
- **Challenges:** Delays in forest clearances and inter-departmental coordination remain major hurdles.

5. Miss World 2025 Grand Opening in Telangana: A Blend of Culture and Global Diplomacy

Context: The 72nd Miss World pageant began with a grand opening ceremony in Telangana, highlighting India's soft power and showcasing the state's rich cultural heritage on a global platform.

Cultural Diplomacy at Centre Stage:

- Held in Telangana, the event served as a confluence of global glamour and indigenous traditions. The ceremony opened with the state anthem "Jaya Jaya He Telangana", performed by 50 vocalists, followed by the powerful Perini Shivatandavam, a traditional warrior dance by 250 artists.

Folk Heritage on Display:

- The event featured captivating folk performances:
 - ✓ **Kommukoya:** A tribal archery tradition from Adilabad, reflecting martial skill and ritual importance.
 - ✓ **Gussadi Dance:** A festive warrior dance of the Raj Gond tribe, performed during Diwali.
 - ✓ **Lambada Dance:** Celebrated by the nomadic Banjara community, known for colorful attire and festive rhythms.
 - ✓ **Oggdu Dolu:** A drum-centric devotional performance narrating tales of village deities.

Global Representation:

- Contestants from across the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia paraded in their national costumes. India's representative, Nandini Gupta, received special acclaim in a traditional bridal outfit and carrying the national flag.

Symbolism and Soft Power:

- The ceremony was officially inaugurated by Miss World CEO Julia Morley and Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. The concluding anthem "One Love, One World" reflected the message of unity in diversity.

6. Padma Shri B.V.R. Mohan Reddy Appointed Chairperson of NIT Warangal BoG

Context: Dr. B.V.R. Mohan Reddy, a distinguished industrialist and educationist, has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (BoG) of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Warangal for a six-month term or until further orders.

About Dr. Mohan Reddy:

- Founder of Cyient Ltd (formerly Infotech Enterprises), a global engineering and technology services company.
- Padma Shri awardee (2017) for contributions to trade and industry.
- Former Chairman of NASSCOM, where he played a pivotal role in shaping India's IT and engineering R&D landscape.
- Currently serves as Chairperson of IIT Hyderabad and IIT Roorkee, showcasing his strong footprint in technical education leadership.

Role of BoG Chairperson:

- The Board of Governors is the apex governing body of an NIT. The Chairperson plays a key role in:

- Steering the strategic direction of the institute.
- Ensuring alignment with national education and industrial priorities.
- Bridging academia and industry to enhance innovation and employability.
- Overseeing governance, financial decisions, and policy formulation.

7. Telangana's Maternal Mortality Ratio

Context: The Special Bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2019–21, released by the Registrar General of India, reported Telangana's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) at 45 per 100,000 live births, well below the national average of 93.

What is MMR?

- **Definition:** MMR is the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.
- **WHO Criteria:** Includes deaths during pregnancy or within 42 days of its termination due to pregnancy-related causes (excluding accidental/incidental causes).
- **Significance:** It reflects the quality of maternal healthcare, institutional delivery coverage, and women's health status.

Key Findings: Telangana & National Trends

- **Telangana's MMR:**
 - ✓ Increased slightly from 43 (2018–20) to 45 (2019–21).
 - ✓ Despite the rise, it remains one of the top-performing states in India.
- **India's National MMR:**
 - ✓ Improved from 97 → 93, aligning with the SDG target of reducing global MMR to below 70 by 2030.

Regional Disparities in Maternal Health

- **Southern States: Strong Performance**

State	MMR (2019–21)
Kerala	20 (<i>Lowest</i>)
Maharashtra	38
Telangana	45
Andhra Pradesh	46
Tamil Nadu	49
Karnataka	63

- **Empowered Action Group States**

State	MMR (2019–21)
Madhya Pradesh	175
Assam	167
Uttar Pradesh	151
Bihar (approx.)	~118

8. Telangana Emerges as India's Top State in Per-Capita GSVA

Context: Telangana has secured the top position among Indian states in terms of per-capita Gross State Value Added (GSVA) for the fiscal year 2023–24, marking a significant milestone in its economic development journey.

