

**January Current Affair**

1. Panama Canal	3
2. Red Sea.....	3
3. Desert Cyclone 2024.....	4
4. Brics.....	4
5. Snow Leopard (Panthera Uncia)	5
6. Bubble Baby Syndrome (BBS).....	6
7. Polar bear	6
8. PRERANA program.....	7
9. Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR).....	8
10. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)	8
11. Rani Velu Nachiyar (1730-1796).....	8
12. Smart 2.0.....	9
13. World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2024	10
14. Laughing gulls	11
15. Atal Setu.....	11
16. Karpoori Thakur	11
17. PM YASASVI scheme	12
18. Free Movement Regime (FRM) Agreement	13
19. Vulture restaurant	14
20. Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).....	14
21. Palm oil	15
22. GI Tags from Odisha	15
23. Zombies viruses (Methuselah viruses)	17
24. Kuno National Park (KNP).....	18
25. All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 21-22	18
26. Lake Victoria	19
27. Leprosy.....	19
28. Madhika language.....	20
29. Project Veer Gatha 3.0	21
30. Baltic Sea.....	21
31. Operation Sarvashakti.....	22
32. VAIshwik BHArtiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV)Fellowship.....	22
33. Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB).....	23
34. Kanger Valley National Park (KVNPN).....	23
35. Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)	23
36. Chandubi festival.....	24
37. South Asia University (SAU).....	25
38. Global Risk Report 2024	25
39. Tea Association of India	26
40. Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI)	27
41. Technical textiles	28
42. World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2024.....	28
43. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)	28
44. Urea Gold.....	29
45. Graphene	29
46. SV AMITVA Scheme.....	30
47. World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024	31
48. Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC)	31
49. European Free Trade Association (EFTA).....	32



50. Non Alignment Moment (NAM).....	32
51. Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT).....	33
52. Section 498A of the India Penal Code.....	34
53. Yellow rust.....	34
54. Guruvayur Temple	35
55. Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023.....	35
56. North Eastern Council (NEC).....	36
57. Havisure	37
58. Gangetic Dolphin	37
59. Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality.....	38
60. Chenab River.....	38
61. Proba-3 mission.....	39
62. United nation security council	39
63. Padma Awards	40
64. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	41
65. 16 th Finance Commission	41

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January Current Affairs

1. Panama Canal

Why in news ?

Shipping disruptions occurred in a drought hit Panama Canal.

About Panama Canal

- Panama Canal is a constructed waterway that connects the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans.
- It enables ships to avoid the lengthy and hazardous voyage around Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America.
- Panama Canal connects nearly 2,000 ports in 170 countries.
- Panama is an isthmus connecting North and South America.
- The canal was built by the United States between 1904 and 1914.
- It is owned and administered by the Republic of Panama since the oversight of the Canal was transferred from the United States to Panama in 1999.

Story to learn

Panama Canal (Jugad)

19वीं century में San Francisco से gold New York city बेल्गाड़ी से जाता था इसमें बहुत पैसा खर्च हो जाता था। इसलिये समुद्री मार्ग ढूँढ़ने की कोशिश की गयी। लेकिन जहाँ canal बनाना था वहाँ पहाड़ था। इसलिए Panama canal ka jugad किया गया

The Panama Canal consists of a series of locks that raise and



2. Red Sea

Why in news ?

Chemical tanker MV Chem Pluto was struck by a drone attack, approximately 200 nautical miles off Gujarat's coast.

About Red sea

- The Red Sea is a seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean, lying between Africa and Asia.
- Bordering Countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti.
- Connected to the Indian ocean in south through the Bab el Mandeb strait and the Gulf of Aden.
- In the north are the Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Gulf of Suez

Why red sea is named so?

- Origins of the Red Sea's name from the seasonal blooms of reddish-colored marine algae is that it contains a cyanobacteria called **Trichodesmium erythraeum (a red-colored algae)**, which turns the normally blue-green water a reddish-brown.

Story to learn

एक men (yemen) था। वह don (sudan) था। उसके पास लाल (red sea) रंग की जीप (Egypt) and boots (Djibouti) थे। जब भी irritate (Eritrea) होता था तो रब (Saudi Arabia) से pray karta tha





3. Desert Cyclone 2024

Why in news?

The Joint Military Exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' is held from January 2 to January 15 in Rajasthan.

About Exercise Desert Cyclone 2024

- It is the Joint Military Exercise between India and UAE.
- It aims to enhance interoperability by learning and sharing best practices in urban operations.
- Other Important fact**
 - The first-ever India-UAE Joint Air Forces exercise took place in September 2008 at the Al-Dhafra base in Abu Dhabi.
 - India has also been a regular participant at the biennial International Defence Exhibition (IDEX) in Abu Dhabi.

Story to learn

UAE में Desertic Cyclone आते रहते हैं। Indian Army ने उन्हें Rajasthan के deserts दिखाये

4. BRICS

Why in news ?

BRICS expanded its membership to include five new nations

About BRICS

- The leaders of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries met for the first time in St. Petersburg, Russia, on the margins of G8 Outreach Summit in July 2006.
- Shortly afterwards, in September 2006, the group was formalised as BRIC.
- The BRIC grouping's 1st formal summit, also held in Yekaterinburg, commenced on 16 June 2009.
- In 2010, South Africa became the 5th member of the grouping making it BRICS.
- Now BRICS expanded its membership by inducting five new full members- **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.**

Story to learn

New members of BRICS
एक Amir (Emirates) आदमी Gypsy (Egypt) में BRICS चुराकर भागा (IRAN)।
रास्ते में उसने रब (Saudi ARAB) को याद किया और पानी पिया (Ethiopia)

Initiatives of the BRICS

New Development Bank (NDB)

- During the Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (Brazil) in 2014, the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the New Development Bank with equal share holding and equal voting rights.
- It is then Established in 2015 by BRICS countries.
- New Development Bank is a multilateral development bank aimed at mobilising resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs).

Areas of Operation

- Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency
- Transport Infrastructure
- Water and Sanitation
- Environmental Protection
- Social Infrastructure
- Digital Infrastructure

Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)

- It was established in 2015 during 7th BRICS summit in July 2015 and provides a framework for providing protection against global liquidity pressures.



- It proposes to provide short-term liquidity support to the members through currency swaps to help mitigating BOP crisis situation, in case such a situation arises.
- It will help India and other signatory countries to forestall short-term liquidity pressures, provide mutual support and further strengthen financial stability.
- It is a framework that aims at providing support through additional liquidity and other means to BRICS countries at a time of economic crisis.
- It would also contribute to strengthening the global financial safety net and complement existing international arrangements (from IMF) as an additional line of defence.



5. Snow Leopard (Panthera Uncia)

Why in news

Kyrgyzstan has acknowledged the snow leopard as a national symbol.

About Snow Leopard

- **Distribution:** They are sparsely distributed across 12 countries in central Asia, from southern Russia down to the Tibetan plateau, including Mongolia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal.
- **Threats:** the loss of natural prey species, retaliatory killing due to conflict with humans and illegal trade of its fur and bones.
- **Adaptation:**
 - Its round, short ears reduce heat loss, and the wide, short nasal cavity warms the air before it reaches the cat's lungs.
 - The cat has strong, short front limbs and longer hind limbs. They help launch the cat up to 30 feet (10 meters) in one leap.
 - The snow leopard sports excellent camouflage thanks to its grey-white fur with its dark spots and rosettes.
 - Its extra long tail helps the cat keep its balance and provides extra warmth when it's wrapped around the body.
 - The snow leopard has soft, dense fur that grows extra-thick during the winter to keep the cat's body warm.
- **Conservation Status**
 - IUCN: **Vulnerable** (story to learn - Global warming के कारण सारी snow पिघल गई so snow leopard **Vulnerable** हो गया).
 - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule-I.
- **More facts**
 - China has world's largest snow leopard population.
 - State animal of Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.



6. Bubble Baby Syndrome (BBS)

Why in news

A two-month-old girl from Karnataka was diagnosed with 'bubble baby syndrome'.

About Bubble baby syndrome

- 'Bubble baby syndrome,' known medically as Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID) is a very rare genetic disorder that leads to no functioning immune system.

- The human immune system constantly protects and defends the body from all types of "enemies," including: bacteria, viruses but in SCID crucial components of the immune system, are absent

Story to learn
Child **Bubble** की तरह fragile हो जाता है। उसका immune system कमजोर हो जाता है।

What Happens in Severe Combined Immunodeficiency?

- In a developing baby, the immune system starts in the bone marrow. Stem cells there can become any of three different types of blood cells:
 1. Red blood cells
 2. White blood cells
 3. Platelets
- White blood cells protect the body from infections and foreign invaders. There are different kinds of white blood cells, including lymphocytes. Lymphocytes come in two main types: B-cells and T-cells. These cells are key to fighting infections:
 1. T cells identify, attack, and kill "invaders."
 2. B cells make antibodies that "remember" an infection and are ready in case the body is exposed to it again.
- SCID (pronounced "skid") is a "combined" immunodeficiency because it affects both of these infection-fighting white blood cells.
- In SCID, the child's body has too few lymphocytes or lymphocytes that don't work properly.
- Because the immune system doesn't work as it should, it can be difficult or impossible for it to battle the germs — viruses, bacteria, and fungi — that cause infections.

What Causes Severe Combined Immunodeficiency?

- There are different kinds of severe combined immunodeficiency.
- The most common type is caused by a problem in a gene found on the X chromosome and affects only males.
- Females can be carriers of the condition, but because they also inherit a normal X chromosome, their immune systems can fight infections.
- Males, though, have only one X chromosome, so if the gene is abnormal, the disease appears.

7. Polar bear

Why in news

First death of polar bear due to Avian Influenza occurred in Arctic region recently.

About Polar bear

- Polar bears are the largest carnivorous land mammals on Earth.
- Most polar bears occur north of the Arctic Circle to the North Pole.
- Male polar bears are much larger than the females
- The polar bear evolved one to three million years ago from the brown bear.

