

**SOCIAL ISSUES &
ART AND CULTURE
MAINS SPECIAL
2024**



YEARLY COMPILATION

(MAY 2023 - AUGUST 2024)

- ♥ Subject wise segmentation
- ♥ User friendly layout
- ♥ Infographic aid and interactive elements

Comprehensive Current Affairs Coverage for Mains 2024

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SOCIAL ISSUES

WOMEN

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act

News Excerpt

Recently, certain aspects of the PC & PNDT Act have been recommended for better implementation by Delhi High Court.

About PC & PNDT Act, 1994

- This act was enacted to ban the female foeticide and deal with the declining sex ratio.
- It banned prenatal sex determination and the motive behind this was to ban the sex selection techniques during conception period and also to stop the misuse of prenatal diagnostic techniques for abortion especially gender biased abortions.
- The act controls the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques (eg. ultra sound machine) by limiting their access to only detecting **genetic abnormalities, metabolic disorders, chromosomal abnormalities, and certain congenital malformations, haemoglobinopathies and sex-linked disorders.**

Amendment Associated with the PNDT Act, 1994

To improve the regulation of the technology used in sex selection, the Act was amended in 2003 to The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (PCPNDT Act) with the objective of **bring the technique of pre conception sex selection and ultrasound technique within the ambit** of the act.

Through Maharashtra Regulation of Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, Maharashtra was the first state to ban pre-natal sex determination in 1988.

- It mandates that no laboratory or clinic should conduct test like ultrasonography for the sex determination of foetus.
- As per the law, it is illegal if anyone communicates the information regarding the gender of the child to the pregnant women or relative.
- There is a imprisonment for upto three years and fine of 10,000 if anyone is caught promoting sex determination facilities.
- Offences under the act include
 - Conducting or aiding in prenatal diagnostic techniques in unregistered facilities.
 - Sex selection on a man or woman.
 - Use of prenatal diagnostic techniques other than the one specified in the act
 - Sale distribution, supply, renting of Ultrasound machine or similar machines for sex determination.

Issues with the Act

- Any involvement of Police in raids and seizure should be as per the CrPC but PC and PNDT contemplate that police should not be involved in related raids.

- The Appropriate authorities is given power to investigate, conduct raids, cancel or suspend the registration of medical centers and facilities that violate the PC & PNDT but it lags the power to arrest any person.
- Under the Act, the offences have been made 'cognizable' but the effectiveness of the Appropriate Authority's role is questionable.
- There are very low numbers of people who are actually convicted for violating the provisions of the Act, which shows failure or incompetence of the Act.

Ethical Issues associated with Prenatal Diagnosis and Sex-Selective Abortion

- It **promotes gender discrimination and violence against women** and is against the basic right to life, dignity and equality.
- It **promotes crime rate** such as trafficking, violence against women, reduced marriage prospects for men, skewed sex ratio and many others.
- Use of prenatal diagnosis for non-medical purposes raises the question on the **morality of the issue** and towards parents and health care workers.
- There are **lots of health issues** associated with prenatal diagnosis and sex-selective abortion especially for women.
- **Government services are rare and lack the high quality of treatment**, while private services provide a high standard of care but are not affordable to most of the population.
- It **increases health disparities and inequalities** especially among vulnerable societies which lack basic health care facilities and are unaware.
- As per studies, it is estimated that there will be 6.8 million fewer female births by 2030, precisely due to the consistent practice of sex-selective abortions.

Conclusion

Recent concerns raised by the court has highlighted the clarity on the roles of Police and powers of investigation with Appropriate Authorities. Moreover it has also raised question on the low conviction rates in such acts. These concerns highlight that there is lot more improvement required in the act, thus quick and early actions would benefit society as a whole to get over heinous act of violence like sex selective abortion.

Domestic Violence and Climate Crisis

News Excerpt

Recently, a study published in **JAMA Psychiatry** has revealed a distressing connection between climate change and intimate partner violence (IPV) in **South Asian countries.**

According to U.N. Women's "Tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the Context of climate change report":

- Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a widespread human rights violation as it affects 1 in 3 women.

- In 2020 alone, 81,000 women and girls were killed, with a woman or girl being killed in their home every 11 minutes.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) and climate change are two of the most pressing global emergencies of our time.

- **Climate change worsens VAWG and has detrimental effects on society.**

- **The COVID-19 epidemic brought attention to the growth in violence amid emergencies.**



- Environmental human rights advocate who are the women, that are particularly vulnerable.

- Besides the U.N. Women report, **the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report** made the first mention in its report that **"women, girls and LGBTQI people are at increased risk of domestic violence, harassment, sexual violence, and trafficking"** during and following intense weather conditions.

Key Highlights of the Study

- **In India, Nepal, and Pakistan**, the study examined data from over 200,000 girls and women between the ages of **18 and 49**.
- The study found a link between **rising temperatures and an increase in IPV cases**.
- With physical violence increasing by **8%** and sexual violence increasing by **7.3%** for every **1°C rise in temperature**, India in particular saw the biggest rise.
- In contrast to Nepal's 14.8 per cent and Pakistan's 5.9 per cent, **India is predicted to have a startling 23.5 per cent spike in IPV instances by 2090**.

About Intimate Partner Violence

- A partner's **infliction of emotional, physical, or sexual harm** is included in the category of intimate relationship violence, which also includes other types of abuse.
- While **physical violence** comprises actions like shoving, slapping, kicking, and more, emotional violence contains insults, humiliation, and threats.
- **Unwanted or coerced intercourse** is considered sexual violence.
- According to the study, **physical violence (23 per cent)** was more common as temperatures increased, preceded by **emotional violence (12.5 per cent)** and **sexual violence (9.5 per cent)**



The Effects of Climate Change on Gender

- Gender-based violence is made worse by climate change by **increasing power disparities** that are firmly ingrained in patriarchal organizations.
- Climate-related stressors amplify financial suffering, **subvert gender expectations**, and promote aggressive behaviour.
- Extreme weather events increase the **vulnerability of women and girls, particularly those in low- and middle-income nations, to domestic violence, harassment, sexual assault, and human trafficking**.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:

The Act was implemented in October 2006, it safeguards domestic violence victims by offering protection and assistance.

It offers different reliefs, such as custody and protection orders, restitution, financial aid, housing, and access to healthcare, to women who have suffered injury.

Loss of Control and Economic Distress

- **Extreme heat impacts crop** results and lowers migrant labourers' ability to make a living. Men who are **unable to support their families** owing to climate-related issues may become enraged, aggressive, or violent for reasons related to gender inequity.
- **The loss of control and economic difficulties** make the already widespread acceptance of violence against women worse.
- According to studies on Indian natural catastrophes, including the cyclones, droughts, and tsunami of 2004, women were more frequently the targets of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

- These climatic occurrences put **men's traditional roles as providers in jeopardy, making males feel insecure and more likely to use violence.**

Way forward

- Recognizing the **gendered aspect of climate change** and its effects is crucial in the fight against intimate partner violence caused by it.
- There is an urgent need for **gender-inclusive climate action** to address the intricate relationship between social risks and climate change.
- **The establishment of support networks, financial resilience development, and IPV infrastructure reinforcement** are examples of preventative approaches.
- **Protecting vulnerable people** and communities depends on gender-sensitive disaster management and climate action.
- One initiative aiming at reducing the financial challenges that contribute to IPV is **Gujarat's innovative heat insurance programme**, which compensates for lost revenue during extreme heat occurrences.
- **Generate data to understand the impact of climate change on VAWG** and risk factors.
- **Increase investment in flexible and adaptive approaches to VAWG prevention and response**, prioritizing funding for women's rights and civil society organizations.

Female Suicides in India

News Excerpt

September 10 marked the observance of **World Suicide Prevention Day**, where it was observed that of female suicides, housewives had on 50% share.

Female Suicides in India:

- While more men (1,18,979) than women died by suicide in India, a deviation from the pattern was observed in those aged below 18, where the incidence of suicide was higher in females.
- According to **NCRB data**, as many as 45,026 women died by suicide in India in 2021; nearly 1 every 9 minutes.
- Over **half of them, 23,178 females were housewives**. On average, 63 housewives died by suicide every day in India in 2021.
- **Indian women make up 36% of all global suicides** in the 15 to 39 years age group – the highest share of any nation in the world.

Causes of Female Suicide in India:

- **Family problems:**

- **Female feticides:** More than 10 million female fetuses may have been illegally aborted in India since the 1990s and 500,000 girls were being lost annually due to female foeticide.
- **Gender-based discrimination:** This inherent bias is still prevalent within the family and is reflected in the *health* of a girl child as well as in *education* which leads to weak capacity and results in female suicides.
- **Marriage issues:**
 - According to the **UN Women's Progress of the World's Women** report, India has one of lowest divorce rates in the world, only 1.1 % of women aged 45-49 were divorced by 2010.
 - However, this does not necessarily mean these marriages are happy. According to the recent **NCRB** data, a higher number of those in unhappy marriages seem to be choosing death over divorce.
 - The report also shows that the number of women who committed suicide owing to **'marriage-related issues'** was *more than that of men*.
 - **Patriarchy and Sexual Violence:** The **NFHS (2019-21)** highlights the challenging circumstances faced by married women, including *limited mobility, restricted financial autonomy, and marital control, as well as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse* at the hands of their spouses.
 - **Low Income and dependency:** Additionally, the data show that women in the lowest income bracket experience greater levels of violence and less freedom compared to those from wealthier households.
- **Uncertainty of Career:**
 - **Exam Stress:** The high number of deaths due to failure in examinations is symptomatic of the larger problem of female student suicides. As many as

Educational level-wise distribution of female suicides in 2021



- **No education: 5,774**
- **Primary education (up to 5th grade): 7,552**
- **Middle education (up to 8th grade): 8,501**
- **Matriculate/ Secondary education (up to 10th grade): 10,079**
- **Intermediate/Higher secondary education (up to 12th grade): 7,011**
- **Graduate and above: 2,070**
- **Professional degrees: 161**

13,089 students killed themselves due to 'exam stress' in 2021 – the highest in 5 yrs.

- **Social insecurity:** The fear of social insecurity-poverty and unemployment are also found to be a major reason for female suicide at a young age (below 18yrs).
- **Mental Health:** NCRB has thrown light on some grim trends, fuelling concern over the mental health and social status of women in India. Irrespective of education and financial independence, women are still not as empowered as we would like to believe.

Challenges in India:

- **A Multifaceted problem:** The problem of female suicides in India is extensive and multifaceted. The data points to no clear solution to the issue – education, income, and marriage singularly do not seem to offer a protective advantage.
- **Lack of research:** According to the Lancet's study (2018) on female suicides in India, more qualitative research is required to understand the efficacy of approaches to ameliorate the problem of suicidal deaths.
 - *For example*, if education was the solution to reduce suicide deaths in females, then South India should have a lower death rate, but it does not. Hence, we need sound and qualitative research to understand the main issue.

Can Education and generation of employment help this rising issue of Married Female suicides in India?

- **Building their mental capacity through Education and skilling:** Of the 9,426 female suicides due to illnesses, 43.25% – 4,077 – were due to mental illness. Therefore, if they are educated and trained for skill enhancement through better educational mediums at the local level, their mental capacity to handle challenges will improve atleast.
- **Making them financially independent:** 1,503 of the marriage-related suicide deaths were over dowry, while 217 were linked to divorce. Nearly 67.5% of female suicides over marital issues were below the age of 30. Therefore, if they are made financially independent through better targeted system, this number will eventually go down.

Rising Female work participation

News Excerpt:

With changes in the work status of females, predominated by the rise in Agri sectors, the rising contribution of females in the labour market epitomizes a stressed livelihood.

Recent Report on Participation in India's Workforce:

- According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey, or PLFS (2022-23)**, there is a rise in female participation in India's workforce.

- There is a rise in the percentage of the **population of all ages** – to 27.8%, up 3 percentage points **Year-on-Year (YoY)**, especially from the rural areas (up 3.3% to 30.5%).
- The surge in employment (WPR) has been driven by **self-employed persons**, predominantly in rural areas.
- **Female participation:** The rise in the female LFPR is a major contributor to the overall rise in the worker-to-population ratio (WPR) employment and availability of rural and female labour in 2022-23.
 - This signifies a significant funneling of economic progress to household livelihoods.
- **Male participation:** However, for males, the LFPR declined (-1.1% at 56.2%) more than WPR (-0.4%, to 54.4%).
 - This implies that notwithstanding a greater contribution by women, the unemployment rate (UR) decline for males has been larger than for females.
- **Occupation status** data shows a rise in female workers in agriculture sectors in FY23, both rural (+0.3pp YoY to 76.2%) and urban areas (+0.6pp to 11.7%).
 - **Rural India:** In rural areas, the proportion of women in industry and services has risen even as the Agri sector remains dominant.
 - Additionally, there has been a rise in the proportion of rural females of self-employed status (+3.2pp at 71%), indicating increasing dependence of rising LFPR and WPR on the Agri sector.
- **Urban India:** In contrast, their proportion in urban industry, construction and services has declined.

Current Challenges:

- **Decrease in work profile quality:** Due to the increasing dependence of rising LFPR and WPR on the agri sector, the work profile's quality reflects a decline in the proportion of regular wage work and casual wage work.
- **Changing trends in incomes:** A gainful situation would imply abundant employment opportunities in productive sectors, translating into rising incomes.
 - Conversely, a distressing situation would emanate from a decline in average real incomes, forcing women to seek work, even in less productive sectors and at lower wages.

Key takeaways from the PLFS data:

- **Disguised unemployment:** The wages for the self-employed segment, male and female, are majorly driven by the rural areas (80% weight).
 - Rural self-employment accounts for the disguised unemployment clustered under
 - Helper in the household enterprise,
 - Own account worker and

- A significant portion of wages is based on their activities; they do not represent actual cash wages.
- **Decline in urban wages:** With respect to self-employed women, the weight of wages from rural (lower paying vs urban) has seen a remarkable rise from 72% in September 2018 to 84% in June 2023; the contribution of higher paying urban wages has declined.
 - As a result, the 4-year CAGR for self-employed females was a meagre 3.5% (INR 5636/month).
 - After COVID-19, real female wages (net of inflation) fell by 5.4%.
- **The narrow gap in the Male-female regular wages:** The regular salary/wage growth for rural females (7.8% 4-year CAGR, 1.8% in real terms) was higher than for males (5.7% CAGR), reflecting the narrowing female-male gap in regular wages.
 - However, the proportion of regular wage earners among females has declined in rural areas (8%, -0.1pp) and risen in urban areas (50.8%, +0.5pp).
- **Increased workload and responsibilities for women:** Declines in real income per worker amid the rise in dependency have led to a forced increase in women's participation in the workforce despite lower earnings.

- **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** launched the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** in **April 2017**.
- The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** was **designed with two major objectives** for measuring employment and unemployment.
 - **The first was to** measure the dynamics in labour force participation and employment status in three months for only the urban areas in the Current Weekly Status (CWS).
 - **The second one** was for both rural and urban areas to measure the labour force estimates on key parameters in both usual status and CWS.

What can be the Implications for Society?

- **Structural implications:** Stretched per capita incomes can affect investment in education and health, thereby impairing labour productivity and future earnings capability.
- **Issue of Triple Burden:** A woman is expected to carry on work, household, and childcare responsibilities. Predominated by the rise in Agri sectors and incomes mainly from self-employment, the rising contribution of females in the labour market epitomizes a stressed livelihood rather than a bountiful situation.

- **Decrease in Urban Employment:** At a broader level, the recent trends observed through PLFS mirror an important dimension of the rising Realization phenomenon and declining proportion of employment in the urban industrial and services sectors, translating into rising dependence on rural sectors.

Way Forward:

- **Need for the change in ideology:** The domestic ideology has reinforced the identification of the domestic sphere and the house as the woman's place. As such, reproductive work is naturally considered women's work. Domestic work has no clear demarcations between and leisure; it is without beginning and end, and in many societies, women tend to work longer hours than men.
- **Need to organize, Mobilize, and challenge injustice:** There is an urgent need to improve women's condition at the household level and **assist them in their traditional roles** to create more time for them to embark on income-generating enterprises.
 - However, improving their condition needs to be done in a transformative way that challenges the gender division of labour and women's subordination to men in society.
- **Need to make her economically empowered:** A critical issue concerning reproductive work is the lack of recognition of the economic cost, which has resulted in it being **undervalued, unpaid, and invisible**. It is crucial to recognize this as work and the obstacles it presents for women's economic empowerment.

Gender Disparities in Financial Inclusion

News Excerpt:

Gender disparities in India's financial inclusion emphasise the need for tailored services for women.

Financial inclusion:

- The term is broadly used to describe the provision of **banking and financial services to individuals** in an inexpensive and easy-to-use form.
- It aims to include everybody in society by giving them basic financial services regardless of their income or savings.
- Financial inclusion has been identified as an enabler for 7 of the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**.
- India has made great strides in financial inclusion. According to **Global Findex 2021**, bank account ownership in the country has **grown to 78%**.
- The value of the Financial Inclusion (FI) Index, which captures the extent of financial inclusion across India, improved to **60.1** in March 2023 **vis-à-vis 56.4** in March 2022.

Challenges to financial inclusion for women in India:

Digital Disparities:

Women, despite increased bank account ownership, face a significant gap in digital literacy and usage.
Limited access to and familiarity with digital technologies hinder their ability to leverage the full spectrum of financial services.

Loan Approval Hurdles:

If a woman applies for a loan to buy a two-wheeler, she is likely to be asked to bring along a male guarantor. This is commonplace in rural settings for banks to exercise caution when extending loans to women without the presence of a guarantor or collateral.