Key Highlights:

- **Rapid Economic Rise:** According to a report by ICRA, Telangana's per-capita GSVAs surged from ₹1.25 lakh in 2014–15 to approximately ₹3.5 lakh in 2023–24 — a threefold increase in less than a decade.
- **Highest Growth Rate:** The state recorded a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.8%, surpassing the national average of 5.8%, thus becoming the fastest-growing state in per-capita GSVAs.
- **Top Rankings:** Telangana now leads the country, followed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, overtaking previous frontrunners like Haryana, Uttarakhand, and Kerala.

Drivers of Growth:

- **Irrigation and Agriculture:** Projects such as the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme significantly boosted agricultural output, enhancing rural incomes and economic participation.
- **Industrial and IT Expansion:** Proactive industrial policies and robust growth in the IT and service sectors, especially in Hyderabad, have fueled the state's economic momentum.

9. Rajiv Yuva Vikasam Scheme

Context: The Telangana government has launched the Rajiv Yuva Vikasam scheme to empower five lakh unemployed youth through self-employment and skill development by October 2, 2025.

Objective:

To promote entrepreneurship and economic inclusion among marginalized youth, especially from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Backward Classes (BC), and Minority communities, across both rural and urban areas.

Key Features:

- **Launch Timeline:**
 - ✓ Scheme rollout began on June 2, 2025 (Telangana Formation Day).
 - ✓ Target completion by October 2, 2025 (Gandhi Jayanti).
- **Implementation Phases:**
 - ✓ Sanction Letters: Issued from June 2–9.
 - ✓ Skill Training: Conducted at district and constituency levels from June 10–15.
 - ✓ Grounding Phase: Commences post-June 15 with actual financial disbursement.
 - ✓ Phased Rollout: Monthly implementation strategy ensures sustained outreach.
- **Urban Focus:** Includes provision of two-wheelers for gig work (e.g., delivery and ride-sharing) to urban youth.
- **Financial Support:** Backed by a credit-linked system through collaboration with the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC).
- **Budgetary Allocation:** A record ₹8,000 crore earmarked, highlighting one of the largest state investments in youth self-employment.

Institutional Mechanism:

- Coordinated by SC, ST, BC, and Minority Welfare Departments, alongside District Collectors, in-charge ministers, and Welfare Corporation Chairpersons.
- Application review and beneficiary selection handled at the district level.

10. Indiramma Amrutam Scheme

Context: The Telangana government has launched the Indiramma Amrutam Scheme to combat anaemia among adolescent girls through a food-based nutritional intervention.

About the Scheme:

- Launched under the Women and Child Welfare Department, the scheme targets girls aged 14–18 years by distributing millet and peanut-based chikkis through Anganwadi centres. The initiative complements existing iron and folic acid supplementation programmes and aims to improve long-term health outcomes among adolescent girls.
- **Objectives:**
 - ✓ To reduce the prevalence of anaemia, especially in high-burden districts.
 - ✓ To promote nutritional awareness and local food solutions.
 - ✓ To encourage consumption of nutrient-rich, culturally acceptable food items.

Key Features:

Component	Details
Target Group	Adolescent girls (14–18 years)
Distribution Channel	Anganwadi centres
Pilot Districts	Bhadradri Kothagudem, Kumuram Bheem Asifabad, Jayashankar Bhupalpally
Supplement	30 chikkis per month (in 2 instalments)
Nutritional Value	600 calories & 18–20g protein per chikki, with added micronutrients

11. Gaddar Telangana Film Awards 2024: Promoting Regional Identity in Telugu Cinema

Context: In 2024, the Government of Telangana instituted the Gaddar Telangana Film Awards, marking the state's renewed effort to promote cinematic excellence, social consciousness, and regional pride through Telugu cinema.