Story to learn IUCN Status

Polar bear depend on the sea ice. Global warming के कारण सारी Ice पिघल गई so Polar bear **VULNERABLE** हो गया



- Most polar bears don't den.
- Polar bears tend to live solitary lives except when mating.
- **Adaptations help it maintain body heat and deal with its icy habitat.**
 - The bear's outer layer of fur is hollow and reflects light, giving the fur a white color that helps the bear remain camouflaged.
 - Polar bears have a thick layer of fat below the surface of the skin, which acts as insulation on the body to trap heat.
 - The bear's large size reduces the amount of surface area that's exposed to the cold per unit of body mass (pounds of flesh), which generates heat.
 - Footpads have a kind of "non-slip" surface, allowing them to get traction on slippery ice.
 - **IUCN Status : Vulnerable**

8. PRERANA program

Why in news

Ministry of Education launched the "Prerana: An Experiential Learning program" to empower participants with leadership qualities.

About Program

- Prerana is a week-long residential program **for selected students of Class IX to XII from any recognised school of the country.**
- Prerana is driven by a strong commitment to integrate principles of Indian education system and the philosophy of value-based education
- A batch of 20 selected students (10 boys and 10 girls) will attend the program, every week from various parts of the country.
- The curriculum of Prerana School prepared by IIT Gandhi Nagar is rooted in **nine value based themes**: Swabhiman and Vinay, Shaurya and Sahas, Parishram and Samarpan, Karuna and Sewa, Vividhta and Ekta, Satyanishtha and Shuchita, Navachar and Jigyasa, Shraddha aur Vishwas, and Swatantrata and Kartavya.
- The program based on above themes will inspire the youth and foster respect for Bharat's unity in diversity, embodying the spirit of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**"
- It is by launched **Ministry of Education**
- The methodology embraces a holistic approach to education, centred around joyful experiential learning. With a keen focus on well-defined learning objectives, the framework integrates and includes various activities like:
 1. Watching films
 2. Immersing in storytelling
 3. Participating, and learning about regional games
 4. Crafting working radio models
 5. Exposure to computer design skills
 6. Making portraits
 7. Observing water samples
 8. Delving into cutting-edge technological advancements like 3D printing, drones
 9. Engaging field trips

Story to learn

Class IX to XII के students को value based education से Prerana मिल रही है



9. Buxa Tiger Reserve(BTR)

Why in news

Recently, forest officials acknowledged the presence of big cats in the Buxa National Park.

About the Buxa Tiger Reserve

- Buxa Tiger Reserve is situated in North Bengal's Alipurduar district and stretches over a length of 50 km from West to East and 35 km from North to South.
- Its Northern boundary runs along the border with Bhutan.
- Reserve has corridor connectivity across the border with the forests of Bhutan in the North; linkages with the Kochugaon forests and Manas Tiger Reserve in the East; and with the Jaldapara National Park on the West.
- Historically, tigers were distributed throughout the reserve but the reserve has a low tiger density at present.

Story to learn

Geography of BTR
B for Bengal (west Bengal)
B for Bhutan

10. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Why in news

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as one of the top threats to public health.

About AMR

- Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.
- It is a natural phenomenon as micro-organism evolve, making drugs used to treat infections less effective. Microorganisms that develop antimicrobial resistance are sometimes referred to as “superbugs”.
- When microorganisms become resistant to antimicrobials, standard treatments are often ineffective, and in some cases, no drugs provide effective therapy.
- The misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants are the main drivers in the development of drug-resistant pathogens.
- World Health Organization (WHO) has identified AMR as one of the top ten threats to global health.

Causes for Antimicrobial Resistance

- Overuse and Misuse of Antibiotics
- Inadequate Dosage and Duration
- Self-Medication
- Antibiotics Consumption in Food-Animals
- Poor Sanitation

Story to learn

Alleopathy दवा से side effect हो जाते हैं. so we should be SMART and use ayurveda but research की कमी है। SMART 2.0 focuses on interdisciplinary research in ayurveda so that लोगों में ayurveda की popularity बढ़े।

11. Rani Velu Nachiyar (1730-1796)

Why in news

The Prime Minister of India has paid tributes to Rani Velu Nachiyar (3rd Jan 1730 – 25th Dec 1796) on her birth anniversary.

About Rani Velu Nachiyar

- Rani Velu Nachiyar was the princess of Ramanathapuram and the only child of Raja Chellamuthu vijayaragunatha Sethupathy of the Ramnad kingdom
- She was trained in war match weapons usage, martial arts like Valari, Silambam (fighting using stick), horse riding and archery.



- She married the king of Sivagangai, with whom she had a daughter.
- When her husband, was killed by British soldiers and the son of the Nawab of Arcot, she became queen of the Sivaganga estate (present-day Tamil Nadu)
- She was drawn into battle.
- She escaped with her daughter and lived near Dindigul for eight years
- During this period, she formed an army and sought **an alliance with Hyder Ali with the aim of launching a campaign against the East India Company in 1780.**
- When Velu Nachiyar found the place where the Company stored some of their ammunition, she arranged a suicide attack on the location, blowing it up.
- During this period, she formed an army and sought an alliance with Hyder Ali with the aim of launching a campaign against the East India Company in 1780.
- When Velu Nachiyar found the place where the Company stored some of their ammunition, she arranged a suicide attack on the location, blowing it up.
- She is known by Tamils as **Veeramangai**.

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12. SMART 2.0

Why in news

SMART 2.0 launched for Ayurveda Teaching Professionals

About Smart 2.0

- Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) along with National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM) has launched 'SMART 2.0' (Scope for Mainstreaming Ayurveda Research among Teaching professionals) program

👁️ Aim

- The study aims at safety, tolerability and adherence to Ayurveda formulations in the priority research areas of Bal Kasa, Malnutrition, Insufficient lactation, Abnormal Uterine Bleeding, Osteoporosis in post-menopausal women and Diabetes Mellitus (DM) II.

👁️ Objective

- Is to generate tangible evidence to demonstrate efficacy and safety of Ayurveda interventions using interdisciplinary research methods and translating it into public health care.

Story to learn

कभी हम खुद डॉक्टर बन जाते हैं और आधी अधूरी दवाइयाँ ले लेते हैं। **Microbes** की मौज हो जाती है क्योंकि वो पूरी तरह नहीं मरते। अगली बार **Microbes** पर दवाई का कोई असर नहीं होता। **They become drug resistant**



- Is to promote robust clinical studies in priority areas of Ayurveda with Ayurveda academic institutions/hospitals across the country through mutual collaboration
- 👁 **About Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)**
 - The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) is an autonomous body of the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy), Government of India.
 - It is an apex body in India for the formulation, coordination, development and promotion of research on scientific lines in Ayurveda and Sowa-Rigpa system of medicine.

13. World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2024

👁 Why in news

A recent UN report titled World Economic Situation and Prospects report for 2024 has been released.

👁 About WESP

- The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 presents an outlook for the global economy and underscores the importance of global cooperation and prudent policies to lift global growth and accelerate progress towards the SDGs.
- The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 is a report
- WESP is produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (**UN DESA**), in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (**UNCTAD**) and the five other United Nations regional commissions

👁 Key findings

➤ India's perspective -

- India remains the fastest growing large economy in the world.
- Growth in India is projected to reach 6.2 per cent in 2024
- Robust domestic demand and strong growth in the manufacturing and services sectors
- Growth in several economies including India in the region will face downward pressures from tighter financial and fiscal conditions, balance-of-payments challenges, and the return of the El Niño climate phenomenon.

➤ Global perspective –

- The report forecasts a deceleration in global gross domestic product (GDP) growth, from an estimated 2.7% in 2023 to 2.4% in 2024.
- Developing economies, in particular, are struggling to recover from pandemic-induced losses, with many facing high debt and investment shortfalls.
- It is anticipated that many low-income and vulnerable nations will experience only moderate growth in the upcoming years.
- The reasons are persistently high-interest rates, escalating geopolitical conflicts, slow international trade and an increase in climate-related calamities



14. Laughing gulls

Why in news

Recently, a laughing gull, a migratory bird from North America, has been sighted for the first time in the country at the Chittari estuary in Kasaragod district.

About Laughing gulls

- The bird is known for its unique laughter-like calls which resemble human laughter.
- These are medium-sized gulls with fairly long wings and long legs that impart a graceful look when they are flying or walking.
- They have stout, fairly long bills.
- They take 2-3 years to gain adult plumage.
- **Habitat:** These are a coastal species and are only occasionally seen very far inland.
- **Distribution:** These birds are mainly found on the Atlantic coast of North America, the Caribbean, and northern South America.
- **Diet:** They are opportunistic carnivores and scavengers. They eat mainly fish, shellfish, crabs, molluscs, insects, bird eggs, and young birds.
- **Conservation Status**
IUCN Status: Least Concern

Story to learn

ये जब एक दूसरे को आवाज़ लगाते हैं
है तो ऐसा लगता है इंसान हंस (laugh) रहा है।
हमेशा हंसते रहते हैं जैसे
दुनिया से **least concern** है

15. Atal Setu

Why in News?

Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) or Atal Setu in Maharashtra.

About Atal Setu

- It is a 21.8-km long six-lane bridge having 16.5 km length over the sea and about 5.5 km on the land.
- The bridge has been constructed with corrosion resistant material that promises to stand firm against earthquakes, cyclones, high wind pressures and tides.
- It is the **longest bridge** and the **longest sea bridge** in India.
- **Originating from Sewri in Mumbai and concluding at Nhava Sheva in Uran taluka, situated in the Raigad district** the bridge will reduce travel time from **Mumbai to Pune, Goa and South India**.
- The bridge is dedicated to the memory of the late BJP veteran and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

16. Karpoori Thakur

Why in news

Recently, the President of India announced that the Bharat Ratna would be awarded to socialist leader and former Chief Minister of Bihar Karpoori Thakur, posthumously.