Under-representation in Financial Management:

Women make up a meagre 16 % of management roles in financial services, according to the 2022 '**Mind the Gender Gap**' report by the CFA Institute.
This leads to traditional socio-cultural norms and personal biases seeping into policy, product and process design.

Business Correspondent Gender Disparity:

The Business Correspondent (BC) model was introduced to extend banking services to unserved areas.
BCs have become the predominant delivery model for financial services. Unfortunately, less than **10%** of the BCs are women.

Credit Invisibility and Denial:

First-time women borrowers are often denied loans from formal institutions because they do not have a credit history.
While women tend to save more money than men, only 28 % use savings accounts.
This credit invisibility keeps them out of the formal credit economy, pushing them towards informal sources with higher risks and interest rates, perpetuating financial exclusion.

Educational and Technological Barriers:

Women face financial exclusion due to illiteracy, the absence of smartphones, and distant bank branches.
This leads them to rely on cash, depend on friends/family, or resort to usurious moneylenders, making them susceptible to theft and exploitation and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Gender-Neutral System Flaws:

Many financial systems suffer from the '**shrink it and pink it**' approach, lacking genuine understanding of women's needs and challenges.
A gender-neutral design often fails to address the unique dimensions of financial inclusion for women.

Way Forward:

- Women must be **recognized as a distinct sector** where we need to work on the entire fulfilment ecosystem – from hiring and distribution to technology, processes and policies.
- **Women have lower defaults**, tend to save more and make timely repayments compared to men. Designing

- for the invisible half of the population is not an act of generosity but a pathway to equitable economic prosperity.
- Introduce services that provide banking facilities at the doorstep, making it convenient for women, especially in remote areas.

Internal Female Migration

News Excerpt:

The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** estimates that internal migration in India was **27%** from June **2020 to 2021**, with women comprising a greater share of the migrant pool.

Issue of National surveys and inaccurate picture:

- **Inaccurate Surveys:** National surveys such as the PLFS capture information about female migrants but often convey an inaccurate picture. Surveys only ask the respondents regarding their primary reason for migration.

- PLFS data suggest that the leading reason for migration among women is marriage (81%), followed by migration of family members (10%), employment (2.42%), and migration for education opportunities (0.48%).

- **Inaccurate Data:** Data from these surveys regarding **migrant women's labour force participation** can be misinforming.

- Approximately three-quarters of migrant women are unemployed, approximately 14% of migrant women are in self and wage-employed jobs, and approximately 12% are in casual labour.

- Women choose forms of employment that allow them to handle their domestic duties while contributing to the household's production or finances.

- **Limitations:** Working as unpaid family workers, in household enterprises, or being self-employed is common among them.

- Female migrant workers in India work in industries such as the **garment industry, domestic work**, and other **labour-intensive industries**.

- Women may view their employment as an extension of their domestic commitment instead of a form of employment, leading to **misreporting their employment status**.

Issue of Human and Social Capital:

- **Female labour potential issue:**

- Entry into the formal labour force is challenging for female migrant workers in India, potentially due to the need for more human and social capital.

- **85% of female migrant workers** have less than **10 years of education**, which can create employment problems.

- Migrant women are **proportionally less employed** than non-migrant women despite similar educational levels.

- **Social Networking issues:**

- **Lack of social networks**, especially after migration, hinders employment chances for female migrant workers.
- The **dismal recovery of women's labour** activity after the pandemic is evident, with 55% of women not returning to their places of employment and those who did so earning only 56% of their pre-pandemic income levels.
- Female migration for **labour/employment increased by 101%** between 2001 and 2011, but



female migrant workers **remain largely invisible**, facing significant hurdles and marginalization.

- **Policy Hurdles:**

- Female migrant workers are not a considerable vote bank, leading to a lack of **targeted policies** and a dearth of good data on female migrants.
- Policies such as **One Nation One ration card, e-Shram**, and **affordable rental housing** complexes are mainly targeted towards the male migrant population, further neglecting the needs of female migrant workers.

Other challenges faced by female migrant workers in India:

Female migrant workers in India face several challenges, including:

- **Invisibility and Informality:** Female migration is prominent in rural-to-rural streams, with a significant number engaged in paid domestic work, which is marked by informality, low wages, and poor bargaining conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic rendered millions of female domestic workers jobless, particularly those working as live-in or part-time domestics who commute to multiple households.

- **Employment Barriers:** Female migrants face barriers to post-COVID recovery, with lower remigration rates and labour market re-entry inside and outside their home villages. They also encounter poor wage rates, persistent wage inequalities, and a lack of formal employment opportunities.
- **Exploitation and Abuse:** Female migrant domestic workers are at risk of exploitation, abuse, and violence throughout the migration cycle, including human rights violations such as sexual and gender-based violence, harassment, and unjust working conditions.

Way Forward:

The challenges highlighted above direct the need for **targeted policies** and support to address the specific needs of female migrant workers in India.

- National surveys should compile more information regarding their **socio-economic conditions post-migration** as very little is known about it.
 - For instance, the PLFS indicates that a minute percentage (approximately 7%) have access to social security benefits; there is no data for the rest of the populace.
- There is also a **lack of time-use data for migrants**, as India has not made that the norm yet.
 - Time-use data would significantly help advance existing knowledge regarding unemployed female migrants.
- On a broader scale, a **change in narrative is required**, starting with an increased collection of **female-specific data**. It will illustrate the largely **anecdotal problem** and bring awareness about the plight of these women to encourage progressive policymaking.

The UNESCO Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan

News Excerpt:

On the eve of the **Olympic Games**, a new **UNESCO report** reveals that women and girls are still far from having equal access to sport at any level, professional or amateur.

More about the UNESCO report:

- UNESCO urgently called on its **194 Member States** to tackle these inequalities by putting in place the recommendations contained in the report.
- It is also **bringing together sports ministers** from around the world at its Paris headquarters to develop concrete political actions.

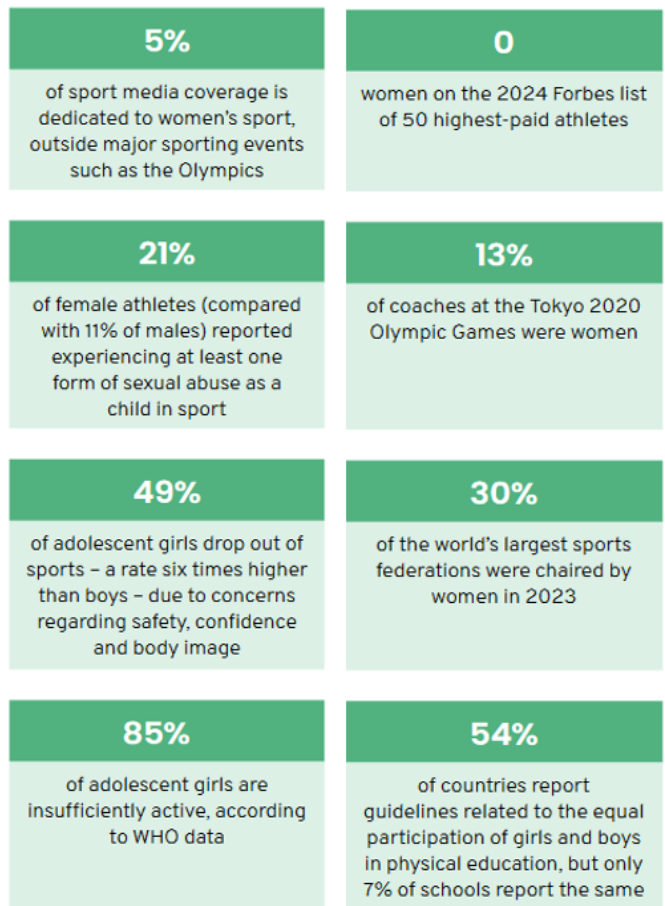
What is the Game Plan for Sport and Gender Equality?

- UNESCO's **Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan**, published with the support of **UN Women and UN Spotlight Initiative**, provides decision-makers with tools, resources and good practice examples for realizing **gender equality** in and through sport.

- Despite considerable advances in recent years, **gender inequalities** persist in virtually every aspect of sport.
- Through targeted investments, data-informed policies and inclusive programming, sport can become both an **equitable ecosystem and a powerful tool** to drive girls' and women's empowerment.

Who is the UNESCO's Game Plan for?

- The **Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan** has been designed for **decision-makers in government and sports organizations** who are in charge of formulating policy and/or organizational strategies relating to gender equity.
- It also provides **practical guidance** which will be useful to **sport leaders and administrators, civil servants and policy officers** in sport ministries or other sectors wishing to **use sport to deliver broader social outcomes**, especially those related to empowerment, inclusion and equality.



Gender equality in and through sport:



Gender equality in sport refers to the **policies, programmes, activities and conditions** that ensure equality between women and girls, men and boys.



Gender equality through sport refers to the unique power of sport to **empower women and girls, challenge gender biases**, eradicate gender-based violence and promote systems-level change.

- It identifies and advocates ways to engage diverse groups of actors in all stages of policy design and delivery.

What is Fit for Life?

- UNESCO's Fit for Life initiative harnesses the power of **sport and quality physical education (QPE)** for sustainable, social development. Activities focus on collective action and targeted investments to advance positive outcomes in equality, education and employability, and in physical and mental well-being.

How does Fit for Life work?

- It operates with the support of a robust Member State mandate stemming from the **Baku Outcome Document**, adopted by 110 countries during UNESCO's 7th Global Sports Ministers Conference (MINEPS VII), and from multiple decisions passed by **UNESCO** governing bodies.
- Its activities are bolstered by the knowledge and resources of its Global Alliance of partners, working to:
 - Support the development and implementation of inclusive and evidence-based policies.
 - Build the capacities of educators and civil society to implement high-quality sports and physical education programming.
 - Strengthen the evidence based on the value of sport and QPE, as well as the social returns on investment.
- **Priority action areas** across Fit for Life include equality of participation, representation, and leadership in sport, as well as tackling violence and discrimination in and through sport.
- UNESCO's Game Plan will be a central resource in advancing progress in these priority action areas and will be operationalized via policy- and programme-level projects as part of Fit for Life implementation in countries and cities across the world

How was the Game Plan developed?

- The **Game Plan has been developed by UNESCO**, within the framework of its **global sport initiative Fit for Life**, and with support from members of the Fit for Life Global Alliance and the Group of Friends for Sport and Gender Equality.
- This collaborative effort has ensured a **comprehensive scope and alignment with key priorities defined at MINEPS VII**, where UNESCO Member States endorsed the Game Plan's role 'as a central tool to translate relevant international policy frameworks and initiatives into action'.

What does the Game Plan include?

- **Action planning**
 - Each chapter provides **clear and actionable recommendations** for policy-makers and sport leaders to get in the game by developing and implementing policies and programmes that drive gender equality in and through sport.
- **Fit for Life resources and initiatives:**

- Information about **Fit for Life's programmes, partnerships and campaigns highlight ways UNESCO** can support countries and organizations to implement the Game Plan's recommended actions.

- **Guidance for collaboration**

- Strategies are provided on how to identify and engage with key players within and beyond the sport ecosystem, including **athletes, research institutions, civil society** organizations and the private sector.

- **Spotlights**

- Twenty case studies from around the world highlight good practice examples of policies and programmes that advance
- gender equality in and through sport, which can be adapted for your national or local context.

- **Indicators**

- A bank of recommended indicators is provided to support data collection and progress measurement on sport and gender equality.

Way Forward:

- **Gender inequalities exist throughout the world, in every sport and at all levels of play.**
- Addressing these inequalities requires **gender-transformative, evidence-based policies** and programmes that empower girls and women and strengthen sports systems.
- Decision-makers in government and **sports organizations** across the world need to:
 - Champion gender equality in sports leadership, governance and decision-making.
 - Develop capacity and infrastructure to support gender-equitable sports participation.
 - Commit to ending all forms of gender-based violence in sports.
 - Harness the power of sport to change attitudes, foster gender equality and empower women and girls.

CHILDREN

Adolescent Leadership Beyond Schools

News Excerpt:

In a changing world, adolescent leaders like Greta Thunberg, Thandiwe Abdullah, Bana Alabed, Malala Yousafzai and others have successfully expressed their voices on contemporary world issues.

- This changing scenario is demanding to expand children's participation in the civic and political arena.

About UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child):

- The UNCRC is a **legally binding international agreement** adopted in 1989, setting out every

child's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. Every member of the United Nations has ratified this, **except the US.**

- UNCRRC comprises **four pillars** - the right to **survival, protection, development and participation.**
- The convention has **54 articles** that cover all aspects of a child's life.
 - **Article 12** focuses on child participation:



- **Right to Express:** State Parties shall assure the child who can form her or his own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child
- **Opportunity in Judicial and administrative proceedings:** The child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Child rights and Indian policy framework on lines with UNCRRC:

- India ratified UNCRRC in 1992, which states that all children are born with **fundamental rights.**
 - Life, **survival** and development,
 - **Protection** from violence, abuse or neglect,
 - An **education** that enables children to fulfil their potential,
 - Be raised by, or have a **relationship with, their parents,**
 - **Express** their **opinions** and be listened to.
- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR)** is a statutory body under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005 under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (Amendment to Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929):** It prohibits solemnization of marriage where either the groom or the bride is below the marriageable age (18 years in case of girls and 21 years for boys).
- **Child Labour Prohibition & Regulation Amendment Act, 2016:** It prohibits the engagement of children in all occupations and the engagement of adolescents in hazardous occupations and processes and the matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (Amended in 1986):** This act with respect to children deals with

person(s) who procure or attempt to procure any child for prostitution or person(s) who are found with a child in a brothel (it is presumed child has been detained for the purpose of prostitution) and punishes them. It also provides for the due care of rescued children and aims to prevent 'immoral traffic' in women and girls.

Major two challenges in India:

- **Mindset of the society:** Child rearing in India is still set in a very patriarchal and patronizing jacket, where the child learns to cope with drowning its voice.
- **Old institutional structure:** Policies in India lack the sustained approach considering the current system, their rights and entitlements to understand them.

- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012:** It aims at punishing the offenders who are guilty of offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography against children below the age of 18 years of age.
 - It provides for the establishment of Special Courts, and also lays down procedures for the trial like the name of the child victim shall not be disclosed; case proceedings to be conducted in court with cameras recording the trial, etc.

Way Forward:

- **Bringing behavioural change:** The stakeholders related to the child rights system, policymakers, child rights and protection service providers, state and non-state actors and parents need to be oriented on their understanding, attitude and behaviour towards children.
- Need for sustained institutional structure, investment for leadership development, and perspective building of stakeholders.
- **Adolescent leadership:** It should go beyond the school campus, creating a sustainable institutional structure with level playing space.
 - The structures could be representative of adolescent leaders at different levels of local self-governance (from Gram Panchayat to district).
 - **Odisha Balya Bibaha Pratirodh Manch** encourages youth and adolescents to become agents of change to stop child marriage.
 - **The Child Friendly Village Campaign in West Bengal** was led by adolescents on advocacy to Panchayats to include activities and budget in the annual Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).
- **Updating the policies:** The schemes focusing on promoting self-awareness and life skills need to be oriented on current system/policies.
- **Awareness through Media:** Social media is used by children to share their ideas and aspirations to draw

public attention. It should be responsibly used and provide possibilities for digital activism.

POCSO

News Excerpt:

The **Himachal Pradesh High Court** recently ruled that the failure to report sexual crimes against children below 18 years is a bailable offence.

About POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act:

- It was enacted by the Parliament in **2012 under the Ministry of Women and Child Development** to create a safer environment for children aged less than 18 years from offences like sexual harassment, sexual assault, and child pornography.
 - The Government also notified the **POCSO Rules, 2020**, which enabled the implementation of amendments to the Act.
- It also mandates the **setting up of Special Courts** that are better equipped to deal with such offences more effectively.
- The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** and the **State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR)** have been constituted under the **Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005**.

Salient Features:

- **Gender-neutral law:**
 - By defining a child as **'any person' below the age of 18 years**, the POCSO Act sets a gender-neutral tone for the legal framework available to child sexual abuse victims.

- Consequently, a child of any gender who has been sexually wronged has access to the remedies provided under the act.
- **Not reporting abuse is an offence:**
 - The **mandatory reporting obligation is imposed under Section 19**.
 - It requires every person who suspects or has knowledge of a sexual offence being committed against a child to **report it to the local police or the Special Juvenile Police Unit**.
 - Any person in charge of a company or an institution who **fails to report** to the NCPCR, a sexual offence relating to a subordinate under their control is **liable to be punished with imprisonment and a fine under Section 21 of the act**.
 - The act, however, exempts children from any non-reporting liabilities. Over the years, criminal actions have been initiated against several individuals, particularly those in charge of educational institutions, for hushing up child sexual abuse offences.
- **No time limit for reporting abuse:**
 - The trauma that child sexual abuse victims endure prevents them from voicing their complaints immediately.
 - In 2018, the Union Ministry of Law and Justice clarified that there is **no time or age bar for reporting sexual offences under the POCSO Act**. A victim can report an offence at any time, even a number of years after the abuse has been committed.
- **Maintaining confidentiality of the victim's identity:**
 - **Section 23 of the POCSO Act prohibits disclosure of the victim's identity** in any form of media except when permitted by the special courts established under the act.