Introduction

- Named after the legendary revolutionary balladeer Gaddar, the awards aim to recognize outstanding contributions to Telugu films while encouraging storytelling rooted in social justice, cultural heritage, and innovation. This marks the revival of official state film awards after a 14-year gap, replacing the previously prominent Nandi Awards.

Significance

- Cultural Recognition: Reinforces Telangana's distinct identity in cinema.
- Tribute to Gaddar: Symbolizes commitment to socially relevant art and activism.
- State-Supported Artistry: Highlights government encouragement of regional talent.

Key Award Categories and Winners

- **Feature Films**
 - ✓ Best Feature Film: Kalki 2898 AD – A futuristic sci-fi directed by Nag Ashwin.
 - ✓ Second Best Feature Film: Pottel by Sahit Mothkuri.
 - ✓ Third Best Feature Film: Lucky Baskhar, directed by Venky Atluri.
- **Socially Relevant Themes**
 - ✓ Best Film on National Integration & Upliftment: Committee Kurrollu.
 - ✓ Best Children's Film: 35 Chinna Kathakadu.
 - ✓ Best Film on Environment & Heritage: Razakar.
- **Direction**
 - ✓ Best Director: Nag Ashwin (Kalki 2898 AD).
 - ✓ Best Debut Director: Yadhu Vamsi (Committee Kurrollu).
 - ✓ Best Wholesome Entertainment Film: Aay... Mem Friends Andi.

- **Performance Awards**
 - ✓ Best Actor: Allu Arjun (Pushpa-2).
 - ✓ Best Actress: Nivetha Thomas (35 Chinna Kathakadu).
 - ✓ Best Supporting Actor: S.J. Suryah (Saripoda Sanivaram).
 - ✓ Best Supporting Actress: Sharanya Pradeep (Ambajipeta Marriage Band).
 - ✓ Best Comedians: Satya and Vennela Kishore (Mathu Vadalara-2).
- **Music & Lyrics**
 - ✓ Best Music Director: Bheems Ceciroleo (Razakar).
 - ✓ Best Male Playback Singer: Sid Sriram – Nizame Ne Chebutunna (Ooru Peru Bhairavakona).
 - ✓ Best Female Playback Singer: Shreya Ghoshal – Suseti Aggi Ravva (Pushpa-2).
 - ✓ Best Lyricist: Chandra Bose (Raju Yadav).

ANDHRA PRADESH CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. “Sanna Biyyam” in Mid-Day Meals

Context: From June 12, 2025, the Andhra Pradesh government will start providing premium-quality “sanna biyyam” (fine rice) in its Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme. This initiative will cover 41,000 government schools and 4,000 welfare hostels, replacing the regular rice used earlier.

Key Highlights

- **Scale of Implementation:** Around 3.5 lakh metric tonnes of fine rice will be distributed across educational institutions and welfare hostels, benefitting lakhs of children.
- **Source and Distribution Model:** The rice will be procured directly from local farmers and supplied through mandal-level stock points (MLS). This approach ensures farmer recognition, reduces reliance on middlemen, and strengthens local supply chains.
- **Objective and Motivation**
 - ✓ The initiative serves a dual purpose:
 - To provide better nutrition to schoolchildren through high-quality rice.
 - To pay tribute to farmers—referred to as “annadatas”—by sourcing directly from them, thereby promoting farmer welfare and food dignity.
- **Governance Context**
 - ✓ Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla Manohar highlighted this as part of a broader welfare initiative under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan. Notably, the government has disbursed over ₹12,400 crore to farmers within 24 hours for the procurement of 48 lakh metric tonnes of paddy.

2. Andhra Pradesh to Build India’s First Transmedia Entertainment City – ‘Creator Land’

Context: In a significant step toward digital innovation and creative industry development, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has unveiled an ambitious initiative to establish ‘Creator Land’, India’s first transmedia entertainment city.