About Karpoori Thakur

- Thakur was born in village Pitaunjhia (now known as Karpoori Gram), in the Samastipur district of Bihar.
 - He participated in the freedom struggle and was also jailed for it.
 - Also known as 'Jannayak', or the leader of the people.
 - In independent India, he was voted in as an MLA in 1952.
 - Thakur was also education minister of Bihar from March 5 1967 to January 28, 1968.
 - He became the state's chief minister in December 1970 with the Samyukta Socialist Party, but his government fell after six months.



➤ **Policies**

- In 1978 in Bihar, the Karpoori government had accepted the Mungeri Lal Commission's recommendations and instituted a layered quota framework that recognised the cleavage within the backward castes and also acknowledged the need to address the disadvantages faced by women — of the 26 per cent quota, 12 per cent was given to the extremely backward castes or EBCs, 8 per cent to OBCs, 3 per cent to women and 3 per cent to the economically backward upper castes.
- This reclassification was known as 'Karpoori Thakur Formula' was also seen as a precursor of the Mandal Commission report, advocating for 27% reservations for Other Backward Classes.
- Thakur is known for many of his decisions —
 - Removing English as compulsory subject for the matriculation examinations.
 - Prohibition of alcohol.
 - Preferential treatment for unemployed engineers in government contracts

➤ **Bharat Ratna**

- 'Bharat Ratna', the highest civilian Award of the country, was instituted in the year 1954.
- Any person without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex is eligible for these awards.
- It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour.
- The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister himself to the President. No formal recommendations for this are necessary.
- The number of annual awards is restricted to a maximum of three in a particular year.
- On conferment of the award, the recipient receives a Sanad (certificate) signed by the President and a medallion. The Award does not carry any monetary grant

17. PM YASASVI scheme

➤ **Why in news**

A total of ₹32.44 Crore has been released for Pre-matric Scholarships and ₹387.27 Crore for Post-Matric Scholarships to States/Union Territories (UTs) under the PM YASASVI scheme in 2023.

Story to learn

Yasasvi cricketer was very poor he used scholarship for coaching

➤ **About scheme**

- It is a scholarship scheme for Other Backward Class (OBCs), Economically Backward Class (EBC), and Denotified Nomadic Tribes (DNT) students.
 - **Components of schemes**
 - Pre-Matric Scholarship for OBC, EBC and DNT Students.
 - Post-Matric Scholarship for OBC, EBC and DNT Students.
 - Top Class School Education for OBC, EBC and DNT Students.
 - Top Class College Education for OBC, EBC and DNT Students.
 - Construction of Hostel for OBC Boys and Girls.
 - **Features of scheme**
 - Under this scheme, students can avail of **Pre-Matric Scholarships from Classes 9 to 10** and **Post-Matric Scholarships for their higher education** at the post-matriculation or post-secondary level.
 - Students who excel in their studies also get an opportunity to receive scholarship to study in top class schools and colleges under the scheme of 'Top Class School Education' and 'Top Class College Education'.
 - Hostel facilities are available for OBC students through the 'Scheme of Construction of Hostels for OBC boys' and girls'.



👁 **Eligibility:**

- Other Backward Class (OBC), Economically Backward Classes (EBC), and Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNT)
- Parents or guardians annual income is not more than Rs. 2.50 Lakhs.
- Studying in a Top Class School in Class 9 or 11.

👁 **Entitlement:** Upto Rs. 75,000 p.a. for Class 9/10, Rs. 1,25,000 p.a. for Class 11/12, covering the school tuition fee/hostel fee.

👁 **Implementing Agency:** Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

NOTE -

These scholarships shall be available for studies in India only and will be awarded by the Government of State/Union Territory to which the applicant actually belongs, i.e., permanently settled.



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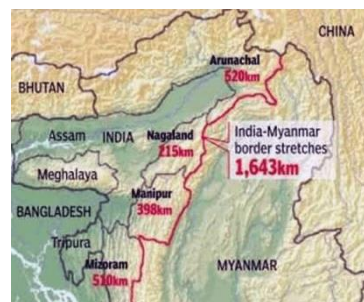
18. Free Movement Regime (FMR) Agreement

👁 **Why in news**

Government reconsidering Free Movement Regime (FMR) Agreement with Myanmar

👁 **About FMR**

- The FMR is a mutually agreed pact between **India and Myanmar** that allows tribes dwelling along the border on either side to **travel up to 16 km** inside the other country without a visa.
- The members of hill tribes have to produce a border pass, which is valid for a year, and can stay in the other country for about two weeks per visit
- The agreement aimed to facilitate people-to-people ties between the countries as residents in the region enjoy strong ethnic and familial relations on both sides of the border.
- The FMR was introduced in 2018 as part of India's Act East Policy.
 - **India-Myanmar border**
 - India-Myanmar border is approximately 1,643 kilometers long.
 - The border runs through the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram.
 - United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I), National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K), Arakan Army (AA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland-Saoraigwra (NDFB-S)





19. Vulture restaurant

Why in news?

Vulture restaurant set up in Jharkhand to conserve Critically Endangered species

About Vulture restaurant

- A vulture restaurant is an undisturbed area where non-toxic, poison-free meat and carcasses are provided for vultures and other scavengers.
- This supplementary feeding supports the vultures in times of food scarcity and when young birds fledge.
- As well as providing a safe food source, vulture restaurants provide land owners with a clean and cost-effective way of disposing of waste and unwanted carcasses.
- The first "vulture restaurant" opened in 2015 at the Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary in the Raigad district

About Vulture

- Vultures are large birds of prey that usually feed on the carrion or (dead or dying animals and rocks) and are found mainly in tropics and subtropics.
- They have played a beneficial role in the ecosystem by consuming carcasses and rotting flesh, keeping the disease transmission rate low

Threats

- Poisoning Vultures feed on the deceased carcasses of many different animals. But larger herbivores such as cattle, deer, and similar animals are their most common food source. If those animals are contaminated with pesticides, herbicides, medication, or other toxins, vultures can be severely affected.
- Poisoning from diclofenac that is used as a medicine for livestock.
- Loss of Natural Habitats due to anthropogenic activities.
- Food Dearth and Contaminated Food.
- Electrocution by Power lines.

20. Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)

Why in news?

Serum Institute of India joins CEPI global network to boost production of vaccines

About CEPI

- CEPI is a innovative global partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil society organisations.
- It work to accelerate the development of vaccines against emerging infectious diseases and enable equitable access to these vaccines for people during outbreaks.
- Founded in Davos, Switzerland in 2017 by Governments of Norway and India, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Wellcome Trust, and World Economic Forum

Function

- CEPI advances vaccines against known threats through proof-of-concept and safety testing in humans and establish investigational vaccine stockpiles before epidemics begin
- CEPI funds new and innovative platform technologies with the potential to accelerate the development and manufacture of vaccines against previously unknown pathogens
- CEPI support and coordinate activities to improve our collective response to epidemics, strengthen capacity in countries at risk, and advance the regulatory science that governs product development.

Headquarter

- Oslo , Norway



21. Palm oil

Why in news?

India's palm oil imports rose in December to their highest in four months.

About Palm oil

- It is edible vegetable oil produced from palm fruit of *Elaeis Guineensis* (African oil Palm) or *Elaeis Oleifera* (indigenous to South and Central America).
- There are two types of palm oil:
 - **Crude palm oil:** Comes from squeezing the fleshy fruit
 - **Palm kernel oil:** Comes from crushing the kernel, or the stone in the middle of the fruit
- Oil palm trees grow in regions around the equator
- **Uses**
 - It is rich in Vitamin A and E with no trans fatty acids; commonly used in food products and industrial applications.
 - It is resistant to oxidation and so can give products a longer shelf-life; it's stable at high temperatures
- **Indian import of palm oil**
 - India is the largest importer of palm oil in Asia, accounting for 15% of global imports, followed by China (9%), Pakistan (4%) and Bangladesh (2%).
 - India buys palm oil mainly from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand
- **Environmental Concerns:**
 - The cultivation of palm oil has been associated with deforestation, leading to habitat loss for many species

22. GI Tags from Odisha

Why in news ?

Seven products from Odisha, ranging from the Similipal Kai chutney made with red weaver ants to the embroidered Kapdaganda shawl, have bagged the coveted Geographical Indication (GI) tag in recognition of their exclusivity to the state.

1. Kapdaganda shawl

- It is embroidered on an off-white coarse cloth with red, yellow and green coloured threads, with each colour holding significance.
- ✓ Green symbolises the mountains and hills
- ✓ Yellow stands for peace and happiness.
- ✓ Red stands as the symbol of blood.
- The motifs in the shawls are mostly lines and triangles, believed to be a reflection of the importance of mountains for the community.
- The shawl is worn by both men and women and the Dongrias gift it to their family members as a token of love and affection.
- Woven and embroidered by the women of the Dongria Kondh tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in the Niyamgiri hills in Odisha's Rayagada and Kalahandi districts
- The shawl reflects the rich tribal heritage of the Dongria Kondhs.



2. Lanjia Saura Painting

- The painting, one of the oldest tribal art forms, is also known as Idital.
- The artworks are famous for their beauty, aesthetics, ritualistic association and iconography.





- The art form belongs to the Lanjia Saura community, a PVTG largely residing in the Rayagada district.
- These paintings are in the form of exterior murals painted on the mud walls of homes.
- White paintings figure over a crimson-maroon background.

Significance of Lanjia Saura Painting

- It is believed that the Lanjia Sauras paint their walls with Idital artworks to show gratitude to their deities and forefathers, and also for the well-being of their community.
- Reflecting the love and affection of the primitive tribes for nature, they feature subjects like tribal humans, trees, animals, birds, the Sun and the Moon.

3. Koraput Kala Jeera Rice

- The black-coloured rice variety, also known as the 'Prince of Rice', is famous for its aroma, taste, texture and nutritional value.
- Tribal farmers of the Koraput region have preserved the rice variety for around 1,000 years.
- As the rice grains resemble cumin seeds, it is also called Kala Jeera.