Supreme Court Judgments related to POCSO Act:

Shankar Kisanrao Khade vs. State of Maharashtra (2013)

The SC ruled that "the non-reporting of the crime by anybody, after having come to know that a minor child below the age of 18 years was subjected to any sexual assault, is a serious crime."	Greater obligation was put on certain categories of professionals, such as medical practitioners and those in charge of educational institutions, to report cases of child sexual abuse to the nearest Juvenile Justice Board or Special Juvenile Police Unit.	This created a conundrum for medical practitioners since their professional ethics require them to maintain the confidentiality of their clients.
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X vs the Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, Govt of NCT of Delhi (2022)

A three-judge SC bench led by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud tried to strike a balance between the mandatory reporting provision under POCSO and the confidentiality provision under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971.	The bench pointed to cases where minors might approach a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) for a medical termination of pregnancy arising out of consensual sexual activity.	It recognized that minors or their guardians might be wary of the mandatory reporting requirement to avoid entangling themselves with the legal process and thus approach an unqualified doctor for abortion instead.
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- A violation of this section can attract punishments under the act, regardless of whether such disclosures are made in good faith.
- Reiterating this position, the Supreme Court issued a host of directions in 2018 forbidding, among other things, revealing a POCSO victim's identity on social media.
- **New obligations under the POCSO Rules:**
 - In 2022, the government introduced a fresh set of POCSO Rules which includes three chief takeaways for any organisation dealing with children in India.
 - Any institution housing children or coming in regular contact with them must conduct a **periodic police verification and background check** of every employee who might interact with a child.
 - Such an institution must impart **regular training to sensitize its employees** on child safety and protection.
 - It has to adopt a child protection policy based on the principle of **zero tolerance to violence against children**.
 - The **NCPCR** and **SCPCRs** have been given the authority to monitor the implementation of the act's provisions.

Challenges towards implementing the POCSO Act:

- **Multi-layered and Multi-dimensional issue:** Sexual abuse, especially Child sexual abuse are multi-layered issues. It has a detrimental impact on the child affecting their mental health, physical well-being, and behaviour.
- **Increase in unsafe digital usage:** With the progress and availability of technology and the internet, new problems have surfaced like Child pornography, online harassment, and bullying.
- **Implementation Issues and ineffectiveness:** The POCSO Act came into immediate effect in 2012, but its implementation has staggered and, thus, failed its objective due to the following reasons:
 - **Low Conviction Rate:** Only 32% of the reported cases get to the conviction stage and nearly 90% of cases are pending under this act.
 - **Delay in Judicial Action:** The Act mentions that all cases will be resolved within a year of reporting the crime. A prolific case like the Kathua Rape case went on for 16 months before a judgment was served.
 - **Hostility towards the Child:** The law speculates only on the biological age, not the mental age. Hence, multiple challenges are age-dependent.

Way Forward:

There is a need for a multifaceted approach.

- **Protecting the rights of all children:** Children in **conflict areas and LGBTQ children** need to be specifically targeted for protection, as they are at high risk of sexual violence and exploitation.
- **Public awareness and engagement:** Engaging with **communities** and involving them in efforts to prevent child abuse and provide support for survivors is crucial for creating a supportive and protective environment for children.
- **Strengthening implementation:** It needs to be effectively implemented, with **improved conviction rates and faster legal processes** that prioritize the needs of child survivors.
- **Strengthening law enforcement:** Law enforcement officials need to be **better trained and equipped** to effectively implement the provisions of POCSO and respond to cases of child abuse.

Child Marriages in India

News Excerpt:

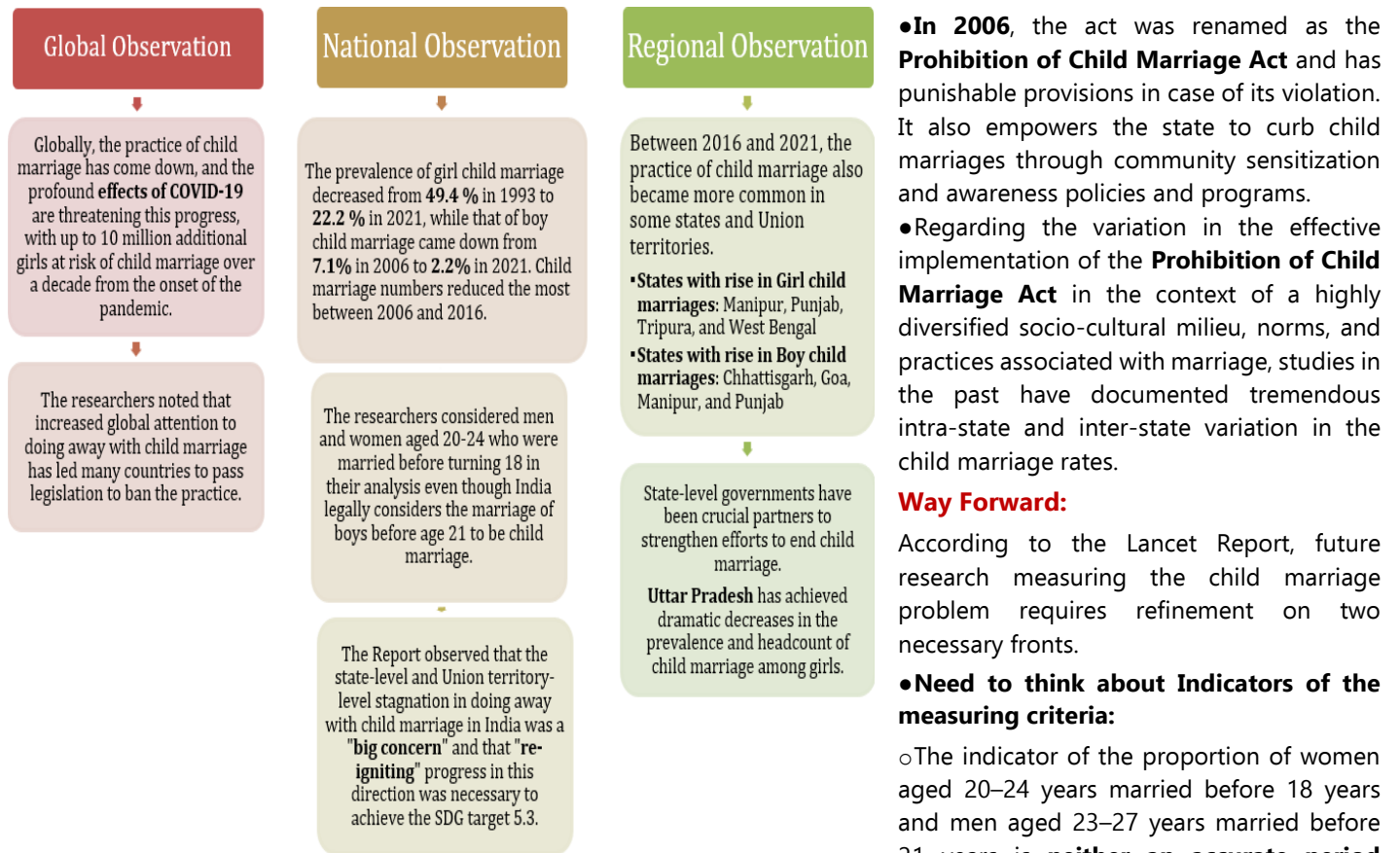
A study published in the Lancet Global Health talks about the declining prevalence of child marriage in India.

About:

- The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** sees child marriage as a **"violation of human rights"** as it "compromises the development of girls and boys".
- Child marriage is often the result of entrenched gender inequality, making girls disproportionately affected by the practice.
- Ending child marriage is therefore seen to be critical to achieving the **UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5**, which is to **"achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030**.
 - **SDG target 5.3** seeks to **"eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation"**.

Significance of the studies and observations by the Lancet Global Health:

- The study has provided the first comprehensive assessment and changes if any, in the prevalence of child marriage across all states and Union Territories of India between 1993 and 2021.
- Most studies in the past have ignored child marriages among boys, which has a direct bearing on reducing child marriages among girls in the Indian context.
 - A deep-rooted societal norm prevailing in most parts of the country is that a bride needs to be younger by age than the potential groom.
 - This practice can be corroborated by the median age at first marriage for men and women in the age group 25–49 years being 24.9 years for men and 19.2



- years for women, as reported by the **National Family Health Survey NFHS (2019–21)**.
 - The study has also made a sincere effort to provide **child marriage headcounts** for girls and boys.
- It not only **helps policymakers, advocates, and implementers to set the future requirement** for multi-sectoral investment in the programs associated with the elimination of child marriages but also a potential source of absolute and relative assessments of child marriage burden across states and Union Territories and the selected socio-demographic backgrounds.

Highlights of the Reports:

- According to the study published, **1/5th of girls** and about **1/6th of boys** in India are married, with the progress made towards eliminating the practice of child marriage stagnating in recent years.

Government Interventions for preventing Child marriages:

- India had started legal intervention much before the cognizance of the current international commitments to tackle child marriage.
- **In 1929**, the Imperial Legislative Council of earlier British India passed the **Child Marriage Restraint Act** to curb child marriages, which was amended later on several occasions in independent India.
- **In 1978**, the amendment to the act fixed the minimum legal age at marriage for **girls to 18 years** and **boys to 21 years**.

- **In 2006**, the act was renamed as the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** and has punishable provisions in case of its violation. It also empowers the state to curb child marriages through community sensitization and awareness policies and programs.
- Regarding the variation in the effective implementation of the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** in the context of a highly diversified socio-cultural milieu, norms, and practices associated with marriage, studies in the past have documented tremendous intra-state and inter-state variation in the child marriage rates.

Way Forward:

According to the Lancet Report, future research measuring the child marriage problem requires refinement on two necessary fronts.

• **Need to think about Indicators of the measuring criteria:**

- The indicator of the proportion of women aged 20–24 years married before 18 years and men aged 23–27 years married before 21 years is **neither an accurate period measure nor a robust cohort measure to capture the most recent progress.**

- **The decline in child marriage might not be a true reflection of a change:**
 - The reports showed that the prevalence of child marriage had declined in India between 1993 and 2021.
 - But, on the other front, participation in mate selection **and forced or unconsented marriage** at any age is a serious issue.

Is downloading Child pornography an offence?

News Excerpt:

Recently, the Madras High Court (HC) said that merely watching child pornography is not an offence under **Section 67B of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, as the accused had merely downloaded it onto his electronic gadget and had watched it in private.

Background of the case:

- Madras HC quashed a case booked against a youngster for having downloaded two child porn videos from the Internet and watching it on his mobile phone.
- The HC said that the videos in question had remained only within the youngster's private domain; at best, the accused person can only construe it as a moral decay.

Section 67B of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:

- The IT Act and rules made thereunder contain several provisions for **safeguarding users in cyberspace**.
- The IT Act penalizes various cybercrimes relating to computer resources
- **Section 67B The IT Act:**
 - Adden, in 2009, this section deals with the **punishment for publishing or transmitting material depicting children in sexually explicit acts in electronic form**.
 - It specifically **targets the dissemination of child pornography** or sexually explicit content involving minors through digital means.
- Sections 67, 67A, and 67B of the IT Act cover all punishable actions related to child pornography.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012:

- POCSO was enacted to safeguard children from sexual abuse and sexual offences.
- The Act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years.
- Section 14(1) of the (POCSO) Act, 2012:
 - Section 14(1) of the POCSO Act pertains to the **punishment for using a child for pornographic purposes**.
 - It prohibits the involvement of a child in any form of pornography or sexually explicit content, including its production, distribution, and publication.

Section 482 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1973:

- It empowers the HC to exercise its **inherent powers** to make orders necessary for the **ends of justice or to prevent abuse of the court's process**.
- This section grants the HC **wide discretionary powers** to pass orders to secure the ends of justice, such as quashing FIRs (First Information Reports) or criminal proceedings or granting anticipatory bail.

- **Section 14(1) of the POCSO** could be pressed only if the accused had used children for sexual acts, which was not the charge in the present case.
- Similarly, **Section 67B of the I-T Act** could be invoked only if the accused had shared the child porn video with others and not otherwise.
- The Madras HC used its **inherent powers under Section 482** of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to prevent misuse of the process of court and quashed the judicial proceedings.

The flaw in the judgement of the Madras HC:

- The Madras High Court referred to a precedent where the High Court of Kerala dealt with the scope of Section 292 of the IPC and held that watching an obscene

photograph or obscene video by a person by itself was not an offence.

- A case decided by the High Court of Kerala in September 2023 did not pertain to child pornography.
- While watching adult pornography in privacy has been held as not to be an offence under Section 292 of the IPC (by the Supreme Court of India), downloading sexually explicit material pertaining to children is clearly an offence under the IT Act.

Way Forward:

- Amendment to the POCSO Act to criminalize mere possession of child pornography would align it with the provisions of the IT Act and remove inconsistencies.
- The state government must appeal the judgement of the Madras High Court to prevent negative precedents in child protection and cybercrime legal matters.

OTHER VULNERABLE SECTIONS

Code on Social Security, 2020

News Excerpt

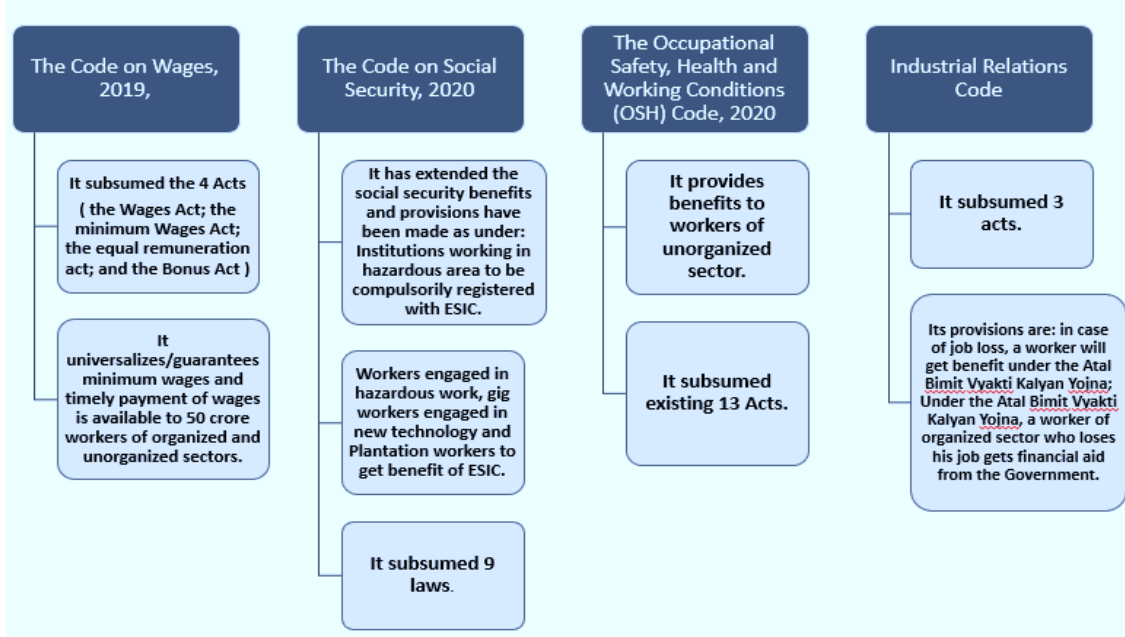
Recently, Minister of State for Labour and Employment stated in Lok Sabha that for the first time, the definition of 'gig worker' and 'platform worker' has been provided in the Code on Social Security, 2020.

Labour code:

Code on Social Security, 2020

- The Code on Social Security, 2020 provides for framing of suitable social security schemes for gig workers and platform workers on matters relating to life and disability cover, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, old age protection, etc.
- The Code also provides for setting up a Social Security Fund and one of the sources of fund, is contribution from aggregator between 1 to 2% of annual turnover of an aggregator subject to the limit of 5% of the amount paid or payable by an aggregator to such workers.
- The Government has launched e-Shram portal on 26.08.2021 for registration and creation of a Comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers including gig workers and platform workers.
- The Code on Social Security, 2020 envisages social security benefits through formulation of schemes for gig and platform workers and can be implemented through Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) which hitherto provides social security benefits to organised sector workers.
- The Code empowered the central government to set up social security funds for unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers. The 2020 code states that the central government will set up such a fund.
 - Further, state governments will also set up and administer separate social security funds for unorganised workers.

LABOUR CODES



Animal Protection, Welfare and Rights

News Excerpt

The Centre has proposed to overhaul The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, introducing 61 amendments in the law, which includes three years' imprisonment for committing "gruesome cruelty" including "bestiality" with animals.

Animal welfare and right in INDIA

- The Code envisages that the appropriate Government may set up a toll-free call centre or helpline or such facilitation centres, etc., for unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers, as may be considered necessary from time to time to disseminate information on available social security schemes, facilitate filing, processing and forwarding of application forms for their registration, assist them to obtain registration, and to facilitate their enrolment in the social security schemes.

Definitions on Code

Gig workers: Gig workers refer to workers outside the traditional employer-employee relationship.

Platform workers: Those who access organisations or individuals through an online platform and provide services or solve specific problems.

Unorganised worker: One who works in the unorganised sector, and includes workers not covered by the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, or other provisions of the Bill (such as provident fund or gratuity).

Key Issues in the Code on Social Security, 2020

- Provisions on gig workers and platforms workers are unclear. With overlap across definitions, it is unclear how schemes specific to these categories of workers will apply.
- Provisions on gratuity for fixed term workers unclear.
- The 2020 code mandates an employee or a worker (including an unorganised worker) to provide his Aadhaar number to receive social security benefits or to even avail services from a career centre. This may violate the Supreme Court's Puttaswamy-II Judgement.

Way forward

- Gig economy is the growing economy and workers connected with it are very important for the Indian economy. So, provision related to them should be clear and profitable for them.
- Aadhar and privacy issue is bigger issue of the time. Employer and government should ensure that the data of the employee will remain safe and it cannot be misused.

Court had ruled that the right to dignity and fair treatment as enshrined in and arising out of Article 21 of India's Constitution is not confined to human beings alone, but animals as well.