Overview:

- Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu announced the project at the WAVES Summit in Mumbai. With an investment target of ₹10,000 crore, the initiative aims to position Amaravati as a global hub for digital media, virtual production, gaming, and AI-driven content creation. The plan has already garnered national attention for its scale and futuristic vision.
- **Key Features and Objectives:**

- ✓ First of Its Kind: The project will be the country's first dedicated transmedia entertainment city, setting a precedent in integrated content creation and digital storytelling.
- ✓ Employment Generation: The city is expected to generate 25,000 direct jobs over the next six years, significantly boosting employment in high-tech creative sectors.
- ✓ Investment Magnet: The state aims to attract ₹10,000 crore in investments, including substantial inflows through foreign direct investment (FDI).
- ✓ Comprehensive Infrastructure: The facility will include advanced infrastructure to support diverse content domains—storytelling, gaming, AI-generated media, filmmaking, music, and virtual production.

3. Andhra Pradesh to Launch India's First Quantum Valley Tech Park in Amaravati

Context: The Government of Andhra Pradesh has announced the launch of India's first Quantum Valley Tech Park in Amaravati, marking a major leap in advanced technology infrastructure. This initiative supports the National Quantum Mission and aims to establish Andhra Pradesh as a national hub for quantum research, innovation, and commercialization.

Key Highlights

Project Overview

- The Quantum Valley will be developed on 50 acres of land in Amaravati.
- The state aims to make it a Silicon Valley of Quantum Technology by integrating research, academia, industry, and startups into a single ecosystem.
- The park will be developed in two phases:
 - ✓ **Phase I (2025–27):** Focus on infrastructure, quantum computing research facilities, and ecosystem development.
 - ✓ **Phase II (2027–30):** Expansion for commercial-scale innovation and international collaboration.

4. PM Modi Lays Foundation Stone for Revival of Amaravati Capital Project

Context: On May 2, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone and inaugurated a series of development works worth over ₹58,000 crore in Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh. This marks the formal revival of Amaravati as the state's capital after years of stagnation.

Key Components of the ₹58,000 Crore Package

- **State Capital Core Projects (₹49,000 crore):**
 - ✓ Construction of major state infrastructure including the Legislative Assembly, High Court, Secretariat, and housing for government officials.
 - ✓ Development of flood-proof roads, underground utilities, smart traffic systems, cycle tracks, and green infrastructure across 320 kilometers.
- **Central Government Projects (₹5,028 crore):**
 - ✓ Includes the Defence Research & Development Organisation's (DRDO) missile testing range at Nagayalanka.
 - ✓ Establishment of a Unity Mall in Visakhapatnam to promote "One District, One Product" and local crafts.
 - ✓ Launch of six national highway projects and major railway overbridges.
- **Transport & Connectivity (₹9,000+ crore):**
 - ✓ Massive investments in national highways and railways to boost inter-district, port, and pilgrimage connectivity.
 - ✓ A tenfold increase in the railway budget for Andhra Pradesh over previous years.

5. Andhra Pradesh Receives Kumki Elephants from Karnataka

Context: In a significant step towards mitigating human-wildlife conflict, Andhra Pradesh has received trained Kumki elephants from Karnataka in May 2025. These elephants are expected to play a crucial role in managing the increasing instances of wild elephant incursions in forest-adjacent areas of the state.

What Are Kumki Elephants?

- Kumki elephants are trained captive elephants used to manage and control wild elephants. Their primary role is to assist forest officials in operations such as:
 - ✓ Driving wild elephants back into forest areas.
 - ✓ Calming and managing rogue or aggressive elephants.
 - ✓ Assisting in rescue and relocation missions involving elephants.
- These elephants are usually well-trained and experienced in human interaction, making them essential in crowd control and emergency wildlife situations.