Significance

- Consumption of the rice variety helps in increasing haemoglobin levels and improves metabolism in the body.
- Ancient tales also speak about the physical, mental and spiritual delights resulting from the consumption of the rice variety.

4. Similipal Kai chutney

- The chutney made with red weaver ants is a traditional delicacy of the tribals in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district.
- The ants are found in the forests of Mayurbhanj, including in the Similipal forests – Asia's second-largest biosphere.
- The tribals prepare the Kai chutney by grinding the ants manually on a Sil Batta or the grinding stone.



Significance

- Rich in medicinal and nutritional value, the chutney is believed to be a good source of nutrients like protein, calcium, zinc, vitamin B-12, iron, magnesium, potassium, etc
- Mayurbhanj's tribals also earn their livelihood by selling the red ants and the chutney made from the ants. They believe that its consumption helps boost immunity and prevents diseases.



5. Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal

- Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal is known for its prickly thorns on the stems and the whole plant.
- The green and round fruits contain more seeds as compared to other genotypes.
- It is famous for its unique taste and relatively short quick cooking time.
- The plants are resistant to major insects and can be grown with minimal pesticide
- It is being widely cultivated in Nayagarh district of the state.



6. Odisha Khajuri Guda

- Odisha's "Khajuri Guda" or jaggery is a natural sweetener extracted from date palm trees and has its origin in the Gajapati district.
- Traditionally, the jaggery is prepared in a trapezoidal form called 'Patali Gur' and is organic by nature.
- It is dark brown and has a unique taste.



7. Dhenkanal Magji

- Dhenkanal Magji is a type of sweet made from cheese from buffalo milk, with distinct characteristics in terms of appearance, taste, flavour, shape, and size.
- It also has unique nutritional values that distinguish it from other cheese-based sweets.
- The region was the hinterland of buffalo milk production and cheese was the third largest produce, after milk and curd.
- Mandar-Sadangi area of Gondia block is believed to be the centre of origin of the sweet stuff, which has now been spread to the entire district.
- The sweet is prepared by draining moisture from the cheese and then frying it, finally forming balls from the mixture.



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23. Zombie viruses (Methuselah viruses)

Why in news ?

Scientists warn that melting Arctic permafrost could unleash 'zombie viruses' and trigger a global medical emergency.

Story to learn

कुछ viruses ice में जम कर zombie बन गए

About zombie virus

- Zombie virus is the term given to a virus that is frozen in ice and therefore dormant for thousands of years
- The virus emerged due to the thawing of permafrost as the global temperature is rising.
- **Potential Impact:** After researching living cultures, it was discovered that all "zombie viruses" may propagate, making them a "health danger."



24. Kuno National Park(KNP)

Why in news?

Recently, a Namibian cheetah translocated to KNP under Project Cheetah, gave birth to 4 cubs.

About KNP

- Kuno National Park lies in the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh in Central India near the Vindhya Hills
- In 2018 that the government changed its status from wild life sanctuary to national park.
- Named after the Kuno River (One of the main tributaries of the Chambal River) that cuts across it, Kuno is primarily a grassland region.
- Under the “Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India,” Kuno National Park was chosen
- Kuno National Park’s forest area is mainly dominated by Kardhai, Salai, Khair trees among mostly mixed forests, this also helps it in having a variety of species of flora and fauna
- Kuno National Park which is mainly dominated by Kardhai, Salai, Khair trees among the mixed forests, supports a wide variety of both floral and faunal species.

Kuno River

- Kuno river originates from the Vindhya mountain range.
- The river flows through a hilly and forested region, with numerous tributaries and streams feeding into it along the way and finally meets in the waters of the river chambal in Morena (MP)

25. All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 21-22

Why in news ?

Ministry of Education releases All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022

About AISHE Report

- Ministry of Human Resource Development conducts an annual web-based AISHE since 2010-11.
- Survey covers **all higher education institutions** in the country, which are categorised into 3 broad categories:
 - University
 - College
 - Standalone Institutions.
- Data is being collected on several parameters such as **teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, infrastructure.**
- Indicators of educational development such as **Institution Density, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Pupil-teacher ratio, Gender Parity Index, Per Student Expenditure** will also be calculated from the data collected through AISHE.
- These are useful in making informed policy decisions and research for development of education sector.

Story to learn

Aishwariya Rai (Aishe) पढी लिखी actress है
(It can relate with Ministry of Education)

Key findings

- In 2021-22, the **overall gross enrolment ratio (GER)** in higher education for the age group 18-23 years **increased** to 28.4%, from 27.3% in 2020-21 and 23.7% in 2014-15, the base year.
- **Female GER increased** to 28.5% (2.07 crore) in 2021-22 from 27.9 (2.01 crore) in 2020-21 and 22.9 percent in 2014-15.
- **The GER of Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) students has also increased** by around 2%. In 2020-21, the GER of SC students was 25.6% and ST was 23.4%, while in 2021-22 it increased to 27.2% and 25.8% respectively.



- The **enrolment of OBC students has also increased** to 1.63 crore in 2021-22 from 1.13 crore in 2014-15.
- About **78.9 per cent** of the total students are **enrolled in undergraduate level** courses and 12.1 per cent are enrolled in postgraduate level courses.
- **Among disciplines at the undergraduate-level** in AISHE 2021-22, enrolment is **highest in Arts (34.2%), followed by science (14.8%), Commerce (13.3%), and Engineering and Technology (11.8%)**.
- **Among streams at postgraduate-level** in AISHE 2021-22, maximum students are enrolled in **Social Science (21.1%)**, followed by science (14.7).
- **Government Universities constituting 58.6% of total Universities, contribute 73.7% of total enrolment**, and Private Universities account for 26.3% of total enrolment.
- The total number of Universities / University level institutions registered is 1,168, Colleges 45,473 and Standalone Institutions 12,002.
- As per the survey, the **total number of faculty/teachers** in 2021-22 is 15.98 lakh, of which about **56.6% are male and 43.4% are female**

26. Lake Victoria

Why in news?

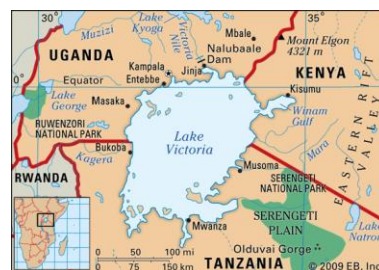
Centre for Science and Environment in association with Tanzania is working to restore Lake Victoria.

About Lake Victoria

- Lake Victoria is the largest African Great Lake by area
- It is second largest fresh water body in the world.
- The shoreline is shared by Kenya (6%), Uganda (43%), and Tanzania (51%).
- Most of the lake's water comes from rainfall
- The Kagera, Katonga, Sio, Yala, Nyando, Sondu Miriu, and Mara rivers feed the lake and the **River Nile carries water out of the lake.**

Threat

- The major threats to the lake are deforestation, land use change, wetland degradation and discharge from urban areas, industries and farmlands.



Story to learn

जिसकी victory (Victoria) होगी
उसको KUTA (Kenya, Uganda,
Tanzania) मिलेगा

27. Leprosy

Why in news?

The Central government has approved a new treatment regimen for leprosy, aiming to stop its transmission at the sub-national level by 2027, three years ahead of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

About Leprosy

- Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*.
- The disease affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes. If left untreated, the disease may cause progressive and permanent disabilities.

Classification: into two types for treatment purposes

- **Pauci-Bacillary (PB)** cases have fewer bacteria visible and show no signs of advanced disease in biopsies.
- **Multibacillary (MB)** patients have visible bacteria and may show signs of more advanced disease in biopsies



Transmission

- The disease is transmitted through droplets from the nose and mouth.
- The disease is not spread through casual contact with a person who has leprosy like shaking hands or hugging, sharing meals or sitting next to each other but spread by Prolonged, close contact over months with untreated cases.
- Moreover, the patient stops transmitting the disease when they begin treatment.

Symptoms

- Symptoms may occur within one year but can also take as long as 20 years or even more to occur.
- Leprosy is diagnosed by finding at least one of the following cardinal signs:
 - definite loss of sensation in a pale or reddish skin patch;
 - thickened or enlarged peripheral nerve, with loss of sensation and/or weakness of the muscles supplied by that nerve
 - presence of acid-fast bacilli in a slit-skin smear.

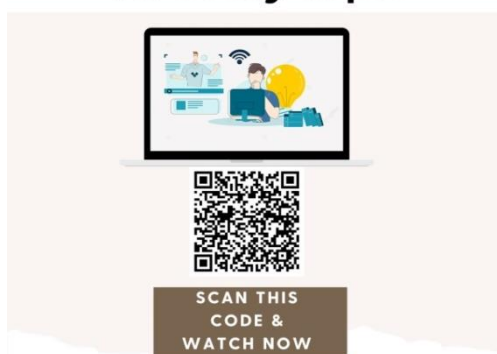
Treatment

- The currently recommended treatment regimen consists of three drugs: dapsone, rifampicin and clofazimine. The combination is referred to as multi-drug therapy (MDT)
- The duration of treatment is six months for PB and 12 months for MB cases. MDT kills the pathogen and cures the patient.

New treatment regimen announcement

- New treatment regimen announced Ministry has decided to introduce a three-drug regimen for Pauci-Bacillary (PB) cases of leprosy in place of a two-drug regimen for six months. Multi-drug therapy (MDT), as recommended by WHO, consists of three drugs - dapsone, rifampicin and clofazimine.

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28. Madhika language

Why in news?

Madhika, a language with just two speakers in Kerala is on the brink of extinction.

About Madhika language

- It is a language spoken by the **Chakaliya community**.
- Despite sounding similar to Kannada it can still bewilder listeners due to its diverse influences.
- It is a blend of Telugu, Tulu, Kannada, and Malayalam.
- It is largely influenced by Havyaka Kannada, an old form of Kannada
- It does not have script.
- It is fast becoming extinct with **the younger generation opting for Malayalam**.