Our laws safeguard animals against cruelty:

- Article 51A (g) of the Constitution of India imposes a fundamental duty on us to safeguard the wildlife and have compassion for all living creatures
- The Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) 48 and 48A talk of wildlife protection.
- In July 2018 the Uttarakhand High Court and in June 2019 Punjab and Haryana High Court observed that animals have a distinct legal person with corresponding rights,
- In the case of Animal Welfare Board of India v. Nagaraja (2014) while striking down the practice of Jallikattu (bull-wrestling).

Need to provide animal protection and securing their rights

- Protection from undue harm:** To prevent them from undesirable distress and cruelty.
- Maintaining natural Behaviors:** Animals' instincts and natural behaviours should be respected. For instance, animals housed in captivity should have the proper enrichment and habitat-like living arrangements.
- Conservation and habitat protection:** It is important to work to save wildlife's innate ecosystems and habitats.
- Ecological requirement and biological need.** Wildlife need unique geographical landscape and specific biological conditions like for breeding, movement, significant prey base, etc. to survive otherwise it will lead to their extinction.
- To prevent animal cruelty and just treatment** Animals that are reared for food should be given a respectful and compassionate upbringing to reduce suffering and

anguish, humane slaughter techniques should be employed.

- **Human and ethical consideration**-For animals, having rights is everything. With rights, they would not be trapped, beaten, caged, artificially inseminated, mutilated, drugged, traded, transported, harmed and killed just because someone else profits by it.
- -By granting animals rights, the sum of suffering in the world would reduce dramatically.
- **Lack of awareness:** Lack of awareness about animal welfare, both among the public and within educational institutions

Challenges faced in implementation

- **Economic challenges** -Animals are reared for vast majority of commercial activities be it legal or illegal there is ever increasing demand.
 - Thus, making it inevitable to compromise the welfare and right of animals. Example illegal trade in wild, unethical breeding of commercial animals.
- **Traditional practices and way of life. Example** people living in the tribal area fulfill their various food requirements from animals.
- **Administrative and institutional challenges: Even** though there are strict regulations in place to protect animals, they may not be consistently or effectively enforced.
 - Effective implementation can be hampered by a lack of committed agencies, corrupt practices, limited resources poor protection and implementation of laws and lack of institutional capacity in terms of fund allocation, manpower, weak penalties etc.
- **Wildlife protection issue: Due** to various reasons like hunting, poaching, illegal destruction of forest, conflict between human and animal population etc.
- **Commercial requirement and agriculture expansion:** require clearing of forest, excessive commercial activities like fishing have been posing serious challenges.
- **Urbanization, Globalization and industrial development: Has** put pressure on animal welfare as it has led to commodification of various wild products, and increased illegal trade of wild animals.
- Besides it poses **problem of regulation and jurisdiction** Example protection of marine ecosystem spread across borders, industrial activities by big MNCs spread across globe etc

Way forward

- **Animal abuse has to stop.** Humans need to shed their condescending approach of patronizing other species. Mere intellectual superiority of human kind cannot be allowed to supersede living rights of another species.
- **Co-existence of all life forms** is absolutely essential to prevent an imbalance of our ecosystem. **But no rights can be absolute.** Like human rights, regulation of animal

rights is a must. We need to strike a balance between safeguarding the interests of animals without compromising on the safety or well-being of humans.

Old Pension Scheme (OPS)

News Excerpt

The demand for the old pension scheme (OPS) is growing especially after a few States announced that they would be reverting to it.

About the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

- Under the OPS, public servants are given a monthly pension. Based on the employee's most recent basic wage and the number of years of service.
- **It guarantees a pension** for those with at least ten years of government service.
- The OPS **scheme offered defined benefits** to all government employees without any contribution on their part.
- Government employees who retire under the OPS are paid their whole pension by the government.
- **The National Pension Scheme (NPS)** was launched in 2004.
 - The **primary bone of contention** is that the NPS does not guarantee a certain amount.
 - Also, unlike OPS **the NPS requires employees** to contribute a sum throughout their working years.
- Almost two decades after the NPS came into effect, several States are switching back to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

COMPARISON OF OLD AND NEW PENSION SCHEME		
DETAIL	OPS	NPS
Contribution of employee	Nil	Employee contribution required
Pension Guarantee	Yes, by government	No
Amount of pension	50% of the last pay	Share market and PFMs driven
On price rise	Dearness Relief given	Nil
PE eligibility	Yes	No
PF withdrawal	Temporary withdrawal: within 15 year PF final: After 15 year	Tier 1-NIL Tier-2 withdrawable

Reasons to Bring NPS

- Such **policy measures are indispensable** when widespread hunger results in death among children under the age of five, and 229 million are still poor.
- Sixth Pay Commission had substantially increased the basic salary of government employees to cover pension contributions and promote savings for post-retirement expenses

- It is **more progressive and fiscally prudent** as it is market-linked, employee contribution is mandatory, reduces financial pressure on the government, aligns with modern tax structure, etc.
- It is important to understand that this change in the pension scheme was a bipartisan effort.
- It was initiated under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government and carried forward by the Manmohan Singh government. **There was political consensus on this change.**

Concerns relating to OPS

- **Financial strain on the Government exchequer:**
 - The pension liabilities of the central government increased due to a substantial hike under the Sixth pay matrix.
 - As it was politically tricky to withdraw the OPS for existing employees when the NPS was introduced.
 - As a result, **pension liabilities substantially** increased to 9% of total States expenditure, and are expected to increase in the future.
- **Financial unsustainability:**
 - Because of the **defined benefit of OPS**, the government was required to guarantee pensions to retired personnel independent of changes in the financial markets or the economy.
 - Over time, this may put a **financial strain on the government.**
- **Socially unjust:** The salary of a government employee is higher than the income of more than 90% of the population.
 - The OPS compels governments to **compress an already low social sector expenditure**, thus pushing the marginalised into a downward spiral of indigence.
 - OPS acts as a regressive redistribution mechanism favouring a better-off class.
- **Lack of fiscal prudence:** since the scheme **is not linked to the market, the inflation** risk may erode the saving benefits.
- **Restrict flexibility and mobility:** OPS is not in tune with **modern economic systems** which require flexibility
 - It restricts job mobility, personal growth as employees prefer stability and assured retirement benefits.
- **The Sixth Pay Commission** had substantially increased the basic salary of government employees to cover pension contributions and promote savings for post-retirement expenses
 - The OPS facilitates a further **monopolization of future labour markets** in the private sector by this proprietary class.
 - **Economically unjust:** Currently, the bottom 50% of the population bears the iniquitous burden of indirect taxation six times more than their income.
 - Due to the OPS, **the bottom of the pyramid population** with a monthly income much less than that of government employees must bear the incubus

burden which will sled them into destitution and abject poverty.

Steps and initiative taken by Government

- Earlier this year, the Central government set up a committee under the leadership of the Finance Secretary to review the working of the NPS and evolve an approach that addresses the needs of government employees while maintaining fiscal prudence
- Various pension schemes has been launched taking into account the need for various sections of the population.

Way forward

- The mainstream scourging of OPS is centered on a preconceived notion of inefficiency and a doctrine of fiscal deficit.
 - Nevertheless, there is a need to disentangle the consequences of OPS from the neoliberal setup and **examine the policy from the class and welfare perspectives.**
- Opposition to the OPS should not be a weapon for downsizing the government but used to argue for a more **equitable distribution of resources** and expansion of universal provisions of public goods
- A participatory pension for government employees will provide a **more egalitarian outcome** in an economy with acute income inequality.
- To protect employees (especially those in the lower rung in the hierarchy) from the vagaries of the market, **the government can tweak the NPS to provide a guaranteed monthly return.**

India Ageing Report 2023

News excerpt:

Population ageing in India is an inevitable and irreversible demographic reality associated with a welcome improvement in the country's health and medical care system.

About the report:

- India Ageing Report 2023 focuses on the **institutional arrangements** that support the **National Policy for Older Persons implementation in India.**
- The report pools existing knowledge on population ageing in India and **maps senior-centric activities carried out by governmental** and non-governmental organizations working with the elderly.
- **Population ageing** is associated with a rise in the proportion of the population termed as 'old', usually at **60 or 65 years and above.**
- Population ageing has been more pronounced in developed nations as they have passed through their demographic transition from high levels of fertility and mortality to lower levels, ahead of many developing countries.

International Policy Frameworks on Ageing:

<p>First World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 1982:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first-ever World Assembly on Ageing was held in Vienna, Austria, in 1982 to generate worldwide attention on the global issue of population ageing. The Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing was the first international instrument on ageing, providing a basis for formulating policies and programmes on ageing; it was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1982.
<p>United Nations Principles for Older Persons, 1991:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1991, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons based on the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 1982. The principles provided that older persons in society ought to have independence, the ability to participate in society, access to care, the full dignity of life, and entitlement to self-fulfilment, among other rights.
<p>Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 2002:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To mark the 20th anniversary of the First World Assembly on Ageing, the Second Assembly was held in Madrid, Spain, in 2002. It was devoted to an overall review of the outcome of that event in a global effort to address the 'demographic revolution' that was taking place worldwide. The main aim was to advance the global ageing agenda beyond the 1982 Plan of Action and address the global force of population ageing and its impact on development. Responding to growing concern over the speed and scale of global ageing, the Assembly adopted its main outcome documents—a Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), 2002, covering three main priority directions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Older persons and development; Advancing health and well-being into old age; and Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

About Older Population and South Asian Scenario:

- With longevity and declining fertility rates, older persons (60 years and above) are growing globally faster than the general population.
- Three key demographic changes**—declining fertility, reduction in mortality and increasing survival at older ages—contribute to population ageing.
- However, in many developing countries like India, chronological age may have little to do with retirement as most elderly are engaged in the informal sector for as long as they can work, with no specific retirement age.

Indian Scenario:

- Differentials across states:** Southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, along with states like Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Punjab, have

a higher proportion of senior citizens (persons above 60 years of age) than states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand.

- The feminization of ageing:** According to Census 2011, the sex ratio among senior citizens was 1,033 females per 1,000 males, with elderly women having a higher life expectancy than elderly men.
- Ruralization of the elderly:** The Census 2011 also highlighted that approximately 71 percent of the senior citizens lived in rural areas.
- More women aged 80 years and above:** During 2000–2050, the population aged 80 years and above is projected to grow 700 percent, with pre-dominance of widows and highly dependent very older women.
- Decline in health status, income insecurity and compulsion to work:** Loss of spouse and consequent living arrangements increases dependency, and the inability to access social welfare benefits meant for them are some of the critical problems faced by the elderly in India.

Government Initiatives for Senior citizens through various programs:

- The Indian Constitution mandates the well-being of senior citizens under **Article 41**, which states: "The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and other cases of undeserved want."

	Initiated by	Objectives
<p>Antodaya Anna Yojana (2000)</p>	<p>Department of Food and Public Distribution (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution)</p>	<p>Provides food grains at a highly subsidized rate (2 per kg for wheat and 3 per kg for rice) to widows/terminally ill persons/PwDs/persons aged 60 years and above.</p>
<p>Annapurna Scheme (2000/01)</p>	<p>Ministry of Rural Development</p>	<p>Persons aged 65 years and above who are not receiving pension under the National Old Age Pension Scheme get 10 kg of food grains per person per month, free of cost.</p>
<p>Varishta Pension Bima Yojana (2003; revived in 2014)</p>	<p>Ministry of Finance (Life Insurance Corporation of India)</p>	<p>Pension to senior citizens through LIC of India. The scheme has a lock-in period of 15 years, and the senior citizen can benefit from a (taxable) interest rate of 9 percent per annum for 10 years. Investments are eligible for tax exemption under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act 1961.</p>

Scheme for Financial Assistance for Veteran Artists (2014/2015)	Ministry of Culture	Earlier known as the Artistes Pension Scheme and Welfare Fund (1961). Central government assistance of 6,000 as a monthly allowance is given to artists aged 60 years and above. In case of death, the spouse will receive lifetime benefits, and dependents will receive till marriage or employment or up to the age of 21, whichever is earlier. The financial assistance may be continued at the discretion of the central Government after examining the dependent's financial condition.
Atal Pension Yojana (2015)	Ministry of Finance (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority)	Help unorganized sector workers save money as they earn and provide guaranteed return post-retirement. Fixed pension for the subscribers ranging from 1,000 to 5,000, receivable at 60 years if s/he joins and contributes between 18 and 40 years.
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana		Government-backed accident insurance scheme. Available to people aged 18–70 with a bank account who consent to enable an auto-debit (₹12 per annum per member).
Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme (SCSS) 2019, amended in 2020	Ministry of Finance (Department of Economic Affairs)	Provide a regular income to those above 60 years of age. Tax benefits, safe investment, account transfer facility across the country, and a higher interest rate of 8.2 percent annually. Minimum deposit of ₹1,000 and a maximum of ₹3,000,000. Tenure-5 years, with premature withdrawal allowed under certain circumstances.

Way Forward:

India needs collaboration and coordination at each level of health care governance. The main emphasis should be upon weekly geriatric clinic run by a trained medical officer. Along with it routine health assessment, home visits by rehabilitation worker for homebound/ bedridden elderly, and specialised Out-Patient-Department (OPD) in geriatric clinics should also be focused.

Draft norms look to make Railways more disabled-friendly

News Excerpt:

The Union government has released draft guidelines on the accessibility of railway stations and train facilities for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Key highlights of the guidelines:

- Website Features Tailored for 'Divyangjans':

- These features will follow **universal design principles and World Wide Web Consortium guidelines, integrating technology-enabled accessibility features** such as **text-to-speech and user-friendly pictograms**.
- **Mobile App and One-Click Template for Enhanced Information:**
 - A dedicated mobile app and a one-click template have been developed to display all the information and facilities available for PwDs at stations and in trains.
- **Inclusive Announcements and Signage at Train Stations:**
 - Credible announcements regarding facilities for disabled persons will be integrated into public announcement systems at train stations and platforms.
 - This includes **sign language, captioning, digital displays, standardised illuminated signage across all stations, and Braille signage**.
- **Enhancing Accessibility Infrastructure:**
 - Frontline staff will be trained in sign language to ensure effective communication.
 - The guidelines call for **accessible entry and exit points, ramps and handrails, designated accessible parking areas with clear signage, low-height ticket counters with accessibility signage** and accessible help booths manned by **Divyangjan Sahayaks**.
- **Creating Unobstructed Zones and Specialized Facilities:**
 - The guidelines emphasized **creating unobstructed platform zones**, incorporating tactile guiding blocks, and **providing accessible toilets, drinking water booths, and foot-over bridges**.
- **Inclusive Train Coaches and Monitoring Mechanisms:**
 - Integration of **accessible features in new train coaches**, prominent signage, **Braille coach numbers, contrasting colours for exteriors**, and inclusive coach interiors with accessible toilets and seating arrangements are recommended.

Current status of Disability:

- **December 3** marks the International Day for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). With around **1.3 billion people** globally living with **disabilities**, the majority residing in **developing countries** and **rural areas**, it underscores the urgent need for inclusive policies and actions that address the disparities they face, such as poverty, limited access to education, and discrimination.

Challenges in Data Collection and Utilization: Recent shelving of **socio-economic data** related to **PwDs** during Unique Disability ID (UDID) registrations raises concerns. **Quality issues** and **low response rates** led to the decision not to release crucial information, highlighting challenges in collecting comprehensive data for policy-making.

Way Forward		
<p>Advancing rehabilitation services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The WHO's Global Burden of Disease study indicates that 2.41 billion individuals require rehabilitation. ○ Advancements in neuro-rehabilitation techniques aids recovery and maximizes functionality in post-traumatic brain injury, spinal injury, stroke, and other neurological conditions. ○ Need to broaden rehabilitation services beyond specialist-led, narrow concepts to encompass diverse neurological and mental health conditions. ○ Community-based, multidisciplinary, and holistic approaches ensure comprehensive care for individuals with disabilities. ○ Professional growth and training: Empowering therapists, caregivers, and professionals involved in rehabilitation. 	<p>Leveraging scientific innovations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-invasive brain stimulation techniques like rTMS and TES show efficacy in treating conditions ranging from depression and OCD to Parkinson's disease and schizophrenia. ○ Evolving Treatments in the Post-COVID Era: Treatments like transcutaneous auricular vagus nerve stimulation (tA-VNS) have emerged to address long-term COVID-19 symptoms and other conditions. ○ Enhance Early Detection and implement timely Intervention, particularly in developmental conditions like autism and ADHD (Attention Deficit/ Disorder). Hyperactivity 	<p>Fostering global collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Private Sector's Role: Engaging the private sector, employer federations, and trade unions promotes the employment and retention of individuals with disabilities, complementing legal frameworks for inclusivity. ○ There is a growing need for a fundamental shift in global commitment, solidarity, financing, and action to prioritise the voices and needs of persons with disabilities at the centre of the global development agenda. ○ The 2030 Agenda for UN Sustainable Development has thus opened doors for the participation of persons with disabilities and recognition as active contributing members of society. ○ Thus, the businesses in India must prioritize disabled users and embrace structured negotiation. It is time for a proactive stance, acknowledging the importance of accessibility and compliance for long-term success.