Practice MCQ's

1. With reference to Digital Access as a Fundamental Right, consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court of India has recognized meaningful digital access as a component of the right to life under Article 21
2. The Right to Equality under Article 14 supports the demand for inclusive digital infrastructure.
3. Digital access is now explicitly mentioned as a fundamental right in the Constitution of India.
4. Ensuring accessible e-governance is part of the obligations under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Correct. The SC judgment in *Amar Jain v. Union of India* recognized digital access as part of Article 21.
- Statement 2: Correct. Article 14 ensures equality, which extends to access to digital public goods.
- Statement 3: Incorrect. Digital access is not yet explicitly mentioned in the Constitution.
- Statement 4: Correct. The Court issued directions under the RPwD Act, 2016 to ensure accessible e-KYC and digital inclusion.

2. Which of the following countries ranks higher than India in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index?

1. Nepal
2. Maldives
3. Bangladesh
4. Sri Lanka

Select the correct answer using codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2, 3, and 4
- (d) 1, 3, and 4 only

Answer: c

Explanation:

In the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, India is ranked 151st out of 180 countries. According to the same report, all four listed neighbouring countries—Nepal (90th), Maldives (104th), Sri Lanka (139th), and Bangladesh (149th)—rank higher than India.

3. Consider the following statements:

Statement-I:

The Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane is statutorily binding on sugar mills in India.

Statement-II:

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) recommendations for sugarcane pricing incorporate the cost of production and returns from alternative crops to ensure farmer profitability

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II explains Statement-I
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, but Statement-II does **not** explain Statement-I
- (c) Statement-I is correct, but Statement-II is incorrect
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct –
 - The Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) is a minimum price fixed by the central government under the statutory framework that governs sugarcane procurement. This price is legally binding on sugar mills, meaning that mills are obligated by law to purchase sugarcane from farmers at or above the FRP. This mandate is enforced through provisions such as those in the Sugarcane (Control) Order, which ensure that farmers receive a guaranteed price for their produce.
- Statement 2 is correct–
 - The recommendations made by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) for setting the FRP take into account several factors, notably the cost of sugarcane production and the returns farmers can obtain from alternative crops. By incorporating these elements, the CACP aims to ensure that the price set is sufficient to cover production costs and provide a better return than what might be available from growing other crops. This helps in maintaining or even enhancing farmer profitability.
- Relationship Between the Statements
 - While both statements are accurate, they address different facets of the sugarcane pricing mechanism. Statement-I highlights the legal obligation imposed on sugar mills to pay the FRP, whereas Statement-II explains one of the methodologies used in determining the FRP. The method of including production costs and alternative returns in the CACP's recommendations does not serve as an explanation for the statutory requirement that sugar mills pay the FRP.

4. Consider the following statements regarding genome-edited crops:

1. Genome-editing technology allows precise modifications in an organism's genetic material without introducing foreign DNA.
2. Genome-edited crops are classified as genetically modified organisms (GMOs) under international biosafety regulations.
3. Genome-edited crops can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and irrigation water usage.
4. Genome-edited crops are regulated under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct –
 - Genome-editing techniques—such as those based on CRISPR-Cas systems—make highly targeted changes to an organism's own genome without incorporating any external genetic material. This

process is used to achieve specific trait modifications by making small edits or deletions in the DNA sequence.

- Statement 2 is incorrect-
 - Unlike traditional GMOs, which involve the insertion of foreign genes, genome-edited crops developed through methods like SDN-1 and SDN-2 do not introduce exogenous DNA. Many regulatory bodies, including those in India and several other countries, have exempted such crops from the strict biosafety regulations applicable to GMOs.
- Statement 3 is correct-
 - Improved crop varieties achieved through genome editing can exhibit enhanced stress tolerance and early maturity. Such traits contribute to more efficient water use and lower methane emissions during cultivation, thereby offering environmental benefits in addition to higher crop yields.
- Statement 4 is incorrect-
 - Genome-edited crops that do not incorporate foreign DNA (using methods like SDN-1/SDN-2) have been specifically exempted from the stringent regulatory framework under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, which is primarily applicable to genetically modified crops that involve transgenic methods.