About Chakaliya community

Story to learn

एक चालाक (chakaliya) लड़की वह बहुत
sweet (Madhu) बोलती थी।



- The Chakaliya community was originally nomadic and worshippers of Thiruvengkattam and Mariamma.
- They migrated from the hilly regions of Karnataka to northern Malabar centuries ago.
- Originally categorised as a Scheduled Tribe (ST), the community was subsequently reclassified into the Scheduled Caste (SC) group in Kerala.

29. Project Veer Gatha 3.0

Why in News?

The third edition of Project 'Veer Gatha', as part of Republic Day celebrations, has witnessed an overwhelming pan India response.

About Project Veer Gatha

- The initiative is aimed at disseminating the details of acts of bravery of the Gallantry awardees and the life stories of these brave hearts among the students so as **to raise the spirit of patriotism and instill values of civic consciousness amongst them**
- Project Veer Gatha deepened this noble aim by providing a platform to the school students to do creative projects/activities based on gallantry award winners.
- As part of this, the students framed different projects through various media like art, poems, essays and multimedia on these gallantry award winners and best projects were awarded at national level by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Education.
- It is a joint initiative of the **Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Education**.
- The project has been coterminous with Republic Day Celebrations each year

Story to learn

Veer gatha = वीरो की story

लोगों को gallantry awardees (can relate with Ministry of defence) से प्रेरित करना।
students (can relate with Ministry of Education) के बीच निबंध, कविताओं का competition करना

30. Baltic Sea

Why in news ?

Russia blamed Kyiv for attack on gas terminal at Baltic Sea port

About Baltic Sea

- The Baltic Sea is connected to the White Sea via the White Sea Canal and to the North Sea's German Bight via Kiel Canal.
- The Baltic Sea is often cited as the world's largest brackish inland water body.
- Its water salinity levels are lower than that of the World Oceans due to the inflow of fresh water from the surrounding land and the sea's shallowness
- The Baltic Sea contains three major gulfs: the Gulf of Bothnia to the north, the Gulf of Finland to the east, and the Gulf of Riga slightly to the south of that.
- **Surrounding Countries:** Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Finland and Sweden.



Story to learn

एक आदमी (Germany) बाल्टी (Balti) में stone (ESTONIA) और मिट्टी (land) (Finland/Poland) लेकर रूसी (Russia) से बांध कर Den (Sweden & Denmark) फेंक दिया



31. Operation Sarvashakti

Why in news?

The Army has launched Operation Sarvashakti in the Rajouri-Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir

About Sarvashakti

- Through this Indian army aims to target terrorists who operate on both sides of Pir Panjal mountain ranges.

32. VAishwik BHArtiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Fellowship

Why in news?

Ministry of Science and Technology has launched the first batch of VAIBHAV Fellowships.

About VAIBHAV Fellowship

- VAIBHAV Fellowship aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's Higher Educational and Scientific Institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world through mobility of faculty/researcher from overseas institutions to India.

Story to learn

वैभव नाम का वैज्ञानिक लड़का देश के बाहर अमेरिका में चला गया (एनआरआई/ पीआईओ/ ओसीआई) ओएस से Indian Institute में रिसर्च करवाएंगे इंसेंटिव देंगे

Eligibility: (for Scientists)

- The applicant should be Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI), currently living abroad.
- The applicant must have obtained Ph.D/M.D/M.S degree from a recognized University.
- Applicant must be a researcher engaged in an overseas academic / research / industrial organization with proven track record of research & development working in the top500 QS World University Ranking.

Eligibility: (for Institutions)

- Higher Educational Institutions / University ranked in top 200 in NIRF overall rankings and having NAAC 'A' grade (3.0 and above) and scientific institutes.

Nature & Duration of Support:

- The fellowship is tenable only in India and can be implemented in any of the recognized
- academic institutions, national laboratories and other recognized R & D institutions.
- The host institution should provide necessary administrative and infrastructural support
- The fellowship is for 1-2 months each year for a period of 3 years.
 - The fellows will be entitled to receive the grants as given below:
 - Fellowship @ USD 5000 (in equivalent Indian currency)
 - International Travel from place of their institute to place of work in India in business class
 - Accommodation in 3 or 4-star hotel
 - Contingency Rs 1,00,000 per year
 - Domestic Travel for academic purposes up to two stations in a year



- The host institute will get Rs 10 lakh per year for hosting the scientist and providing office/lab accommodation and facilitation for various infrastructure support

33. Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB)

Why in news?

First meeting of the Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB) held

About SAAB

- SAAB is the body established by the National Institute of Social Defense (NISD)
- It is an advisory body and has been set up to guide the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in institutionalizing social audits for its various schemes.

➤ The work profile of the advisory body members is as under:

- To work for the capacity building of the members of Social Justice Cell of the Social Audit Units.
- To train the Social Audit teams comprising five other social auditors from Social Justice Cell.
- To ensure that the SA team's skill set is enhanced in terms of interaction with the community, inmates, organizers and stakeholders to improve the service delivery, and to identify the gaps to be filled.

➤ What is Social Audit?

- It is an audit of a Scheme/Programme that is conducted jointly by the Government functionaries and the people, especially by those people who are affected by or are the intended beneficiaries of such scheme.
- It can be described as the verification of the implementation of a program/scheme and its results by the community with the active involvement of the primary stakeholder.

34. Kanger Valley National Park (KVNP)

Why in news?

In a first-of-its-kind model of convergence, Kanger Valley National Park is working with a coalition of various organizations and government departments to prepare a landscape-based ecological restoration plan for the national park.

About KVNP

- National Park derives its name from the Kanger River, which flows in its length.
- It got the status of a national park in 1982.
- It is located in Jagdalpur, in the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh state.
- It is located on the banks of the Kholaba River (tributary of the Godavari River).
- Main attraction of the park are Kutumsar Caves, Kailash Gupha, Tirathgarh Falls, Bhisadarha, State Bird of Chhattisgarh State Bastar Hill Myna (*Gracula religiosa peninularis*) found in National Park.

35. Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)

Why in news ?

Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) proposes policy suggestions for sustainable marine fisheries management

About CMFRI



- Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute was established by Government of India in 1947 under the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** and later it become part **ICAR (Indian Council Of Agriculture Research)** in 1967.
- During the course of over 75 years the Institute has emerged as a leading tropical marine fisheries research institute in the world.
- 👁 **Vision**
 - Sustainable marine fisheries through management intervention and enhanced coastal fish production through mariculture for improved coastal livelihoods.
- 👁 **Mission**
 - To develop an information based management system for changing over from open access to regulated regime in marine fisheries, augment coastal fish production through mariculture and sea ranching and restore critical marine habitats.
- 👁 **Headquarters**
 - Headquarters of the ICAR-CMFRI is located in Kochi, Kerala.

36. Chandubi festival

👁 Why in news ?

The 14th Chandubi Festival was recently held near the Chandubi Lake in Assam's Kamrup district from January 1 to January 5.

👁 About Chandubi Festival

- The Chandubi Festival happens every year for five days, starting on New Year's Day, by the Chandubi Lake in Assam.
- Chandubi Lake was formed by an earthquake in 1897.
- The name "Chandubi" comes from "*Chand*" meaning "*five*" and "*Dubi*" meaning "*sinking*" in the Khasi language.
- At the festival, one can enjoy local culture, try ethnic food, see handcrafted clothes, and go boating.
- The festival's main goal is to encourage eco-tourism and protect the lake, which has been losing water.
- Preserving the lake and helping the tribes like Rabhas, Garos, Gorkhas, and tea tribes are reasons for holding the festival.



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37. South Asian University (SAU)

Why in news?

The Delhi High Court has ruled that the South Asian University is not amenable to the writ jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India

About SAU

- SAU is an intergovernmental university funded by the governments of **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries**.
 - The idea of establishing a South Asian University (SAU) was mooted by the **Prime Minister of India at the 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka in 2005**.
 - The University is currently functioning from Akbar Bhawan Campus in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi.
 - It falls under the purview of the **Ministry of External Affairs**.
 - Students of the University will be predominantly from the **eight SAARC countries**.
 - Tuition fees for them are heavily subsidized.
 - Some students from non-SAARC countries may also be admitted on full cost recovery basis.
 - Teachers of the University will also be **predominantly from the eight SAARC Countries, but up to 20% of teachers may be from other countries**.
 - Its degrees are accredited in and **recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and its equivalents in all the eight SAARC countries**.
 - The university offers graduate and doctoral level courses.
- 🔍 **Delhi High court's observation**
- The Delhi High Court has observed that the South Asian University (SAU) has the status of an **"international organisation"** and enjoys the "privilege and the immunity" from being subjected to the writ jurisdiction conferred to the court under **Article 226** of the Constitution of India as it is not functionally, administratively or financially controlled by the Government of India, and hence SAU is not 'State' under **Article 12 of the Constitution of India**.

Story to learn

SAARC countries ने decide किया की we should open an university in India जिसकी डिग्री सभी देशों में वैध हो क्योंकि इसमें foreign contries was involved, it falls under the purview of the ministry of external affairs

38. Global Risk Report 2024

Why in news ?

Recently, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the Global Risk Report 2024

About Global Risk Report 2024

- May face over the next decade, against a backdrop of rapid technological change, economic uncertainty, a warming planet and conflict.

Key Highlights

- Misinformation and disinformation are the biggest short-term risks highlighted in the report.
- Extreme weather events and critical changes to Earth's systems like biodiversity loss are noted as the greatest long-term concerns.
- Cost-of-living crisis and the interlinked risks of AI-enabled misinformation /disinformation and societal polarization dominate the global risks outlook for 2024.