Government initiatives for the empowerment of Divyangjans:

- **DISHA (Early Intervention and School Readiness Scheme)**
 - It aims at setting up Disha Centres for early intervention for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) through therapies, training and providing support to family members.
- **VIKAAS (Day Care):**
 - This is a daycare scheme, primarily to expand the range of opportunities available to a person with a disability for enhancing interpersonal and vocational skills as they transition to higher age groups.
- **SAHYOGI (Caregiver training scheme):**
 - It aims to set up Caregiver Cells (CGCs) to provide training and create a skilled workforce of caregivers to provide adequate and nurturing care for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and their families who require it.
- **PRERNA (Marketing Assistance):**
 - Prerna is the marketing assistance scheme of the National Trust to create viable and widespread channels for the sale of products and services produced by Persons with disability (PwD) covered under the National Trust Act.
- **BADHTE KADAM (Awareness and Community Interaction):**
 - It aims to create community awareness, sensitisation, social integration and mainstreaming of Persons with Disabilities.

EDUCATION

National Research Foundation

News Excerpt

The **National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill** was placed in the Parliament.

About NRF

- The establishment of the National Research Foundation was one of the key recommendations made by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- The foundation is intended to play a crucial role as a **coordinating agency, bringing industry to the forefront of research** by bridging the gap between researchers, governmental bodies, and companies.
- The goal of this strategy is to **encourage the expansion of research initiatives** and improve the nation's overall research environment.

Aim and Objective of NRF

- It seeks to **advance scientific investigation** at Indian institutions of higher learning.
- Along with more fundamental objectives like **funding and mentoring research**, it also aims to **broaden the range of college and university research engagement**.
- By providing chances for **doctorate and post-doctoral fellowships**, the NRF hopes to close the gap between research and higher education and encourage active researchers to work with current faculty members.
- Notably, the NRF promotes research in the **humanities, social sciences, and arts** in addition to the natural sciences, which stimulates **creative and critical thinking**.
- It seeks to **address urgent national concerns** like healthcare, clean energy, and climate change through extensive, protracted, multidisciplinary projects.
- The primary focus is on funding, with the goal of considerably **increasing national research spending** and enhancing research.

How will it be funded?

- The National Research Foundation (NRF) would operate on a **₹50,000-crore budget for five years**.
- Government funding will account for **28%** of the total (₹14,000 crore), with the balance **72%** (₹36,000 crore) coming from the private sector.
- The plan calls for raising the government's contribution to **₹20,000 crores annually**, with **₹4,000 crores coming from the budget** of the current Science and Engineering Research Board. As a result, the NRF will receive an **additional ₹10,000 crore over the following five years**.
- However, this rise in research and development expenditures is thought to be modest, as it representing **less than 2% of India's gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD)**.
- **India's GERD is much lower than other developed nations'**, such as the United States and China.
- India has a GERD of **₹1,13,825 crore in 2017–18**, while its GDP was **7.6 and 5.1** times lower than that of the United States and China, respectively.
- Additionally, during the same time period, **India's GERD was about 24 times lower than that of both of these nations**, and the disparity has become even wider in the last five years.

How can the NRF facilitate the "ease of doing science"?

- The research grant process needs improvement in several areas. Firstly, the **time between application**

and receiving funds should be minimized, preferably within six months.

- Secondly, **all paperwork should be digitally processed**, avoiding the need for hard copies.
- Thirdly, **finance-related matters should be handled between the NRF and the university/research institution's finance department**, freeing scientists to focus on research.
- Fourthly, **specific spending guidelines are required for scientific research**, separate from general financial rules.
- Lastly, **a mechanism must be established to ensure timely disbursement of funds**. Regarding private industry participation in the NRF, there is uncertainty about raising ₹36,000 crore from the industry, requiring a more detailed plan and mechanisms like escrow accounts for reassurance.

Way forward:

- **Clear and open funding and coordination rules** are essential to the National Research Foundation's (NRF) effectiveness.
- The **effectiveness of research activities** will be maximized by putting a focus on **inclusivity and collaboration**.
- In order to increase financing and relevance, **NRF should encourage critical thinking, creativity, and early career researchers**.
- **A strong monitoring and evaluation structure** will guarantee efficient resource use.
- **Knowledge sharing and exposure to cutting-edge innovations** will be facilitated by international partnership with prominent academic institutes.
- By putting these plans into action, **NRF can close the funding gap for science and technology**, turning India into a hub for international research and fostering innovation for local growth.

Indian Higher Education must be globally competitive

News Excerpt:

Recently, the D/o Higher Education Ministry of Education **set up an Overarching Committee to strengthen the assessment and accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**.

About HEIs:

Higher education **is tertiary education, leading to the award of an academic degree**. It is an optional final stage of formal learning after completing secondary education.

What is Accreditation in HIEs?

Higher education accreditation is a **type of quality assurance process under which services and operations**

of post-secondary educational institutions or programs are evaluated to determine if applicable standards are met. If standards are met, accredited status is granted by the agency.

Why does the Present system of Accreditation need changes?

- Changing Student Expectations.
- A renewed emphasis on research quality and innovation.
- Burgeoning global collaborations, a genuine desire for international recognition and intense competition in the academic sector among both public and private players.
- This need for change is also fueled by accrediting bodies and ranking entities like NAAC, NBA, NIRF, UGC and AICTE, which wield substantial influence.

About the Overarching Committee:

- This overarching committee was set up on 3rd November 2022 by the Ministry of Education.
- K Radhakrishnan, chairman of IIT's Kanpur Board of Governors chaired the committee.
- The report's title is 'Transformative Reforms for Strengthening Periodic Assessment and Accreditation for All Higher Education in India'.
- The Aim/Objectives of the Committee:
 - To strengthen the accreditation processes by NAAC and the ranking system by NIRF,
 - To recommend how more institutions can come into the fold of accreditation,
 - To prepare a roadmap for aligning NAAC, NBA, and NIRF to the proposed National Accreditation Council (NAC) in HECI.

It will also help reduce the time spent on HEIs collecting data and information.

- **The transition from the present 8-point grading system of NAAC to an 'Adapted Binary Accreditation System' is proposed;** HEIs are awarded eight types of letter grades viz. A++, A+, A, B++, B+, B, C and D as per NAAC.
- **Enable Choice-based Ranking System for Diverse Users:** Mentor the Institutions falling 'far below the standards for accreditation'. HEIs from the accredited group may be encouraged to become mentors, with suitable credit given during their re-accreditation.
- **Encourage accredited Institutions to raise their bar gradually to:**
 - 'Level 1' to 'Level 4' of Institutes of National Excellence (moving up as they evolve 'in-depth in their disciplines' and/or in-breadth in disciplines)
 - 'Level-5' for Multi-Disciplinary Research and Educational Institutions of global standing (as envisioned in NEP 2020)
- **This classification could be a necessary condition for graded autonomy.**
 - **Include all HEIs and every programme in the newly proposed assessment and accreditation system, with due regard for their statutory dispensations (e.g. IITs):** The process of encouraging IITs to migrate from their internal peer review system to an appropriate national accreditation system is on the anvil.

BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

FOR THE PUBLIC	FOR STUDENTS & GRADUATES	FOR EMPLOYERS	FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE	FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	FOR THE UNIVERSITY
Accreditation promotes the health, safety & welfare of society by assuring competent public health professionals.	Accreditation ensures that the school has been evaluated & has met standards established by the profession. Promotes professional mobility & enhances employment opportunities.	Accreditation provides assurance that the curriculum covers essential skills and knowledge needed for today's jobs.	Accreditation establishes standards of practice & assures that educational requirements reflect the current training needs of the profession.	Accreditation serves as a basis for determining eligibility for federally funded programs and student financial aid.	Accreditation serves as a reliable basis for inter- and intra-institutional cooperative practices, including admissions & transfer of credit. Enhances its national reputation & represents peer recognition.

Transformative reforms proposed now for India's HEI-accreditation system conforming to NEP 2020:

- **One Nation One Data Model:** The **One Nation One Data (ONOD)** Portal aims to establish a unified data architecture for augmenting the efficiency and transparency of the country's Approval, Accreditation, and Ranking processes of Higher Education Institutions.

- **Initiate a robust outreach mechanism in tandem with effective methods of handholding the potential entrants** (which is the large majority now), where the aim should be to facilitate all HEIs in the country towards joining the accreditation process and ranking as soon as possible.

Way Forward:

To address the present issues the following focus areas need to be considered:

- Carrying out **stakeholders’ consultation** to further streamline the existing accreditation process of NAAC/NBA.
- Examination of the existing documentation/verification processes and **rationalization** of the present system of recognition/accreditation and ranking by multiple agencies.
- Adopting an **incentive-based, facilitation-oriented approach to encourage HEIs to undertake accreditation.**
- The government must give **due regard to the Institutes of Excellence** to achieve global competitiveness in HEIs.

An ambitious push for values ethics in higher education

News Excerpt:

A survey of human resource managers has highlighted unethical practices in various higher education institutions (HEIs).

What is the present Ethical issue in the Indian Higher Education System?

- **Issue with Human Resources:** According to the survey, **human resource managers** highlighted unethical practices in various organisations.
 - The most prominent are favouritism and gender discrimination in hiring, training, pay and promotion; sexual harassment; gender discrimination in promotion; inconsistent view on discipline; lack of confidentiality; gender differentiation in compensation; non-performance factors overlooked in appraisals; and arrangements with vendors for personal gain.
 - **Associations and unions** of teachers, staff and students have often been banned and suspended on the slightest pretext.
 - **Office-bearers and elected representatives** have generally been accused of violating the code of conduct and acting against the interests of their institutions.

- **The dilemma with the Right to Information:** The emphasis on the need for and the importance of **maintaining the confidentiality of information** is bemusing as it runs counter to the **‘Right of Information’** as an instrument to ensure accountability.
 - **Higher education institutions** are not voluntarily disclosing critical information and are not subjecting themselves to public scrutiny.

About Mulya Pravah 2.0:

- **Mulya Pravah 2.0**, a modified version of Mulya Pravah, which was notified in 2019, seeks to inculcate human values and professional ethics in higher education institutions issued by the **University Grants Commission (UGC).**
- **Aim:** To build value-based institutions by orienting individuals and institutions towards developing a deep respect for fundamental duties and constitutional values and bonding with the country.
 - **Mulya Pravah 2.0** stresses the criticality of ‘encouraging persons at all levels to think and give their advice freely.

How can Mulya Pravah 2.0 help HEIs?

- **Emphasis on transparency**
 - **Better decision-making:** Mulya Pravah 2.0 highlights that decision-making in higher education institutions must be solely guided by institutional and public interest and not be vitiated by biases.
 - **Preventing Discrimination:** It seeks to abolish the discriminatory privileges of officials and urges the administration to punish the corrupt.
 - **Builds Constitutional Values:** Mulya Pravah 2.0 expects HEIs to 'ensure integrity, trusteeship, harmony, accountability, inclusiveness, commitment, respectfulness, belongingness,

MULYA PRAVAH 2.0

Inculcation of Human Values and Professional Ethics in Higher Education Institutions

THE PRESENT POLICY FRAMEWORK, STRUCTURED IN FIVE PARTS

FIRST PART	SECOND PART	THIRD PART	FOURTH PART	FIFTH PART
The first part elaborates the objectives and possible outcomes of establishing a value-based environment charged with professional ethics	The second part delves into the conceptual framework of human values and professional ethics. An academic institution is built upon the pillars of its various stakeholders.	The third part elaborates the value-based and ethical practices of various internal and external stakeholders.	The fourth part, while suggesting the operational guidelines, emphasizes the implementation and monitoring of the relevant programmes.	The fifth part recognizes that human values and ethics need to be nurtured and fortified; therefore, the document indicates ways to reinforce the culture of values and ethics in institutions.

University Grants Commission
Ministry of Education
Government of India, New Delhi

sustainability, constitutional values and global citizenship'.

- **Builds Conducive Culture:** It reminds the staff to act in the best interest of their institution, create a conducive culture and work environment for teaching, learning, and research and develop the potential of their institution.
- **Solving the Issue of Confidentiality:**
 - **Restoring Public Confidence:** Mulya Pravah 2.0 urges HEIs to promptly upload agendas, proceedings and minutes of the meetings of their decision-making bodies, sub-committees and standing committees.
- **Building Unions and support:**
 - Mulya Pravah 2.0 expects staff and student unions to 'support the administration in development activities and raise issues in a dignified manner'.

Way Forward:

- **At the Administrative level:** The authorities and officers of universities must ensure that the provisions of acts, statutes, ordinances, regulations and **Mulya Pravah** are strictly adhered to in letter and spirit.
- **At regulatory levels:** The higher education regulator(s) must demonstrate zero tolerance and act swiftly to quell even the smallest trace of corruption in the admission, examination, and hiring processes or, for that matter, in any aspect of university administration.
- **Need to analyse Nobility and Professional Ethics:** Teachers should 'act' as role models and set examples of 'good conduct, and a good standard of dress, speech and behaviour, worth emulating by students'.
- **Need to Consult Stakeholders in Decision-making:** Each stakeholder must be allowed to proactively participate in protecting, preserving and promoting the culture and standards of their institutions.

Need to examine the Examination System

News Excerpt:

The education system significantly influences educational standards and certificates' credibility. However, reforms focusing on transparency and fairness are needed to ensure a credible examination process and enhance the quality of education.

Significance of Examination System:

- A well-designed examination system plays a significant role in **evaluating** the **knowledge, skills, and competencies** that students acquire during their education.
- It issues **certifications** that demonstrate their **academic achievements**.
- Examinations help **identify students' strengths and areas that need improvement, guiding teachers** in

Assessment quality in India and its associated challenges:

Foundational issues: All regulatory institutions in India emphasize on outcome-based learning. Although there are elaborate advisories on curriculum design, pedagogy, and examination systems from all the regulatory boards, educational institutions hardly follow these.

Classroom quality and assessment issues: The syllabi of every graduate/diploma program fulfills course objectives, expected outcomes, and even specifying the finer details of skills to be imparted. This does not meet the requirements of imparting higher-order thinking and skills.

Maintaining secrecy in the examination process: From question paper setting to evaluation of answer scripts and mark sheet preparation, the aspect facilitates malpractices that make a mockery of uniformity and confidentiality.

Issues with Autonomic regulations:

Regulatory bodies encourage colleges to go in for academic autonomy and certify their students based on their examinations. Still, the degrees/diplomas that are conferred are on par with all others by the affiliating university.

Autonomy regulations give little oversight authority to the affiliating university on the autonomous college examination system.

customizing their teaching methods to cater to the student's individual needs.

- This approach ensures **assessment fairness** and **credibility** and **fosters confidence** among students, teachers, and society.

Way Forward:

- **Need for Participative and Transparent Assessment:**
 - Proper documentation and real-time oversight with a participative process of students' assessment of teachers should make it better.
- **Need to enhance Credibility:**
 - Software solutions can be used in every aspect of assessment, for both centralized and distributed systems of assessment, to enhance credibility
- **Need for Transparent Evaluation:**
 - Transparency in students' access to the evaluation process and measures to address their grievances should be in place.

Major Issues with the examination system:

- **Lack of credibility of the examination system in India:**
 - The media reports scandals that engulf some universities or even school boards every examination season. The credibility of the examination system is linked to the standard of the certificates that the examination/school boards issue.
- **Marks Inflation in India:**
 - Inflation of marks and achieving a very high pass percentage are the key objectives of the education administration. Consequently, the talent search cost for employers rises.

Decentralized system in India and its associated challenges:

Secrecy and standardization:

Secrecy without **proper checks and balances and audits** leads to scandals.
Standardization through uniformity in examination kills experimentation in assessment and curriculum.

Imparting Practical Knowledge:

There are complaints that the examination boards test only memory. So, teachers coach students to memorize answers and score marks rather than teach them higher-order thinking.

Higher order of learning:

Question papers with grave flaws such as language errors, errors in conceptualization, irrelevant questions, and questions that do not test higher-order learning. The evaluation of answer scripts is indiscriminate, and the grades do not reflect the differences in students' learning achievements.

Employment issues:

Employers disregard institutional certification and have their rigorous assessment of a candidate's academic achievements and **suitability for employment**. This has created a coaching market for competitive examinations and skilling.

- An **external audit of assessment systems** in universities and school boards is essential. Such audit reports should cover all the processes based

on established principles and benchmarks set by educationists.

- **Need to build healthy Competition:**
 - Grading examination boards in terms of transparency, reliability and consistency should be a part of audit reports. Such audit reports should be released soon after the completion of every major cycle of examinations.

ASER 2023: Beyond Basics Report

News Excerpt:

ASER (Annual Status of Education Report)'s 2023 survey results show gaps in learning. It focused on 14-to-18-year-old children in rural India, specifically on their ability to apply reading and math skills to everyday situations and their aspirations.

About Pratham:

- Pratham is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in India. The organization conducts large-scale assessments, including the ASER, to understand the State of education in rural areas and identify areas for improvement.
- It launched the **Read India campaign**, which aims to improve reading and arithmetic skills among children.

About ASER:

- ASER was initiated in 2005 and conducted annually until 2014, transitioned to an alternate-year cycle in 2016.
- The core ASER survey focuses on children aged 3 to 16, assessing their enrollment, foundational reading, and arithmetic abilities. The ASER 2023 report, titled 'Beyond Basics,' offers a detailed exploration of the lives of 14 to 18-year-olds, covering 34,745 youth in 28 districts across 26 states.

Enrollment

Table 1: Distribution of youth by age and enrollment status (%)

Age	Enrolled in:			Not enrolled	Total
	School (Std X or below)	School (Std XI or XII)	Under-graduate or other		
14	94.7	1.4	0.1	3.9	100
15	81.0	11.6	0.2	7.2	100
16	44.8	42.6	1.6	10.9	100
17	15.0	57.3	9.4	18.3	100
18	6.9	31.1	29.5	32.6	100
All youth	52.5	27.6	6.7	13.2	100

'Not enrolled' includes youth who never enrolled or have dropped out.
'Undergraduate or other' includes youth who are enrolled in college to pursue an undergraduate degree or a certificate or diploma course.