5. With reference to Article 143 of the Indian Constitution, consider the following statements:

1. It empowers the President to seek the advisory opinion of the Supreme Court on matters of public importance involving questions of law or fact.
2. The opinion given by the Supreme Court under Article 143 is binding on the President.

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

Correct Answer: a

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: Article 143(1) allows the President to refer legal or factual questions of public importance to the Supreme Court for advisory opinion.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The Supreme Court's opinion under Article 143 is advisory in nature and not binding on the President.

6. What are Bio-Input Resource Centres (BRCs) primarily designed to do?

- (a) Develop high-yielding hybrid seeds.
- (b) Offer direct financial assistance to farmers for infrastructure development.
- (c) Replace traditional farming with fully mechanized agriculture.
- (d) Provide farmers with locally prepared bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Bio-Input Resource Centres (BRCs) are designed as cluster-level enterprises under the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF). Their primary purpose is to support natural farming practices by:

- Providing locally prepared biological formulations like bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides to enhance soil health, plant nutrition, and pest management.
- Acting as decentralized hubs for the production and sale of organic and biological inputs tailored to regional agro-ecological conditions.

7. Which of the following is true about the Road Accident Victim Cashless Treatment Scheme?

1. It provides cashless treatment for up to ₹1.5 lakh for road accident victims.
2. The scheme is applicable only to Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY beneficiaries.
3. The funds for claim settlement are disbursed from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.
4. The scheme is monitored by a committee headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

Select the correct answer using codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 3, and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2, 3, and 4
- (d) 2, 3, and 4 only

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Correct. The scheme provides cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh for road accident victims for 7 days.
- Statement 2: Incorrect. The scheme is not limited to Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY beneficiaries. It applies to any person injured in a road accident involving a motor vehicle.
- Statement 3: Correct. Payments are made from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund within 10 days after verification by the State Health Agency.
- Statement 4: Correct. The scheme is monitored by a committee headed by the Secretary, MoRTH for its implementation.

8. Which of the following statements about the Jenu Kuruba tribe is correct?

1. They are one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) recognized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
 2. Their traditional livelihood practices include honey collection and harvesting wild tubers.
 3. They rely on external religious institutions for spiritual guidance.
 4. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 ensures their community forest rights, but implementation remains a challenge.
- (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 1, 3, and 4 only
 - (c) 1, 2, 3, and 4
 - (d) 1, 2, and 4 only

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Correct. The Jenu Kurubas are classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Statement 2: Correct. Traditional livelihood practices of the Jenu Kurubas include honey collection, wild tuber harvesting, and gathering minor forest produce.

- Statement 3: Incorrect. The Jenu Kurubas follow animistic belief systems and maintain autonomy in governance, relying on community figures like the Yajamana and Gudda rather than external religious institutions.
- Statement 4: Correct. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 provides for individual and community forest rights, but poor implementation often hampers its effectiveness.

9. Consider the following statements regarding the Dongria Kondh tribe:

1. The Dongria Kondhs derive their name from the term "dongar," which means 'hill,' and identify themselves as protectors of streams.
2. Their economic practices include the cultivation of horticultural crops such as pineapples and turmeric, along with podu cultivation.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Correct. The Dongria Kondhs are named after "dongar" (hill) and refer to themselves as Jharnia, emphasizing their role as "protectors of streams."
- Statement 2: Correct. Their economic practices include podu cultivation (shifting agriculture) and horticulture crops such as pineapples, turmeric, and bananas, which are vital for their subsistence economy.