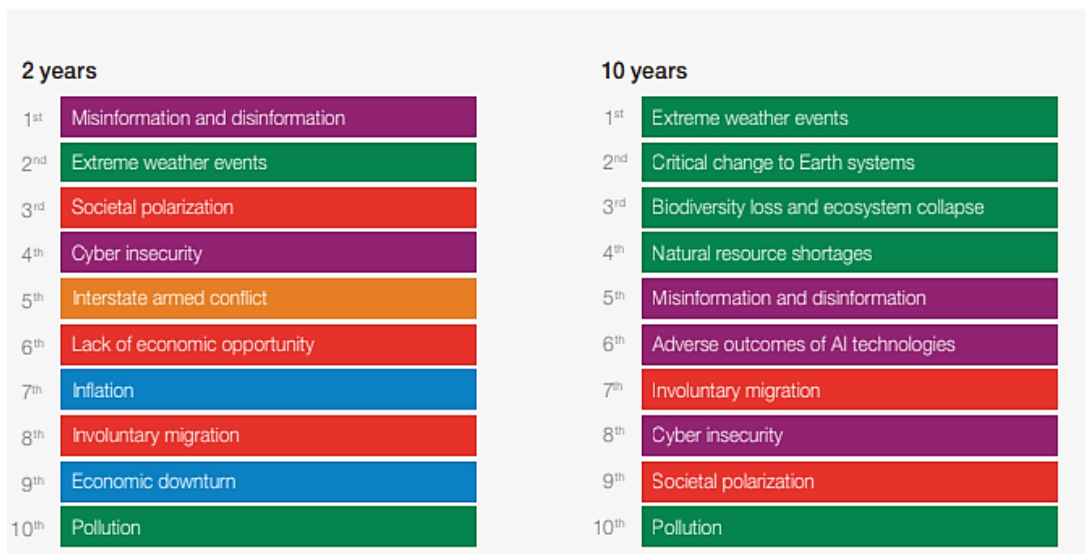
Story to learn

"Global risk" is defined as the possibility of the occurrence of an event or condition which, if it occurs, would negatively impact a significant proportion of global GDP, population or natural resources



Global risks ranked by severity over the short and long term

"Please estimate the likely impact (severity) of the following risks over a 2-year and 10-year period."



39. Tea Association of India

Why in news?

Tea Association of India calls for introspection and resilience of Indian Tea industry

About Tea Association Of India

- Tea Association of India is predominantly an Association of North Indian tea producers in the organized sector of the Indian Tea Industry.

Evolution of Tea Association of India

- In the pre-independence period, some of the daring Indian entrepreneurs fired by national spirit entered the field of Tea Industry in North-India with a missionary zeal.
- They put their heart and soul into the tea fields which they developed almost with their own in the remote regions without having much technical skill.
- In doing so, they had to face many constraints and therefore realized the imperative need of a common platform to discuss their problems and exchange ideas among themselves.
- Thus began the process of formation of the Tea Association of India (TAI) with a wider interest and representation that was existing for the Indian interest.
- Tea Association of India formed at a General Meeting of indigenous tea planters held on 27th January 1956 with a view to protect their common interests and to foster trade, commerce and industry connected with Tea.

Who can become a Member?

- Any person, 18 years and over, and any Firm, Company, Corporation or Association owing a Tea Estate or Tea Garden anywhere in India in their conventional or corporate name is eligible for membership of the Association.
- Firms / Proprietors / Partnership / Companies (public or private) / Cooperatives engaged solely in manufacturing of Tea anywhere in India in their conventional or corporate name.



40. Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI)

Why in news?

Denmark announces alliance on green fuels in India.

About GFAI

- GFAI is part of the Green Strategic Partnership signed in 2020 between **India and Denmark**.
- Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) initiative to boost collaboration between the two countries in the sustainable energy solutions sector and advance its joint global goal towards carbon neutrality.
- GFAI announcement comes at an opportune moment in history as India massively pushes towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2070.
- Meanwhile, Denmark has topped the global Climate Performance Ranking 2024 and is also on the path to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Objective

- GFAI's primary objective is to promote sustainable energy growth in India by establishing an ecosystem that encourages collaboration among businesses, government entities, research institutions, and financial stakeholders.

Founding Members

- Nine pioneering Danish organisations — Maersk, Topsoe, Umwelt Energy, Mash Makes, European Sustainable Solutions, Novozymes, Danfoss, Brdr. Christensen and Hydrogen Denmark — have committed themselves to the GFAI initiative as founding members.

Advisory Board

- GFAI's advisory board members include India Hydrogen Alliance, Energy Consortium at the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, the Danish Energy Agency and State of Green.

41. Technical textiles

Why in news ?

Ministry of Textiles under National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM) is organizing "Fostering Innovations in Technical Textiles Hackathon".

About Technical textiles

- Technical textiles are textiles materials and products manufactured primarily for technical performance and functional properties rather than aesthetic characteristics.
- Technical textiles are functional fabrics that have applications across various industries including automobiles, civil engineering and construction, agriculture, healthcare, industrial safety (fire proof jackets), personal protection (bullet proof jackets, high altitude combat gear), space applications etc.

Story to learn

Technical Textile पहनने के काम नहीं आते ये और कुछ अलग काम आते हैं जैसे Bullet proof jacket etc.

About National Technical Textiles Mission

- It aims to position the country as a global leader in technical textiles and increase the use of technical textiles in the domestic market.
- It aims at taking domestic market size to USD 40 billion to USD 50 billion by 2024.
- It will be implemented for four years starting from 2020-2021 and has four components:
 1. Component -I (Research, Innovation and Development)
 2. Component –II (Promotion and Market Development)
 3. Component – III (Export Promotion)
 4. Component- IV (Education, Training, Skill Development)



42. World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2024

➤ Why in news?

Recently, the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) has released the World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024 report.

🌐 About World Employment and Social Outlook

- World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends provides a comprehensive assessment of the latest labour market trends, including unemployment, job creation, labour force participation and hours worked.
- Released annually by **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**.

🔍 Key Findings

- Macroeconomic environment deteriorated significantly over 2023.
- Despite slowdown, global growth in 2023 was modestly higher than anticipated.
- Real wages declined in majority of G20 countries due to inflation.

Story to learn

Employment is related to Labour
World Employment and Social Outlook is related to International Labour Organisation (ILO)

43. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

🌐 Why in news?

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) has been celebrated on 9th January every year since 2003 to honor the Indian diaspora and the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the country's development.

🌐 About PBD

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated **once in every two years** to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.
- January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.
- It is the flagship event of the **Ministry of External Affairs**.
- During the Convention, selected overseas Indians are also honored with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to recognize their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad
- To date, 17 conventions have been held.
- The last Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was celebrated in the Indore of Madhya Pradesh in 2023.
- The theme of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2023 was "**Diaspora: Reliable Partners for India's Progress in Amrit Kaal**"

Story to learn

Gandhi ji south Africa में तहलका मचा कर 9 Jan को आये थे | उसके उपलक्ष में PBD बनाया जाता है Foreign से आये थे so it can be related with **Ministry of Foreign affairs**





44. Urea Gold

Why in news?

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approves launch of Urea Gold

About Urea Gold

- It is a new variety of Urea coated with Sulphur.
- It is being introduced to address the Sulphur deficiency in soil and save input costs for the farmers.
- Urea Gold surpasses the existing Neem-coated urea in terms of both economic viability and efficiency.

How Urea Gold Is Better Than Others?

- Sulphur-coated urea facilitates a gradual release of nitrogen, thereby enhancing its availability and uptake by crops.
- The inclusion of humic acid in Urea Gold further extends its lifespan as a fertilizer.
- This product not only substitutes traditional urea consumption but also reduces overall fertilizer usage.
- According to the report, 15 kg of Urea Gold provides comparable benefits to 20 kg of conventional urea, making it a more efficient and effective choice for farmers.

45. Graphene

Why in news?

Researchers in Georgia have created the world's first functional semiconductor made from graphene.

About Graphene

- Graphene is a material that is extracted from graphite and is made up of pure carbon
- It is a two-dimensional form (allotrope) of carbon that consists of a single layer of carbon atoms arranged in a hexagonal lattice.

Properties

- Graphene is the thinnest material known to man at one atom thick, and also incredibly strong - about 200 times stronger than steel.
- Among the diverse properties of graphene, the ones that stand out most are its high thermal and electrical conductivity, elasticity, toughness, lightness, resistance and has interesting light absorption abilities.
- It is impermeable to gases, even those as light as hydrogen and helium.
- Graphene is a transparent material and absorbs very little light (only 2%).
- As well as being an excellent electric conductor, graphene is a very resistant material

Potential application

- Batteries, transistors, computer chips, Sensor, Bio-sensor, Biomedical, energy generation, supercapacitors, DNA sequencing, water filters, antennas, touchscreens (for LCD or OLED displays), solar cells, fuel cell, Spintronics- related products etc.

**Note - For the first time, graphene has showed band gap property.**

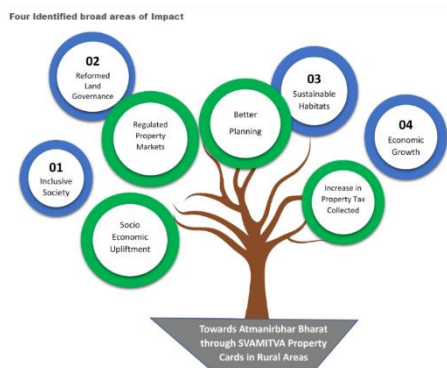
- The term "band gap" refers to the energy difference between the top of the valence band and the bottom of the conduction band. Electrons are able to jump from one band to another.
- Band Gap is a crucial electronic property that allows semiconductors to switch on and off.

46. SVAMITVA Scheme**Why in news?**

SVAMITVA (Survey of villages and mapping with improvised technology in village areas) Scheme won the Best Innovation Award for Innovation Sandbox presentation during Public Policy Dialogues-2024.