- ASER 2023 aligns with **Sustainable Development Goal 4**, focusing on inclusive and equitable quality education, addressing technical, vocational, and tertiary education targets, digital literacy, and overall literacy and numeracy.

Key Outcomes of ASER 2023	
Enrollment Trends and Educational Streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report underscores that 86.8% of youth in the age group of 14-18 are enrolled in educational institutions, emphasizing the progress made in terms of enrollment over the years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant differences in enrollment rates are observed by age. Notably, 32.6% of 18-year-olds are not enrolled, reflecting challenges in retaining students through their teenage years. However, the report suggests that educational institutions might not effectively deliver foundational skills to students. Choice of educational streams: Arts/humanities emerges as the most popular stream among enrolled youth, accounting for 55.7%, while STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) follows closely at 31.7%. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This sheds light on rural youth's diverse academic interests and aspirations, highlighting the need for a flexible and inclusive education system.
Math and Reading Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 43.3% of 14-18-year-olds can correctly solve division problems (3-digit by 1-digit), a skill usually expected in third and fourth grade. The report indicates that a significant percentage of students cannot read Class-II-level text fluently in their regional languages, struggle with basic math problems, and 42.7% of youth in the age group cannot read sentences in English, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to enhance language proficiency.
Digital Access and Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly 90% of surveyed households have smartphones, indicating widespread access to digital technology. Only 9% have a computer/laptop at home, impacting digital skills. Nearly 80% use smartphones for entertainment purposes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52% lack knowledge of online safety, affecting tasks like reporting/blocking profiles and managing passwords. Two-thirds of smartphone users reported engaging in educational activities, indicating digital learning adoption. The report's findings suggest an opportunity to cultivate a more profound set of digital skills among young people, extending beyond social media engagement.
Challenges in Basic Life Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A considerable portion, approximately 30%, is already engaged in various activities, often working to support their families. However, their aspirations extend beyond these current engagements, indicating a mismatch between their current situations and future aspirations.
Gender Disparities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanities are more popular among females (60.6%), while males favoured STEM more (36.3%). Females outperform males in reading a Standard II level text in their regional language (76% vs. 70.9%). Boys have greater access to smartphones and outperform girls in digital tasks. Males are more likely (43.7%) to own smartphones compared to females (19.8%). The gender disparity in math and reading skills is evident, with boys outperforming girls in arithmetic and English reading tasks. In terms of household responsibilities, the report indicates that 86% of females reported being involved in domestic work, compared to 66% of males.
Vocational Training and Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 5.6% of youth aged 14 to 18 are currently engaged in vocational training. The vocational choices made by youth often align with the educational offerings in their localities.
The Role of Schools and Beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the majority of respondents in Class 11 or higher were studying humanities-related subjects, questions arose about their prospects in a job market that traditionally values STEM knowledge. The report suggests that the New Education Policy of 2020, emphasizing flexibility, could be instrumental in

	providing students with alternatives and expanding their learning opportunities.
Policy Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The analysis suggests a shift in focus from enrollment challenges to learning outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions raised at the policy level include whether there is a shortage of teachers if teachers lack proper incentives, the need for better monitoring systems, and whether teachers are adequately trained. Addressing these questions is crucial to enhancing learning outcomes and preventing a scenario where inadequate education contributes to inequality and undermines growth and development goals.

Key Recommendations Include:

- Focused Remedial Education:** Implement remedial programs that address specific learning deficiencies, leveraging technology and community resources to provide personalized support.
- Gender-Inclusive Education Policies:** There is a need to implement gender-inclusive education policies and targeted interventions to enhance girls' digital literacy, promoting equal education opportunities.
- Career Counselling and Vocational Training:** Strengthen career counselling services, introduce vocational training aligned with local employment needs, and create awareness about non-traditional career paths to broaden horizons.
- Skill Development and Apprenticeships:** Introduce skill development programs aligned with market demands, enhance vocational education, and foster collaboration with local industries to create apprenticeship opportunities for practical learning.
- Tailored Regional Interventions:** Customize educational interventions to address region-specific challenges, invest in infrastructure, and encourage community involvement to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- Empowering Aspirations:** Launch awareness campaigns challenging stereotypes, involve local communities in discussions on gender equality, and advocate for policies supporting educational aspirations beyond traditional roles.
- Comprehensive Digital Literacy and Safety:** Integrate digital literacy training into the curriculum, conduct awareness programs on online safety, and involve

parents and communities in promoting responsible digital behaviour.

- Flexible Learning Pathways:** Introduce flexible learning pathways, showcase the benefits of higher education, and establish mentorship programs to guide students in making informed decisions about their educational and career paths.
- Financial Literacy Programs:** Integrate financial literacy education into the curriculum, provide **hands-on training in financial management, and collaborate with financial institutions** for outreach programs to enhance financial literacy skills.

Way Forward:

- As a country, we need to equip our young people adequately with the essential knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to drive their own progress and that of their families and communities. India's anticipated **"demographic dividend"** and **"digital dividend"** can achieve their full potential if this is done.
- The snapshots of youngsters' digital — and other educational — capabilities in ASER 2023 could guide policymakers in implementing NEP's visions. At the same time, they should also remain alert against lapsing into technological fundamentalism.

Gender-neutral textbooks

News Excerpt:

The Kerala government has introduced updated school textbooks, aiming to instill the concept of a gender-neutral society in young minds.

More about the news:

- Gender-neutral textbooks are one among the many changes introduced by the **Kerala government in school textbooks, as they aim to shatter patriarchal gender norms.**
- The curriculum encompasses teachings on **POCSO rules, democratic values, secularism, and scientific thinking.**
- The changes are part of the Kerala government's **proposed reforms in 2022 to promote gender awareness, gender neutrality, and gender justice** in the education sector.

What are some of the changes introduced?

- Pictorial representations** show **fathers/men involved in cooking and kitchen chores, such as grating coconut and cooking snacks for their daughters.**



- The textbook also illustrates **three girls playing football, a game conventionally played by men.**

- The social science textbook for Class 5 tells the **story of Neenu, a girl with a disability who uses a wheelchair**, portraying her as empowered and not discriminated against.

Objectives of the gender-neutral textbooks:

- They **aim to introduce concepts of gender neutrality and equality at a young age** to impact the thought processes of children.
- The new content conveys the **message that cooking and household duties are the collective responsibility of both fathers and mothers.**
- They also convey that **children can aspire to any career**, regardless of gender.
- Questions **initiate discussions** on unpaid labour at home and conventional gender roles that need to change.
- The portrayal of Neenu aims to break **attitudinal barriers and stigma around disabilities**, sending a message of an accessible and disability-friendly environment for them.

Significance of the gender-neutral textbooks:

- They **sensitize language and conversations** by using **gender-neutral pronouns like "they/them"** instead of **"he/she"** and portraying characters beyond conventional gender norms (e.g., **a girl wanting to be a fighter pilot**).
- They **help widen children's horizons** and teach them to respect and accept people across the gender spectrum.

Gender Neutrality beyond-textbooks:

- In addition to textbook revisions, **several state-run schools** in Kerala have **introduced gender-neutral uniforms**, marking a departure from the traditional dichotomy in school attire.
 - However, **schools in Kerala have embraced a more inclusive approach, adopting uniforms consisting of knee-length pants and shirts for all students.**
- Furthermore, in a landmark move, the **state child rights panel** directed schools to **phase out single-gender institutions, promoting co-education.**
- Additionally, **efforts to replace traditional honorifics like 'sir' and 'madam' with the universal term 'teacher'** have been explored, albeit with varying degrees of implementation.

Way Forward:

- **Teacher Training:** Implement professional development programs to equip educators with the skills and knowledge to teach gender-neutral content effectively.
- **Community Engagement:** Conduct workshops and seminars to educate parents and the wider community about the importance of gender equality and inclusivity in education.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish mechanisms to collect and analyze feedback from students, teachers, and parents to assess the impact of gender-neutral textbooks and policies.

- **Inclusive School Policies:** Adopt policies that create safe spaces, establish anti-bullying programs, and provide access to gender-neutral facilities.
- **Inclusive Representation in Media and Resources:** Ensure educational materials reflect diverse and inclusive gender representations.

National Integration:

- Advocate for adopting gender-neutral education policies at the national level, using Kerala as a model.

Long-Term Commitment:

- Secure funding, political support, and sustained efforts to maintain momentum and achieve gender equality in education.



HEALTH

National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD)

News Excerpt

National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) programme was recently renamed into National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD).

About NPCDCS/NP-NCD

- This programme is implemented under the National Health Mission in India and was launched in 2010.
- Its aim is to strengthen infrastructure, human resource development, early diagnosis, promoting health and management.
- For proper management NCD cells are established at National, State and District levels while NCD Clinics are set up at district and community Health Centres levels.
- Currently under NPCDCS there are 677 NCD, 187 Districts Cardiac Care Units, 266 District Day Care Centres and 5392 NCD Community Health Centre-level clinics.

Status of Non- Communicable Diseases

Globally

- As per WHO, NCDs is responsible for 71% of all deaths.
- 85% of nearly 15 million people die from NCDs are between the ages of 30 and 69. Also, these "premature" death are mainly in low and middle income countries.
- Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or 17.9 million people annually, followed by cancers (9.3 million), respiratory diseases (4.1 million), and diabetes (1.5 million). These four groups of diseases account for over 80% of all premature NCD deaths.
- Suicide occurs throughout the lifespan and was the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29 year-olds globally in 2019. It is common in all regions of world.

Non-Communicable Diseases

Non-Communicable Diseases or chronic diseases are a combination of **genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors** and are generally of long duration.

Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are main type of non-communicable diseases.

Main risk factors contributing for non-communicable diseases are **tobacco use, unhealthy diet, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity and air pollution.**

In India

As per the report by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR):

- Death due to NCDs increased from 37.9% in 1990 to 61.8% in 2016.
- There are 55% of the total disability-adjusted life years in India.
- In comparison to less developed states, there is more burden of NCDs in developed states.

Government Initiatives to combat NCD:

- **Supporting State Cancer Institutes:** Central Government is working on **strengthening of tertiary care cancer facilities scheme** to set up State Cancer Institutes and Tertiary Care Centres.
- To make available Cancer and Cardiovascular Diseases drugs and implants at discounted prices to the patients under **Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT)**, various outlets named Deendayal outlets have been opened in many institutions.
- **Department of Pharmaceuticals is setting up Jan Aushadhi Stores** to provide generic medicines at affordable prices.
- **Fit India Movement** is another initiative by government for healthy lifestyle.

Conclusion

As per WHO as well as report of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) there is a dire need for promoting healthy lifestyle choices and improving health care services to deal with NCDs. Whole world is hard hit by the impacts of NCDs and India is no less. NCDs can have devastating impacts on personal financial security and national economic growth. In low- and middle-income countries, NCDs often affect people during their most productive years. Thus, dealing with NCDs is a global challenge and should be considered at utmost priority. Steps should be taken to prevent and control it.

National Rare Diseases Committee

News Excerpt

The Delhi High Court has set up a five-member panel to implement the Centre's rare diseases policy in an efficient manner and ensure that its benefits reaches patients.

Key Points

- The National Rare Diseases Committee will also look into the case of these patients, enrolled with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, and the manner in which their treatment can begin.
- Under the National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021, hundreds of patients — mostly children — are registered with the 'Digital Portal for Crowdfunding and Voluntary donations for Patients of Rare Diseases' by the Union Health Ministry.
- However, the government has been unable to fully finance their treatment due to high costs, resource constraints, and competing health priorities.
- The court ordered the panel to explore procurement of therapies and drugs, and the creation of associated logistical framework to administer treatment.
- The High Court has been hearing a batch of petitions by rare disease patients and their caretakers, which contend that medicines and therapies are exorbitantly expensive. If these are not made available, the children's well-being would be severely jeopardised, the petitions argue.

Legal intervention

On December 2021, the Delhi HC had urged the Centre to look into the matter, saying that patients identified under the National Policy for Rare Diseases cannot be made to suffer due to lack of funds. "Any delay in commencement of their treatment may prove to be fatal and defeat the very purpose for which the above-mentioned policy was created," it had noted.

The court has heard the case from time to time, issuing various directions to enable treatment of the children and making medicines available to them.

In its latest order, the High Court ordered the National Rare Diseases' Committee to take up on an "urgent basis" the immediate requirement of patients to commence the treatment stopped due to lack of funding.

Double Burden of TB and Diabetes Mellitus

News Excerpt

India has been experiencing the double burden of two debilitating diseases – **type 2 diabetes** (a.k.a. diabetes mellitus, DM) and **tuberculosis (TB)**. Currently, India has around **74.2 million** people living with diabetes while TB affects **2.6 million** Indians every year.

- **Diabetes Mellitus:** It is a disorder in which the body does not produce enough or respond normally to insulin, causing blood sugar (glucose) levels to be abnormally high.
- **Tuberculosis:** It is an infectious disease that most often **affects the lungs** and is caused by a type of bacteria. It spreads through the air when infected people cough, sneeze, or spit.

Impact of DM on TB

- DM weakens the **immune system**, **delays the clearance of TB germs**, and **prolongs the course of treatment**.
- The risk of TB infection rises due to the **altered lung defences** caused by hyperglycemia in DM. Additionally, DM affects the signs and symptoms of TB, radiographic results, therapeutic methods, and results.
- People who have both TB and DM have **larger bacterial loads, and cavitory lesions** in the lower lung fields, and are more susceptible to TB.
- The TB-DM group has **poorer lung function** than the TB non-DM group even after finishing TB treatment.
- Compromised immune responses, protracted treatment, increased infection risk, decreased lung function, and subpar treatment outcomes are some of the effects.

How does DM affect people with TB?

- People who have both tuberculosis (TB) and diabetic mellitus (DM) experience **severe lung damage**, including the presence of **enormous cavities**. The persistence of inflammation after TB therapy demonstrates the chronic diseases' long-lasting impact.
- DM directly affects the outcomes of those affected by both diseases. However, a recent study reported that a higher fraction of unfavourable TB treatment outcomes occurred among people with **low body-mass indices and with low glycated hemoglobin levels** (better known as HbA1c) compared to people with **low BMI and high HbA1c**.
- Nutritional status has a significant impact on how well TB patients respond to treatment, supporting the association between undernutrition and TB.
- According to a different study carried out in Pune, **DM is an independent risk factor for early mortality of people with both TB and DM**. It also showed that the most common cause of deaths were respiratory complications (50%) followed by events related to cardiovascular disease (32%) in those affected with TB DM as compared to TB only (27% and 15%).
- These results demonstrate the considerable influence of DM on the mortality results in TB-DM cases.

Challenges and consequences:

- The coexistence of DM and TB has major ramifications for patients, the healthcare system, families, and communities.
- The likelihood of **adverse TB treatment outcomes**, such as **treatment failure, recurrence, and mortality**, is also increased by DM.

- Furthermore, although TB by itself is not a common cause of death, TB and DM patients regularly pass away from **respiratory issues**.
- The necessity of **addressing undernutrition** in TB and DM patients is brought home by the significance of nutritional status in affecting treatment outcomes.

Way forward:

- Providing **integrated and patient-centered care**, which includes coordinated diagnosis, bidirectional screening, patient education, and customised care regimens, is crucial for managing the dual burden of DM and TB.
- Patient well-being and treatment outcomes are improved by **comprehensive care for TB, DM, and related comorbidities**. All parties must be committed, resources must be mobilised, and policies must be adjusted to achieve this aim.
- For the development of successful projects and the formation of well-informed judgments, **more research, data accessibility, and community awareness** are all advantageous.
- To lessen the burden, enhance treatment outcomes, and improve the future for everyone impacted by both diseases, **addressing the dual burden of DM and TB requires a concerted effort from healthcare professionals**.

Indian pharma companies under international scrutiny

News Excerpt

Indian pharma companies have been under constant international scrutiny for exporting allegedly contaminated drugs, which have led to deaths of children.

About the Issue

- Nigeria raised the alarm about two oral medications, and Cameroon did the same when many children died from a cough syrup that was allegedly produced in India.
- Two medications made in India were singled out by Sri Lanka after numerous patients reported experiencing negative side effects.
- In Uzbekistan, diethylene glycol-containing cough medication caused the deaths of 18 kids. Following the deaths of children in the Gambia and Uzbekistan, the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) cancelled Marion Biotech's licence**.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** issued an alert in October, associating four Indian-made cough syrups with child deaths in Gambia. While India maintained that the medicines met the required standards during domestic testing, the WHO upheld its actions.

- These controversies have overshadowed India's pharmaceutical industry, which is responsible for one-third of the world's medications.

Why are regulators failing to take action against faulty manufacturing practices

- The **complicated and disjointed regulatory framework**, in which numerous agencies are given diverse roles, is one important issue.
- Drug imports and approvals are handled by the **Ministry of Health and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), while licensing and criminal prosecutions are the responsibility of state governments.**
- This separation of duties frequently results in a **lack of coordination and responsibility.** Agencies may pass the buck among themselves, failing to act quickly and forcefully against companies engaging in unethical behavior.
- The issue is also exacerbated by the fact that **State Food and Drug Administration authorities are not required to disclose inspection reports.**
- The lack of resources and facilities for testing completed goods for contamination is another problem. **Diethylene glycol (DEG)** is used in Jammu & Kashmir.

Why are pharma companies not punished?