10. Which of the following statements about the 16th Lion Census (2025) is/are correct?

1. The lion population in Gujarat has increased by 32% since 2020, reaching 891 individuals in 2025.
2. A majority of the Asiatic lions are now found exclusively within the Gir National Park and its adjacent sanctuaries.
3. Barda Wildlife Sanctuary has re-emerged as a viable lion habitat after more than a century.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Correct. The lion population has indeed increased by 32%, from 674 in 2020 to 891 in 2025.
- Statement 2: Incorrect. A significant number of lions (507) are now found outside Gir National Park, indicating habitat expansion.
- Statement 3: Correct. Barda Wildlife Sanctuary has re-emerged as a lion habitat after 1879, making it a notable development in conservation efforts.

11. With reference to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions, consider the following statements:

1. The Basel Convention primarily focuses on controlling the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and ensuring their environmentally sound disposal.
2. The Rotterdam Convention requires member countries to eliminate Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and promote safer alternatives.
3. The Stockholm Convention addresses toxic chemicals that bioaccumulate and persist in the environment, aiming to restrict or eliminate their use.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Correct. The Basel Convention controls the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and promotes their environmentally sound disposal.
- Statement 2: Incorrect. The Rotterdam Convention facilitates informed decision-making in the international trade of hazardous chemicals and pesticides but does not focus on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).
- Statement 3: Correct. The Stockholm Convention addresses Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), aiming to restrict or eliminate their use due to their harmful environmental and health effects.

12. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the Saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*)?

1. The Saola is listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.
2. It is native to the Annamite Mountains along the India-Nepal border.
3. Genome mapping of the Saola has revealed two genetically distinct populations.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: The Saola is listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The Saola is native to the Annamite Mountains along the Vietnam–Laos border, not the India-Nepal border.
- Statement 3 is correct: Genome mapping has revealed two genetically distinct populations of Saolas.

13. Consider the following statements about the Barak 8 and Akash surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems:

1. The Barak 8's maximum engagement range (up to 100 km) is roughly four times that of the Akash (25 km).
2. Akash is fitted with Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM), a feature not specified for Barak 8.

3. Akash can be deployed on both naval and land platforms, whereas Barak 8 is restricted to land-based use only.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: Barak 8's stated range of up to 100 km is about four times the Akash's maximum of 25 km.
- Statement 2 is correct: Akash explicitly incorporates ECCM for high jamming resistance; no ECCM capability is mentioned for Barak 8.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: Barak 8 is designed for both naval and land platforms, whereas Akash is a land-based SAM.

14. Consider the following statements about the Samudrayaan Mission:

1. MATSYA 6000, the submersible for the mission, is designed to operate at a depth of up to 6,000 metres.
2. The mission aims to explore marine biodiversity and assess non-living ocean resources.
3. India launched the Deep Ocean Mission (DOM) under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
4. The mission will promote sustainable utilization of oceanic resources and contribute to India's Blue Economy.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2, and 4 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3, and 4 only
(d) All of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: MATSYA 6000 is designed to operate at depths of up to 6,000 metres.
- Statement 2 is correct: The mission focuses on exploring marine biodiversity and assessing non-living resources like polymetallic nodules and rare earth elements.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The Deep Ocean Mission is under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, not the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- Statement 4 is correct: The mission aims to contribute to the Blue Economy by promoting sustainable utilization of oceanic resources.

15. Consider the following statements regarding Bhargavastra, India's indigenously developed anti-drone system:

1. Its two-layer hard-kill mechanism uses unguided micro-rockets with a 20 m lethal radius in the first layer, followed by guided micro-missiles in the second.
2. Radar coverage for drone tracking is limited to 2.5 km, whereas its detection systems extend up to 10 km.
3. It is capable of operating at altitudes above 5,000 m and integrates with network-centric C4I systems.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct. Bhargavastra's "hard kill" employs two layers: unguided micro-rockets (20 m lethal radius) and guided micro-missiles.
- Statement 2 is incorrect. In reality, Bhargavastra detects drones up to 2.5 km, while its radar coverage extends to 10 km—the reverse of what is stated.
- Statement 3 is correct. The system is designed for high-altitude deployment (above 5,000 m) and is C4I-enabled for network-centric operations