About SVAMITVA Scheme

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** formally launched in 2021.
- It was launched to provide **RURAL INDIA** with an integrated inhabited (Abadi) property ownership solution.
- This will provide the 'record of rights' to village household owners in the form of Property Cards/Title Deeds.
- It uses drone technology for mapping land parcels
- The preparation and distribution of Property Cards on the basis of maps generated under SVAMITVA Scheme by the Survey of India is the responsibility of the respective State Government.
- However, **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** is engaged with States/UTs to integrate property cards generated under SVAMITVA with DigiLocker platform

**➤ Aim**

- The scheme aims to cover 6.62 lakh villages from the Financial Year 2020-21 to the Financial Year 2024-25

➤ Objective

- Creation of accurate land records for rural planning and reduce property related disputes.
- To bring financial stability to the citizens in rural India by enabling them to use their property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits.
- Determination of property tax, which would accrue to the GPs directly in States where it is devolved or else, add to the State exchequer.
- Creation of survey infrastructure and GIS maps that can be leveraged by any department for their use.
- To support in preparation of better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) by making use of GIS maps

➤ **SVAMITVA Dashboard:** A centralised online monitoring and reporting dashboard for realtime progress monitoring of SVAMITVA implementation.

➤ **DigiLocker App:** Beneficiaries can view and download the property card through the DigiLocker App.

➤ **Gram Manchitra:** Funds released to the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for the Enhancement of the Spatial Planning Application 'Gram Manchitra' and Central Infrastructure.



47. World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024

Why in news?

Researchers in Georgia have created the world's first functional semiconductor made from graphene.

About World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024

- The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 is a report produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five United Nations regional commissions
- The WESP 2024 presents an outlook for the global economy and underscores the importance of global cooperation and prudent policies to lift global growth and accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Key findings

1. India's Perspective:

- South Asia grew by an estimated 5.3% in 2023 and is projected to increase by 5.2% in 2024, driven by a robust expansion in India, which remains the fastest-growing large economy in the world.
- India is projected to grow by 6.2% in 2024, supported by domestic demand and growth in manufacturing and services.
- In South Asia India, which remains the fastest-growing large economy

2. Global perspectives

- The report forecasts a deceleration in global gross domestic product (GDP) growth, from an estimated 2.7% in 2023 to 2.4% in 2024.
- Developing economies, in particular, are struggling to recover from pandemic-induced losses, with many facing high debt and investment shortfalls.
- It is anticipated that many low-income and vulnerable nations will experience only moderate growth in the upcoming years.
- The reasons are persistently high-interest rates, escalating geopolitical conflicts, slow international trade and an increase in climate-related calamities.

48. Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC)

Why in News?

Supreme Court judge Justice BR Gavai has been nominated as the Chairman of the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC).

About SCLSC

- The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee was constituted under Section 3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society, in cases falling under the top court's jurisdiction.
- Section 3A of the Act states that the Central Authority (the National Legal Services Authority or NALSA) shall constitute the committee.
 - It consists of a sitting SC judge, who is the chairman, along with other members possessing the experience and qualifications prescribed by the Centre.
 - Both the chairman and other members will be nominated by the CJI.



49. European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

Why in News?

EFTA deal with India could be signed before 2024 elections: Swiss envoy

About EFTA

- It is the intergovernmental organisation of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
- It was set up in 1960 by its then seven Member States for the promotion of free trade and economic integration between its members.
- EFTA was founded by the Stockholm Convention in 1960.

Mission

- The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is an intergovernmental organisation set up for the **promotion of free trade and economic integration** to the benefit of its four Member States – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – and the benefit of their trading partners around the globe.

EFTA and India

- EFTA is India's 9th largest trading partner, accounting for about 2.5% of India's total merchandise trade in 2020-21.
- The main items of India's exports to EFTA are textiles, chemicals, gems, and jewelry, machinery, and pharmaceuticals.
- The main items of India's imports from EFTA are machinery, chemicals, precious metals, and medical instruments.

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50. Non Alignment Moment (NAM)

Why in News?

NAM summit is being held in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, on January 19-20. **About**

About NAM

- The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of the Cold War, that is, power rivalries and ideological conflicts between the USA and the USSR, with both countries creating military alliances.
- At that period a new ideology emerged that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union, but sought to remain independent or neutral. This ideology later known as Non Alignment
- Basic concept of NAM originated in 1955, during discussion that took place at **Asia Africa Bandung Conference** in Indonesia



- First NAM conference held at Belgrade presided by Joseph Tito, President Of Yugoslavia, September 1961 initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru(India), Sukarno, Yugoslavia (Indonesia), Abdul Naseer (Egypt), Kwame (Ghana)
- ☛ **Principle of NAM**
 - Respect for the principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations and international law.
 - Respect for sovereignty, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all States.
 - Peaceful settlement of all international conflicts in accordance with the charter of the United Nations.
 - Respect for the political, economic, social and cultural diversity of countries and peoples.
 - Defence and promotion of shared interests, justice and cooperation, regardless of the differences existing in the political, economic and social systems of the States, on the basis of mutual respect and the equality of rights.
 - Respect for the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence, in accordance with the charter of the United Nations
 - Non-interference in the internal affairs of States. No State or group of States has the right to intervene either directly or indirectly, whatever the motive, in the internal affairs of any other State.
 - Promotion and defence of multilateralism and multilateral organisations as the appropriate frameworks to resolve, through dialogue and cooperation, the problems affecting humankind.
- ☛ **Secretariat:** NAM does not have a permanent secretariat or a formal founding charter, act, or treaty.
- ☛ **Members:** Currently, NAM membership consists of 120 countries: 53 from Africa, 39 from Asia, 26 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and two from Europe. It also includes the non-UN member state of Palestine, and 17 other observer countries.

51. Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT)

☛ Why in News?

An Indian delegation visited Mauna Kea, Hawaii, USA and discussed challenges in the progress of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project and ways to overcome them.

☛ About TMT

- Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) is a 30-meter diameter primary mirror optical and infrared telescope being established at Mauna Kea, Hawaii, USA.
- This project aims to open new windows to the universe through optical and infrared astronomy.
- It is proposed as a joint collaboration involving institutions in the US, Japan, China, Canada, and India.

☛ India's Role and Contribution

- **Major Contributor:** India is expected to play a significant role in the TMT project, contributing hardware, instrumentation, and software worth \$200 million.
- **Mirror Production:** Of the 492 required mirrors, India will contribute 83, showcasing its capabilities in precision engineering and technology.



52. Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code

Why in News?

The Supreme Court has held that one discordant instance of bad behaviour could not be classified as harassment or cruelty for dowry under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code.

About Section 498A

- It deals with the offense of cruelty by a husband or his relatives towards a married woman.
- This section was introduced to address the rising instances of cruelty and harassment faced by married women in the context of dowry. *“Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.”*

It defines cruelty as:

- Any wilful conduct which is of such a nature as is likely to drive the woman to commit suicide or to cause grave injury or danger to life, limb or health (whether mental or physical) of the woman; or
- Harassment of the woman where such harassment is with a view to coercing her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any property or valuable security or is on account of failure by her or any person related to her to meet such demand.

53. Yellow rust

Why in News?

Based on the input from wheat researchers and the weather bureau, the Karnal-based Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research (IIWBR) has appealed to the farmers to remain vigilant against yellow rust, a pest used to appear a few years ago in some districts of Haryana during this period.

About Yellow rust

- Yellow Rust disease appears as yellow stripes of powder or dust on leaves and leaf sheaths of the wheat crop. The disease does occur in barley but it is rare due to effective varietal resistance.
- It is a disease of cool weather in the northern hills and north-western plains zone.
- The disease can spread rapidly under congenial conditions and affects crop development, and eventually the yield.
- It can spread easily during the onset of cool weather and when wind conditions are favourable.
- This occurs when the rust colonies in the leaves drain the carbohydrates from the plant and reduce the green leaf area
- Rain, dew and fog favour the disease's development.
- Last year, a new variety of wheat called HD-3226 or Pusa Yashasvi was released by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, which had higher levels of resistance against major rust fungi such as the yellow/stripe



54. Guruvayur Temple

Why in News?

The Prime Minister performed darshan and puja at Guruvayur Temple in Guruvayur, Kerala.

About Guruvayur Temple

- The Guruvayur Temple, nestled in Guruvayur, Kerala, is a revered Hindu sanctuary dedicated to Guruvayurappan, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu located in the town of Guruvayur in Kerala.
- The statue of Lord Vishnu installed here has four arms.
- One has the conch Panchajanya, another has a discus Sudarshana Chakra, the third one has the mace Kaumodaki and the fourth is holding a lotus with a Holy basil garland.
- It is one of the most important places of worship for Hindus in Kerala and is often referred to as Bhuloka Vaikunta (Holy Abode of Vishnu on Earth).
- The temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu and the young form of Lord Krishna, is also known as Guruvayur Sree Krishna Temple.

Legends attached

- There are several legends attached to the temple and the most famous among them is related to Lord Krishna. Legend has it that Krishna set his charioteer, Udhava, to save Vishnu idol from being worshipped by him in Dwarka. Udhava sought the help of Lord Vayu (Lord of Winds) and took the statue away from Kerala and installed it at Guruvayur. Since then, the place is known as 'Guru-Vayu-ur'.

55. Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the 18th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 titled 'Beyond Basics' was released by **NGO Pratham**, discussing the activities students are engaged in, their basic and applied reading and maths abilities and digital awareness and skills.

About ASER 2023

- The ASER, is an annual, citizen-led household survey that aims to understand whether children in rural India are enrolled in school and whether they are learning.
- ASER has been conducted every year since 2005 in all **rural districts** of India.
- It is the **largest citizen-led survey** in India.
- The ASER 2023 is based on a survey conducted in 28 districts across 26 states, reaching out to 34,745 youths in the 14-18 age group. One rural district was surveyed in each major state with the exception of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where two such districts were surveyed.

Key findings

Trends on basic learning:

- Overall (of those aged 14-18), a quarter (26.5%) could not read a Class 2-level textbook in their regional language, and a little less than half (42.7%) could not read sentences in English.