- **License suspension or cancellation:** Suspending or canceling a company's manufacturing license is insufficient, as owners can start a new business.
- **Slow legal proceedings:** The Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 imposes a maximum punishment of life imprisonment for manufacturers who fail to comply with good manufacturing practices. Slow court proceedings enable companies to evade consequences and operate without interruption.
- **Errors by drug inspectors:** Poor conviction rate due to drug inspector errors, including poor paperwork, improper labeling, and incomplete testing, weakens evidence against pharmaceutical companies. Such errors weaken the evidence against pharmaceutical companies, making it harder to secure convictions.
- **Shortage of drug inspectors:** CDSCO faces a shortage of drug inspectors, hindering thorough inspections and effective regulation enforcement.
- **Influence of the pharmaceutical industry:** Pharmaceutical companies' economic and political influence can influence decision-making, potentially causing leniency or inadequate enforcement actions.
- **Complex legal framework:** Pharmaceutical industry's complex legal framework requires expertise, evidence, and resources, making accountability challenging for regulatory agencies.

- **Economic considerations:** Pharmaceutical industry's revenue and employment contribute significantly to the economy; governments may be hesitant to take punitive actions due to potential negative consequences.

Steps taken by the government:

- The Indian government has mandated that cough syrup manufacturers must have their **products tested before exporting** them.
- This new requirement, effective from 1 June, **necessitates a certificate of analysis from an approved laboratory.**
- **The Director General of Foreign Trade** made the announcement, stating that cough syrups can be exported only after the **export sample has been tested.**
- The notification of the Director General of Foreign Trade also provided a **list of authorized government laboratories in the country for sample testing.**
- This policy change follows previous reports highlighting concerns about the quality of drugs produced by Indian pharmaceutical companies and their manufacturing practices.

Way forward

- In order to ensure compliance with **good manufacturing practices**, it is essential to strengthen the regulatory environment through the Drug and Cosmetics Act with harsher rules and penalties.
- It is critical to address the **scarcity of inspectors, offer training, and carry out detailed facility inspections** to improve drug inspections.
- **Collaboration with international regulatory organizations** will bring procedures into line with international norms and boost credibility.
- Innovative and high-quality medication development can be accelerated by **encouraging research and development partnerships between universities, businesses, and research organizations.**
- **Fostering public-private partnerships promotes knowledge exchange, capacity building, and collaborative projects for research and quality assurance.** A comprehensive investigation and proper action against violators are ensured through the establishment of transparent reporting systems and accountability.
- Industry standards are raised by promoting **acceptable production processes** through training and certification.

New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules (2023)

News Excerpt

Recently the Indian government has approved an update to the **New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules (2023)** that will result in a dramatic change in how drugs are developed and tested.

Key highlights

- The approval of non-animal, human-relevant procedures in drug testing advances **animal-free testing**.
- The **precision and effectiveness of medication development** are expected to be improved by this modification, which will also address concerns about animal suffering.
- These novel methods have significant potential advantages and hold out hope for a **more trustworthy and moral drug development process**.
- India wants to use these techniques to **lessen its dependency on animal experimentation** and set the standard in this forward-thinking field.

Advancements in Testing Methods

- Technologies that use **human cells or stem cells** for drug testing have made amazing strides in recent decades.
- **Organoids**, which are three-dimensional cellular constructs that resemble particular organs, offer a viable route for the creation of new drugs.
- Using human **cell-lined chips, organs-on-chip mimics the physiological circumstances** and interactions seen in the human body.
- Using patient-specific cells as **"bio-ink,"** 3D bioprinting also enables the development of human tissues or organ systems.
- These innovations hold the promise of reshaping medication research, personalising drug evaluations, and reducing the need for animal testing.

Status of Global Regulatory Frameworks

- The amount of **adoption of non-animal testing methodologies is significantly influenced by the global regulatory frameworks** that have been put in place.
- Several countries, including the European Union, the United States, South Korea, and Canada, have supported the **switch to animal-free testing practices through legislation and policy reforms**.
- The New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules 2019 modification in India follows this international trend and demonstrates a dedication to improving ethical and efficient drug testing procedures.

Challenges

- The change to India's New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules is a step in the right direction, but obstacles still stand in the way of fully achieving the potential of human-relevant testing techniques.
- In order to create organ-on-a-chip systems, one challenge is the need for **trans-disciplinary competence**, which necessitates cooperation between experts in diverse domains.
- The creation of **specialised institutes or Centers for Excellence**, like the **Wyss Institute in Boston**, could promote collaboration and creativity in human biology simulation.
- Additionally, since **most chemicals, equipment, and supplies for cell culture are imported, access to research resources is a challenge**.

Way Forward

- To build a self-sustaining environment and lower the cost of resource imports, India should invest in **research infrastructure and expand knowledge in key fields**.
- It is essential to **standardize quality standards** and protocol requirements in order to validate testing procedures involving human subjects across numerous labs.
- Regulations governing animal experimentation must also be updated to reflect developments in **cell- and gene-based therapies**.
- By addressing these problems, India will be better able to develop **human-relevant testing methods and progress medical research**.

Palliative care

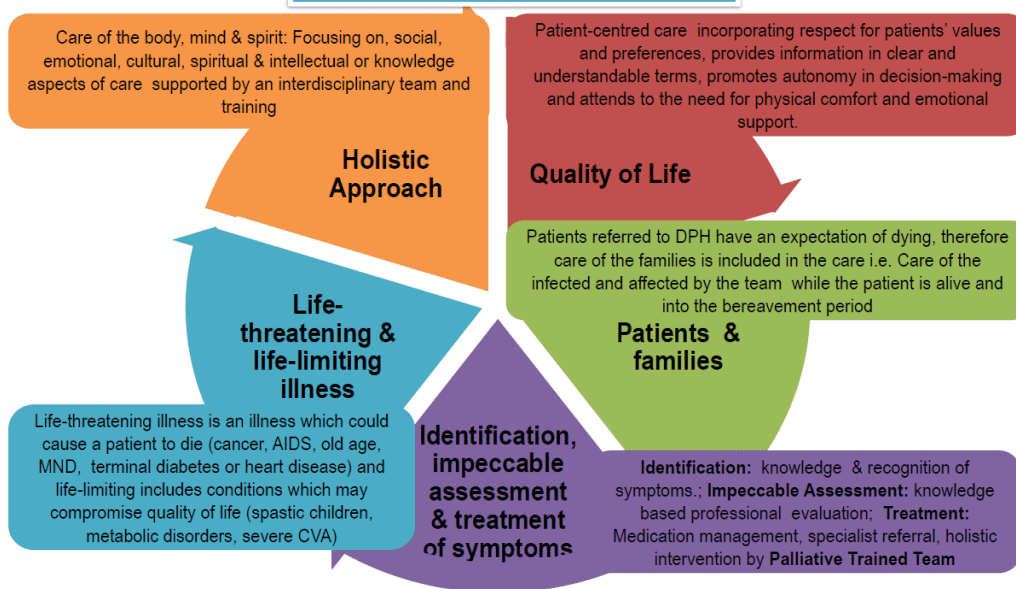
News Excerpt

Recently, a new set of operational guidelines, issued by the government, limit the focus of palliative care in India to people with cancer.

About palliative care

- India has around **20% of the world's population**, is more severely affected by non-communicable diseases than any other country, with cancer being the most common, accounting for **1.4 million annual deaths**. As lifestyle-related illnesses like diabetes and respiratory ailments get worse, palliative care becomes important.
- A crucial component of healthcare is Palliative care, which tries to **improve the quality of life and lessen suffering for people with terminal illnesses**.
- The social, emotional, spiritual and physical needs of those who are nearing the end of their life are considered part of a holistic approach to patient care.

Palliative Care



- By considering the entire person and not just the illness, **it seeks to improve the patients' and their families' overall wellbeing.**
- Palliative care also **includes grieving support for carers** when the patient passes away.

The Need for Palliative Care in India

- India, a nation of over a billion people, suffers greatly from non-communicable diseases. **Palliative care is required for up to 7 out of 10 patients, especially those who have terminal or chronic conditions.**
- However, due to their concentration in **urban tertiary healthcare centres**, palliative care services are still only partially accessible.
- As a result, only a small percentage of the **estimated 7–10 million patients** who require palliative care can access these services.

Gaps in the Existing Guidelines

- Even though the **National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD)** is a step in the right direction toward reducing the burden of chronic illnesses, palliative care is gravely underrepresented in the program's implementation.
- Palliative care is **only mentioned about cancer in the updated operational guidelines for NP-NCD**, which were published in May 2023. The necessity for palliative treatment for other non-cancer ailments is diminished by this restricted focus.
- Additionally, **the guidelines miss the chance to promote pediatric palliative care**, which is essential for kids with chronic illnesses.

- Children who are nearing the end of their lives are denied the treatment they so urgently need if this branch is neglected.

Way forward:

- To provide thorough palliative care for all patients, the NP-NCD recommendations should be updated to include not just cancer but all life-limiting illnesses as well.
- Where possible, palliative care delivery should begin at the sub-centre and health and wellness centre levels. This approach is crucial for the

patient's comfort and affordability.

- Even while NGOs have contributed significantly to the delivery of palliative care, the government must enhance its financial support if it wants to guarantee widespread access to these treatments.
- The use of morphine by cancer patients alone should not be the exclusive criterion for evaluating access to palliative care. It should take into account the total use of opioid analgesics and assess how well palliative care services are performing in contrast to global norms.

Patient Safety Rights Charter for 2021-2030

News Excerpt

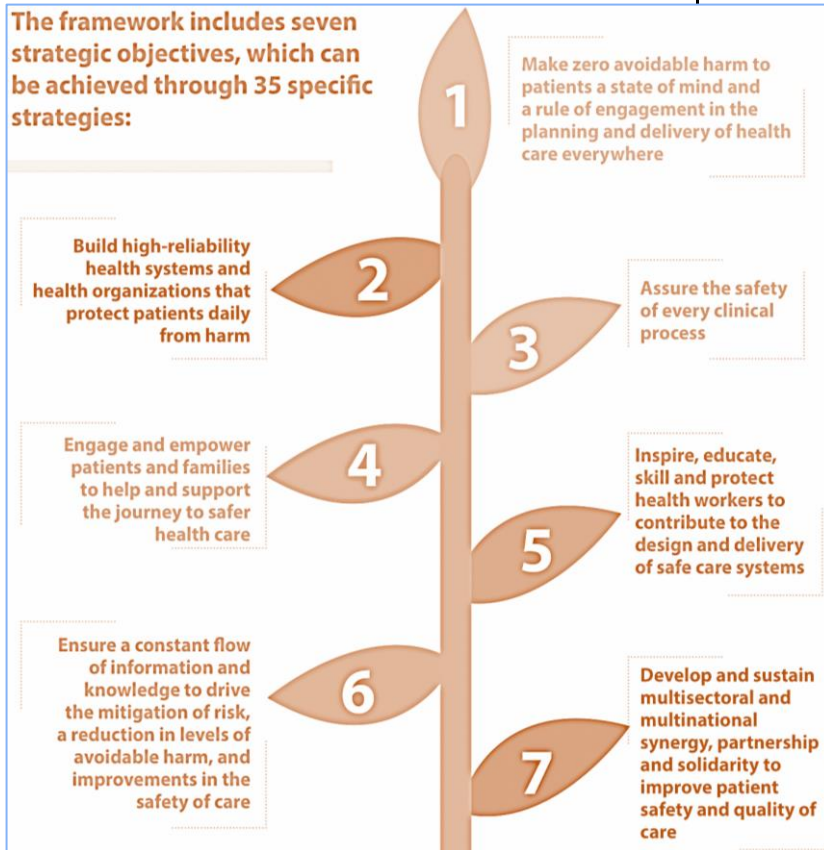
The WHO released the first-ever Patient Safety Rights (PSR) Charter outlining the core rights of all patients in the context of the safety of healthcare in September 2023.

Patient Safety Rights Charter:

- The Charter outlines the **core rights of all patients** in the context of safety of healthcare and provides an action plan on **Global Patient Safety Framework for 2021-2030**.
- **Aim:** It seeks **to assist governments and other stakeholders** to ensure that the voices of patients are heard and their '**Right to Safe Healthcare**' is protected.

Observations from the Charter:

- **Collective Responsibility:** Health systems must work hand-in-hand with patients, families, and communities, so that patients can be informed advocates in their own care, and every person can receive the safe, dignified, and compassionate care they deserve.
- **Purpose of seven strategic Objectives for action:**



- To reduce the risks and to improve the safety of patient care in every part of the world.
- To mobilize each stakeholder to do the very best they possibly can within their operating context and resource availability.
- Designing and operating safe care processes and pathways, for example, High-technology maternity service to reduce maternal deaths from post-partum haemorrhage.
- **Principles of the Plan:**
 - Engage patients and families as partners in safe care.
 - Achieve results through collaborative working.
 - Analyze and share data to generate learning.
 - Translate evidence into actionable and measurable improvement.
 - Base policies and action on the nature of the care setting.
 - Use both scientific expertise and patient experience to improve safety.
 - Instill a safety culture in the design and delivery of healthcare.
- **Partners in Action:**
 - To achieve the goal and strategic objectives of the **Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021-2030**, it is important that partnerships develop at both the strategic and operational levels.
 - Collaboration in this way will add particular value to patient safety endeavours and strengthen the efforts of individual organizations.

- **Four broad categories of partners** have been identified to support the implementation of the global action plan.
 - Governments, Healthcare facilities and services, stakeholders and WHO secretariat.
 - The action plan also envisages patients, families and communities as key partners at all levels of action.

Global Scenario:

- **Reports and Stats:** According to **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**, around 1 in every 10 patients is harmed in healthcare and more than 3 million deaths occur annually due to unsafe care.
 - In *low-to-middle income countries (LMIC)*, as many as 4 in 100 people (5.7 and 8.4 million) die from unsafe care.
 - **Deaths due to poor service:** Some of the most common sources of patient harm are *medication errors, surgical errors, healthcare-associated infections, sepsis, diagnostic errors* and patient falls.
 - Due to the poor-quality healthcare system, each year, years of life people lived with disability amounting up to 107 million, primarily among those living with mental illness and untreated diabetes.

Present Indian Scenario w.r.t. Right to Safe Healthcare:

- **Right to Life:** Article 21 imposes an obligation on the state to safeguard the right to life of every person. Preservation of human life is thus of paramount importance. The government hospitals run by the state are duty-bound to extend medical assistance for preserving human life.
- **National Accreditation Board for Hospitals (NABH):** Patients have a right to receive quality healthcare according to currently accepted standards, norms and standard guidelines as per the **National Accreditation Board for Hospitals (NABH)** or similar. They have a right to be attended to, treated and cared for with due skill, and in a professional manner in complete consonance with the principles of medical ethics.
- **The Consumer Protection Act, 1986:** Patients and caretakers have *a right to seek redressal* in case of perceived medical negligence or damage caused due to deliberate deficiency in service delivery.
- **National Clinical Establishments Council set up in Clinical Establishment Act 2010:** Patients have the right to receive education about major facts relevant to his/her condition and healthy living practices, their rights and responsibilities, and officially supported health insurance schemes relevant to the patient as per **Right to Patient Education**.

To improve medication safety, countries can:



• Clinical establishments (Central Government) Rules 2012:

- Patients have a right to be provided with care in an environment having requisite cleanliness, infection control measures, and safe drinking water as per **BIS/FSSAI Standards** and **sanitation facilities**.
- The hospital management must ensure the safety of all patients in its premises including **clean premises** and provision for **infection control**.

Way Forward:

The Indian Government needs to invest in patient safety to positively impact health outcomes and reduce costs related to patient harm, which will eventually improve system efficiency and will also help in reassuring communities and restoring their trust in the governmental healthcare system.

India Failed to Reduce Premature Births

News excerpt:

According to the recent Lancet report, India has not improved in reducing preterm or premature births in the previous decade. India recorded 3.02 million preterm births in 2020- the highest worldwide- accounting for over 20 percent of all preterm births globally.

About:

- The research by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medical, UK, showed that over 50 percent of all preterm births in 2020 occurred in just 8 countries:
- India is followed by Pakistan, Nigeria, China, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the US.
- In South Asia, Bangladesh had the highest rate of preterm births in 2020 (16.2 percent), followed by Pakistan (14.4 percent) and India (13.0 percent).

Definition:

Preterm births are babies **born before 37 weeks** of pregnancy compared to the normal term of 40 weeks. Based

on gestational age, there are sub-categories of preterm birth –

- **Extremely preterm** (less than 28 weeks)
- **Very preterm** (between 28 and 32 weeks)
- **Moderate to late preterm** (between 32 and 37 weeks).

Why has Preterm birth is an issue in India during the last decade?

- According to the WHO data, preterm birth is the single largest killer of children under five.
 - An estimated 134 lakh babies were born prematurely in 2020, of which 30 lakh or 20 percent were from India.
- At all ages, preterm birth remains the 4th leading cause of loss of human capital worldwide after ischaemic heart disease, pneumonia, and diarrhoeal disease.

Causes of Preterm Birth in India:

- **Maternity Complications:** Most preterm births happen spontaneously due to **infections** or other **pregnancy complications, including multiple pregnancies or in vitro fertilization** requiring early labour induction or caesarean birth.
- **Lifestyle diseases: Smoking, alcohol consumption, chronic heart diseases, diabetes, etc.,** also led to preterm births.
- **Standard of living:** More than 90 percent of extremely preterm babies born in **low-income families** die within the first few days of life.

Solution:

- **Antenatal care:** A preterm pregnancy may be projected beforehand with proper antenatal care (ANC). Infections, the main causes of preterm births, can be diagnosed and treated.
 - The Lancet report suggests that an expectant mother should receive 8 antenatal checkups at a healthcare facility (currently, there are 4 antenatal checkups in India).
 - Intact survival will need to be delivered in a place with advanced neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) that have the expertise to cater for such babies.
- **Reducing the rich-poor and rural-urban divide:** Nutritional deficiencies, particularly iron deficiency-anaemia need to be sorted at the primary level only.
- **Investments:** Countries need to prioritise programmatic investments to prevent preterm birth and to ensure evidence-based quality care when preterm birth occurs.