16. Consider the following statements regarding Lafora Disease:

1. It is an autosomal recessive progressive myoclonus epilepsy caused by mutations in the EPM2A or EPM2B (NHLRC1) genes.
2. Clinically, it manifests with recurrent seizures, cognitive decline, and progressive loss of motor coordination.
3. Its prevalence is highest in Northern Europe and North America due to low rates of consanguineous marriages.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct. Lafora Disease follows autosomal recessive inheritance and arises from mutations in EPM2A or NHLRC1 genes.
- Statement 2 is correct. The disorder leads to myoclonus epilepsy characterized by seizures, cognitive deterioration, and loss of motor control.
- Statement 3 is incorrect. The disease is more prevalent in regions with higher consanguinity—such as the Mediterranean, North Africa, the Middle East, and Southern India—not in Northern Europe or North America.

17. Which of the following statements about the Ramman Festival is correct?

1. It is celebrated in the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra in Uttarakhand.
2. The festival is dedicated to the village deity Bhumiya Devta.
3. It features Jagar singing, a traditional form of folk music narrating local legends.
4. The festival is observed during the winter season.

Options:

- (a) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: The Ramman Festival is celebrated in the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra, Chamoli district, Uttarakhand.
- Statement 2 is correct: The festival is dedicated to Bhumiyal Devta, the village guardian spirit.
- Statement 3 is correct: Jagar singing is a unique musical element of the festival, narrating local legends and spiritual lore.
- Statement 4 is incorrect: The festival is held in late April, not during the winter season.

18. Consider the following statements regarding the International Astronautical Federation (IAF):

1. Established in 1951, it connects over 500 member organizations across 78 countries.
2. Its membership is restricted to national space agencies and research institutions only.
3. Its motto "Connecting @ll Space People" underlines its aim to share policy, scientific and technical knowledge globally.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct. The IAF was founded in 1951 and today counts over 500 members from 78 countries.
- Statement 2 is incorrect. Membership also includes private industries and universities, not just space agencies and research institutions.
- Statement 3 is correct. The motto "Connecting @ll Space People" reflects its role in fostering policy, scientific, and technical collaboration

19. Which of the following statements about Exercise Nomadic Elephant is correct?

1. It is an annual bilateral military exercise between India and Mongolia.
2. The 2025 edition is being held in Umroi, Meghalaya.
3. The exercise focuses on joint operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain.
4. Counter-terrorism and cyber warfare are included as focus areas in the 2025 edition.

Options:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3, and 4 only
(d) All of the above

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: Exercise Nomadic Elephant is an annual bilateral military exercise between India and Mongolia.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The 2025 edition is being held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, not Umroi, Meghalaya (which hosted the 2024 edition).

- Statement 3 is correct: The exercise focuses on joint operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain.
- Statement 4 is correct: Counter-terrorism and cyber warfare are included as focus areas in the 2025 edition.

20. Consider the following statements about the indigenous super-fast charging sodium-ion battery developed by JNCASR, Bengaluru:

1. It utilises a stable NASICON crystal framework to enable rapid sodium-ion movement across both electrodes.
2. The battery can charge up to 80% within six minutes and endure over 3,000 charge–discharge cycles.
3. Its electrode structure is based on a perovskite framework to boost energy density and conductivity.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: The innovation uses the NASICON (Sodium Super Ionic Conductor) framework for swift ion transport.
- Statement 2 is correct: It achieves 80% charge in six minutes and sustains more than 3,000 cycles.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The electrodes are not perovskite-based; they rely on the NASICON structure, along with carbon coating and aluminium doping.

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