- Of those who can read these sentences, over a quarter (26.5%) did not understand the meaning of what they were reading.
- Basic mathematics remains the big challenge. More than half of the surveyed students (56.7%) could not solve a simple 3-digit by 1-digit division problem.
- The ability to do division is seen as a proxy for the ability to do basic arithmetic operations.

Arithmetic proficiency:

- 45% of youths in the surveyed group have basic arithmetic proficiency.
- The rest need to 'catch up' as low levels of foundational numeracy affect the ability of youth in tackling everyday calculations (say, for financial computations).
- Application of basic skills to everyday calculations:
- 85% of surveyed youths can measure length using a scale when the starting point is 0 cm but this drops sharply to 39% when the starting point is moved.
- This showed a decline as compared with 2017 when it was 86% and 40%. Males do better than females across all everyday calculations.



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56. North Eastern Council (NEC)

Why in News?

71st Plenary Session of NEC held in Shillong, Meghalaya.

About NEC

- North Eastern Council (NEC) is under the administrative purview of the **Ministry of Development of the North-Eastern Region (MDoNER)**.
- NEC is not a constitutional body, but a statutory organization established under the North Eastern Council Act, 1971, as amended in 2002.
- It is a statutory body created by Parliament through NEC Act, 1971.
- It works under administrative control of Ministry of Development of NER.
- Union Home Minister is ex-officio Chairman of NEC.
- It consists of eight States i.e. **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura**
- The Council comprises Governors and Chief Ministers of constituent States and three members nominated by the President.



57. Havisure

Why in News?

India's first indigenously developed Hepatitis A vaccine launched

About Havisure

- Havisure was developed by Indian Immunologicals Ltd (IIL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
- Havisure is a two-dose vaccine wherein first dose is administered at above 12 months of age and second dose is given atleast after 6 months of the first dose.
- It is also recommended for individuals who are at risk of exposure or travel to the regions with high hepatitis A prevalence.
- Hepatitis is an inflammation of liver that is caused by a variety of infectious viruses and non-infectious agents.

58. Gangetic Dolphin

Why in News?

Gangetic dolphin was captured and rescued from Jalaka River in Odisha

About Gangetic dolphin

- Ganga River Dolphin also known as the "Tiger of the Ganges" was officially discovered in 1801.
 - The Ganges River dolphin can only live in freshwater and is essentially blind.
 - They hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds, which bounces off of fish and other prey, enabling them to "see" an image in their mind.
 - They are frequently found alone or in small groups, and generally a mother and calf travel together.
 - Being a mammal, the Ganges River dolphin cannot breathe in water and must surface every 30-120 seconds.
 - Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the animal is popularly referred to as 'Susu'.
 - Ganges river dolphins historically distributed in major river systems (Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu) of **India, Nepal and Bangladesh**.
- Story to learn**

Dolphin can be relate with (Anabella **DOLL**), which can be relate with Danger
IUCN Status - **ENDANGERED**
- 👁 **Threat**
 - Dumping of single-use plastic
 - Industrial pollution
 - Fishing and dredging
 - 👁 **IUCN Status** - Endangered (EN)





59. Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality

Why in News?

India established the "Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality" at the 54th annual World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos.

About Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality

- It is an international alliance for global good, gender equity and equality
- The idea of this alliance emerged from the G20 Leaders' Declaration and India's abiding commitment to the cause of women-led development.
- The primary objective of this new Alliance is to bring together global best practices, knowledge sharing and investments in the identified areas of women's health, education, and enterprise.
- The Alliance will be taking forward the commitments of the G20 leaders for the benefit of the larger global community as a follow up to the activities of the Engagement Group and initiatives under the G20 framework, inter alia, the Business 20, Women 20 and G20 EMPOWER.
- WEF has come on board as a 'Network Partner' and Invest India as an 'Institutional Partner'.
- Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the alliance will be housed and anchored by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Centre for Women Leadership.

60. Chenab River

Why in News?

Successful diversion of Chenab River achieved at Ratle Hydro Electric Project in Jammu & Kashmir.

About Chenab River

- Chenab River Formed by two streams, Chandra and Bhaga, which join near Keylong in Himachal Pradesh.
- Hence, it is also known as Chandrabhaga.
- River flows for 1,180 km before entering into Pakistan.
- Chenab is largest tributary of Indus

Story to learn

Chandra नाम का आदमी keys (keylong)
छीनकर(chenab) Pakistan भाग (Bhaga) गया

About Ratle project

- The Ratle Project is being executed by Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (RHPCL), a Joint Venture of NHPC Limited and Government of J&K, with shareholding of 51:49 percent, respectively.
- Ratle HE project is situated on River Chenab in Kishtwar District of J&K with installed capacity of 850 MW.





61. Proba-3 mission

🌐 Why in news ?

India will launch the European Space Agency's (ESA) pioneering Proba-3 mission in September 2024.

🌐 About Proba-3 mission

- Proba-3 is ESA's – and the world's – first precision formation flying mission.
- Proba- 3 consists of two space crafts
 1. one of space craft has a telescope which is pointing towards the sun.
 2. other spacecraft carries an occulting disc.
- Both spacecrafts are flying between 1- 10 kms/sec.
- In this mission solar disc is to be positioned in front of telescope such that solar disk is occulted from the point of view of telescope .

👁️ What is the significance of the mission?

- Proba-3 is an ambitious mission that aims to form a 144-m long solar coronagraph, allowing scientists to study the Sun's faint corona closer to the solar rim than has ever before been achieved.
- Proba-3's unique positioning will provide new insights into the origins of coronal mass ejections (CMEs) eruptions of solar material that can disrupt satellites and power grids on Earth.
- Achieving precise formation flying opens up a whole new era for science and applications, including Earth observation and in-orbit satellite servicing.
- The mission will also measure total solar irradiance, tracking changes in the Sun's energy output that may influence Earth's climate.
- The Proba-3's formation flying also serves as a testbed for future multi-satellite missions.

62. United nation security council

🌐 Why in news ?

France reiterated its support for India's permanent membership of United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

🌐 About UNSC

- UNSC is composed of **15 members: 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members.**
- 5 Permanent members having veto rights are **China, France, Russia, UK, USA**
- Each Member has one vote.
- Under UN Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.
- Security Council has power to make **binding decisions on member states.**

👁️ Function of UNSC

- The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression.
- It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement.
- In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.



63. Padma Awards

🎯 Why in news ?

President approved conferment of 132 Padma awards for 2024 .

🎯 About Padma Awards

- Padma Awards, which were instituted in the year 1954, is announced every year on the occasion of Republic Day except for brief interruption(s) during the years 1978 and 1979 and 1993 to 1997.
- The Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honours of India announced annually on the eve of Republic Day.
- The Awards are given in three categories: **Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.**
 1. Padma Vibhushan for exceptional and distinguished service.
 2. Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of a high order.
 3. Padma Shri for distinguished service.
- The award seeks to recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved.

🎯 Who decides?

- The Padma Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year.
- The nomination process is open to the public.
- Even self-nomination can be made.
- The Padma Awards Committee is constituted by the Prime Minister every year. It is **headed by the Cabinet Secretary and includes Home Secretary, Secretary to the President and four to six eminent persons as members.**
- All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these awards. However, Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards.

🎯 Eligibility

- All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these awards.
- However, Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards.
- The award seeks to recognize works of distinction and is given for distinguished and exceptional achievements/service in all fields of activities/disciplines. An illustrative list of the fields is as under: Art ,Social work, Public Affairs, Science & Engineering, Trade & Industry, Medicine, Literature & Education, Civil Service , Sports and others.
- The award is normally not conferred posthumously. However, in highly deserving cases, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously.
- A higher category of Padma award can be conferred on a person only where a period of at least five years has elapsed since conferment of the earlier Padma award.

🎯 Recipient of the award will be granted the following.

- Awardees are presented a Sanad (certificate) signed by the President and a medallion.
- The recipients are also given a small replica of the medallion, which they can wear during any ceremonial/State functions etc., if the awardees so desire.
- The names of the awardees are published in the Gazette of India on the day of the presentation ceremony.
- The award does not amount to a title and cannot be used as a suffix or prefix to the awardees' name.



64. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

📌 Why in news?

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their immediate withdrawal from West African bloc ECOWAS.

📌 About Ecowas

- It is a regional political and economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa.
- Established in 1975, with the signing of the **Treaty of Lagos**.
- The goal of ECOWAS is to achieve “collective self-sufficiency” for its member states by creating a single large trade bloc by building a full economic and trading union.
- It also serves as a peacekeeping force in the region.

📌 Aim:

- Promote co-operation and integration, leading to establishment of an economic union in West Africa to raise living standards of its people, enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States and, contribute to progress and development of African continent.

📌 Vision:

- According to its website, the vision of ECOWAS is the creation of a “borderless region” that is well-integrated. ECOWAS is meant to be a region governed in accordance with the principles of democracy, rule of law and good governance,” it states.

📌 Organisational structure:

- At the helm of its organisation structure is the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.
- The Chairman is the current Head of State and Government and is appointed by other Heads of State and Government to oversee its affairs for one year.

- 📌 **Other members:** Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sénégal and Togo.

65. 16th Finance Commission

📌 Why in news ?

The government of India constitutes the Sixteenth Finance Commission .

📌 About Finance commission

- It is a Constitutionally mandated body that is at the centre of fiscal federalism.
- It is constituted by the President under article 280 of the Constitution, mainly to give its recommendations on distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States and amongst the States themselves.

- Recommendations of the Finance Commission are not binding on the government.

- 📌 **Composition** - It consists of a Chairman and four other members appointed by the President.

- Chairman of the Commission is selected from among persons who have had experience in public affairs.
- Four other members are selected from among persons who are, or
 1. have been, or are qualified to be appointed as Judges of a High Court.
 2. have special knowledge of the finances and accounts of Government.
 3. have had wide experience in financial matters and in administration.
 4. have special knowledge of economics.

Tenure of members - Every member will be in office for the time period as specified in the order of the President and is eligible for reappointment.



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