- It is crucial that preterm birth data quality can be improved and used for action and accountability processes.

Way Forward:

The FIGO Working Group for Preterm Birth recognizes that reducing preterm birth at the population level requires the ability to track changes in the general population to determine the frequency and causes known to be associated with preterm birth.

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0'

News excerpt:

The Immunization drive known as '**Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0'**, began in Tamil Nadu.

About the Mission:

- **Aim:**
 - **To focus on reaching zero-dose children** (children who failed to receive any routine vaccination) aged between 0-5 years and pregnant women.
 - To eliminate measles and rubella, ensure every child under 5 has completed the **two-dose Measles and Rubella Containing Vaccine (MRCV) schedule**.
- Mission Indradhanush (MI) is a special campaign under the umbrella scheme - **Universal Immunization Program (UIP)**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- The programme provides free vaccines against 12 life-threatening diseases - Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Hepatitis B, Pneumonia and Meningitis due to Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib), Measles, Rubella, Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Rotavirus diarrhoea.
 - The program is generally conducted in the **areas of low immunization** coverage to vaccinate all the children and pregnant women left out or dropped out from Routine Immunization.

Progress of the IMI program over the years:

Missions	Coverage
Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2017	To reach every child under two years of age and all those pregnant women left uncovered under the routine immunization programme.
Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0 2019	Its objective was to attain a minimum of 90 percent nationwide immunization coverage by 2022 .

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 3.0 2021	It primarily concentrated on providing vaccines to children and pregnant women who had not received immunization shots due to the Covid-19 pandemic .
Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 4.0 2022	To extend Routine Immunization (RI) services to children and pregnant women who have not been vaccinated or only partially vaccinated .

Challenges:

- **Ignorance:** Various myths and rumours spread by social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp about the impact and quality of vaccines are created due to ignorance.
- **Management and governance issue:** The programme management team, being less skilled or updated, specifically at the Block and District levels, needs a crisis management plan to avert any failure-like incidents.
- **Networking and information system:** Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) post-vaccination dampens and derails the Immunization programme. Lack of clear information and communication about AEFI often leads to rumours and fears among caregivers, the larger community and stakeholders.

- According to the data and facts, **over five lakh children** have not yet received their initial **Pentavalent-1 dose**, while over seven lakh children have missed their second dose of the measles-rubella (MR) vaccine.
 - Alone, Uttar Pradesh in 2022 accounted for every fourth measles-rubella (MR) outbreak recorded in the country.

Way Forward:

- **Training on protocol:** Every person responsible for implementing IMI must be fully aware of the AEFI protocol laid out in all training curriculums for both medical officers and health workers and ensure it is followed thoroughly.
- **Media preparedness and management:** Having a preparedness plan with media is always useful in case of panic created due to reporting, especially if there is a severe illness or an unfortunate death that may or may not be associated with immunization. Media briefs/press releases frameworks must be prepared in advance for this.
- **Monitoring:** The platforms of social media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp, will be used to generate positive conversations around IMI and the

benefits of complete immunization. The government needs to monitor the communications activities at all three levels.

- High-level political support, advocacy, supervision across sectors, and flexibility to reallocate financial resources and staff were essential for success.
- Districts must strengthen staff capacity to list household beneficiaries, add additional vaccination sites, and invest in the transportation required.
- Better communication and counselling skills tailored to local beliefs are needed to deal with barriers to seeking vaccinations.
- Districts and primary care facilities must work more effectively with non-health stakeholders by involving them early in logistics planning, communication, and messaging strategies.

Half the global population not covered by Essential Health Services: WB and WHO

News excerpt:

As of 2021, over half the world's population- 4.5 billion people was not fully covered by essential health services, according to the report released jointly by the World Health Organization and the World Bank.

Major highlights from the report:

- **Poor Health Care services:** While the overall health service coverage has improved since 2000, *progress has slowed since 2015*. Further, there is no improvement from 2019 to 2021.
- The most significant gains have been made in the **service coverage for infectious diseases**, which has witnessed an average yearly growth of 7 percent. According to WHO, there has been little to no improvement in service coverage for **non-communicable diseases and reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health services** in recent years.
 - Within countries, disadvantaged demographic sub-groups such as the poorest, least educated and those living in rural areas are more likely to **struggle to access healthcare services**.
 - Millions of people were denied access to measures that could have saved their lives and improved their

health, as the score increased from 45 in 2000 to 68 in 2019, remaining steady through 2021.

- **Out Of Pocket (OOP) expenditure increased:** In 2019, around 13.5 percent of the global population spent over 10 percent of their household budget on healthcare. This is a 77 percent increase in the population suffering substantial OOP health costs during 2000-2019.
 - The growth of Universal Health Service Coverage (UHC) has stagnated since 2015, and financial protection for those who receive health services has worsened.
- **Undoing poverty eradication gains:** WHO's Triple Billion targets for 2019-2023 aim to increase the number of people benefiting from UHC by 1 billion. The initial set for 2018-2023 was subsequently extended to 2025 under the recommendation of Member States. But the world is not on track to achieve this target.

India Needs Youth Mental Health Focus to Strike Demographic Gold

News excerpt:

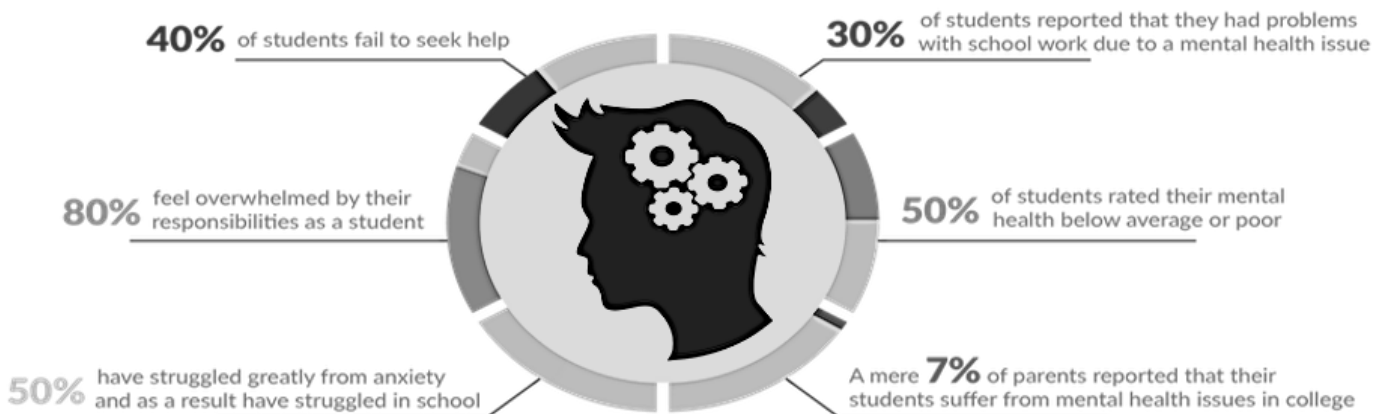
India, home to over 250 million adolescents aged 10-19 years, grapples with **various mental health challenges among its youth, with depression emerging as a significant concern**.

10th October is marked as World Mental Health Day to spread awareness and education about mental health issues worldwide.

- The first time World Mental Health Day was observed in 1992. It started as an annual World Federation for Mental Health activity by the then Deputy Secretary-General Richard Hunter.
- **Theme for 2023:** 'Mental Health as a Universal Human Right'.

About Mental Health:

- According to **WHO**, Mental health is a fundamental human right for everyone.
- Everyone, whoever and wherever, has a right to the highest attainable standard of mental health.
 - This includes the right to be protected from mental health risks, the right to available, accessible,



acceptable, and good quality care, liberty, independence, and inclusion in the community.

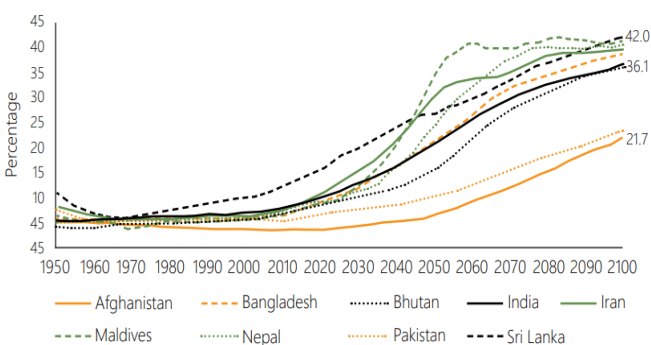
Mental Health Status in India:

- WHO estimates that the burden of mental health problems in India is 2,443 Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) per 10,000 population, with an age-adjusted suicide rate of 21.1 per 100,000 people.
 - The contribution of mental disorders to the total DALYs in India increased from 2.5 percent in 1990 to 4.7 percent in 2017.
 - **DALYs** are the sum of the years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLLs) and the years lived with a disability (YLDs) due to prevalent cases of the disease or health condition in a population.
- **The economic loss due to mental health conditions:** It annually costs the global economy \$ 1.03 trillion (2012-2030) in lost productivity.
 - In 2017, 197.3 million people had mental disorders in India, including 45.7 million with depressive disorders and 44.9 million with anxiety disorders.
- **The Lancet report of 2019** – "The burden of mental disorders across the states of India: The Global Burden of Disease Study 1990–2017," states that one in seven Indians is affected by a mental disorder.

Initiatives to Promote Mental Health:

- **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):** Since 1982, the Government has been implementing the NMHP to address the enormous burden of mental disorders and a shortage of qualified professionals in the mental health field.
- **The Mental HealthCare Act of 2017:** It guarantees every affected person access to mental healthcare and treatment from government-run or funded services.
 - It decriminalized suicide in India.
- **Tele-MANAS App:** The National Tele Mental Health Programme of India launched a 24 x 7 tele-mental health facility through 51 functional Tele-MANAS (Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System) cells.
- **National Youth Policy:** The policy is aligned with the UN SDGs and recognizes young people as a critical national demographic, giving special attention to mostly overlooked issues such as mental health, substance abuse disorders, etc.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of the elderly population in South Asian countries, 1950–2100



- **Draft UMMEED (Understand, Motivate, Manage, Empathise, Empower, Develop) Guidelines:** These are prepared by the Union Ministry of Education for schools to prevent student suicides with the underlying theme of "Every Child Matters",
- **Kiran Helpline:** In 2020, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the 'Kiran' toll-free helpline to support people experiencing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts, etc.
- **Paro Declaration-** It was adopted by the WHO South-East Asia Region, committing to Universal Access to People-centered Mental Health Care and Services.

Reasons for Under-Reporting of Mental Health Disorders:

- Poor awareness.
- Lack of help-seeking behaviour (stemming from stigma).
- Desire and/or expectations to be self-reliant.
- Insufficient prioritisation in the policy framework.

Ways to improve mental health issues in India:

- **Control and Prevention:** Ensure effective screening, control, and management of mental health diseases and establish a robust monitoring system to facilitate mid-course corrections leveraging technology.
- **Community participation-** More stakeholders can be roped in to spread awareness about mental health. E.g.- the 'Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child' model in the U.S.
- **Encourage help-seeking behaviour** by following these steps:
 - Establish peer support groups in schools and colleges,
 - Organise activities regularly for relaxing and reducing stress,
 - Provide channels and resources for expression,
 - Integrate mental well-being into the curriculum.
- **Increase Access and Affordability:** Public-private partnerships, alliances, and collaborations can improve access to healthcare services for citizens, especially those from low-income groups and in rural and remote areas.
 - The flow of additional funds to provide optimal health services will ensure minimum mental healthcare for all by reducing the cost of healthcare services and products such as medicines and medical devices.
- **Improving Infrastructure:** More psychiatric units are required at the sub-district level for effective dissemination. Further, additional human resources are needed for preventive and curative strategies.

- **Capacity Building:** Providing training and education to healthcare professionals can build expertise in specialized areas.
 - While ASHAs may be trained to screen individuals for common mental health conditions, a new cadre of community mental health workers (CMHW) may also be created at the PHC level for screening and facilitating treatment.
- **Proactive policies:** A multi-sector approach that includes underlying factors like education and nutrition should be at the core of policies to realise the full potential of adolescents.
 - This will uphold the fundamental human right to good mental health and advance Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially **SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 8 (decent work for all/economic growth)**.

Way Forward:

Good health and well-being are essential for the overall development of a country, and India has been striving towards achieving this goal. Considering that India is currently in a demographic phase where a significant portion of its **population is of working age**, it is crucial to address the quality of employment and provide long-term social security for this demographic group.

India's First district-level Study on Hypertension

News Excerpt:

A recent district-wise analysis of hypertension flags disparities in healthcare practices in India.

About the study:

- For the first time in India, a district-level study on hypertension was published in JAMA Network by the American Medical Association conducted by AIIMS Delhi in collaboration with scientists from Europe and the US.
- The scientists used the hypertension data from the **National Family Health Survey data NFHS-5** as a base report, released in May 2022.
- An **output dashboard** was created as a part of the study and has gender-wise, area-wise educational levels data on hypertension.

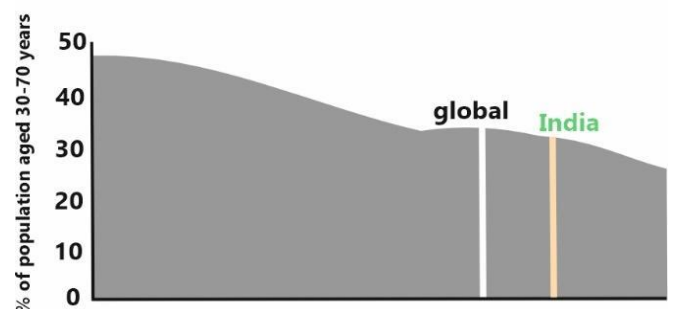
Current Scenario of Hypertension in India:

- According to a **WHO report**, 188.3 million people in India suffer from hypertension but only 37% get diagnosed, 30% start treatment, and 15% manage to keep their blood pressure under control.
- Nearly **4.6 million deaths** can be prevented in India **by 2040** if half of the hypertensive individuals can control their blood pressure.
- To tackle the issue, the government this year launched an ambitious initiative to put 75 million people with hypertension or diabetes on treatment by 2025.

Key Outcomes from the Report:

- **In South India:**
 - Karnataka's four districts namely, Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Udupi and Chitradurga, have a similar prevalence of hypertension.
- **In Northeast India:**
 - In Meghalaya, the districts of Garo, Jaintia and Khasi Hills all have a similar prevalence of hypertension, but the proportion of those diagnosed is much lower in Garo Hills as compared to Jaintia and Khasi Hills.
- **The substantial variations across districts with respect to:**
 - Blood pressure diagnosis (range: 6.3%-77.5%)
 - Treatment (range: 8.7%-97.1%)
 - Control (range: 2.7%-76.6%)
- **Raising a red flag:** The national mean values of hypertension "hide considerable" variation at the district level.

Prevalence of hypertension -global comparison (both sexes)^a



Significance of study:

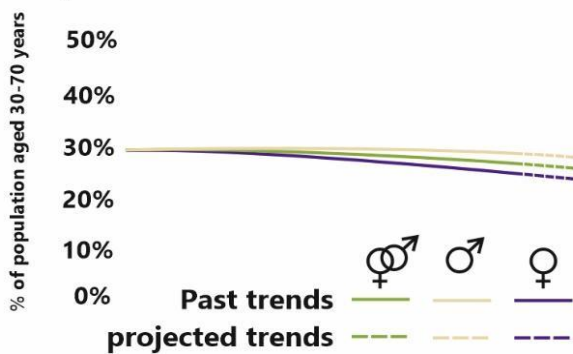
- The district-wise analysis is important to **highlight "the heterogeneity" within states** and particularly the regions.
- With the help of this new dashboard, every district will gain **momentum in its policy and healthcare implementation programmes**.
- This will help the Indian government to **record the database and seek the issue of gender and socio-demographic disparities**.

Indian Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI)

- **Indian Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI)** is a 5-year initiative involving the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Indian Council of Medical Research, State Governments, and WHO-India.
- Hypertension is a serious, and growing, health issue in India today. There are an estimated 20 crore adults with hypertension, of whom approximately only 2 crores have it under control.
- **Aim:** To reduce premature mortality due to **non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by 25% by 2025**. One of the nine voluntary targets includes **reducing the prevalence of high BP by 25% by 2025**.

- IHCI aims to accelerate progress towards the Government of India's NCD target by supplementing and intensifying evidence-based strategies to strengthen the building blocks of hypertension management and control.
- IHCI was launched in November 2017.
 - **Year 2017:** IHCI covered 26 districts across five states - Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra.
 - **Year 2020:** IHCI was expanded to 52 districts across ten states - Andhra Pradesh (1), Chhattisgarh (2), Karnataka (2), Kerala (4), Madhya Pradesh (6), Maharashtra (13), Punjab (5), Tamil Nadu (1), Telangana (13) and West Bengal (5).

Trends in uncontrolled hypertension in adults 30-79 years^c



Health-Care challenges related to hypertension in India:

- **Regional Variations in India:**
 - **State Variation:** Southern states have a higher prevalence of hypertension (29.9%) compared to the national average (26.8%). Diagnosis rates are similar, but the proportion of treatment with controlled hypertension is higher in the southern states.
 - **District Variation:** Within districts, significant disparities exist. For instance, in Meghalaya, the proportion of diagnosed individuals varies across districts with similar prevalence. Similarly, in Karnataka, districts with similar prevalence show differences in treatment and control rates.
- **Unavailability of Treatment:** A significant proportion of people with hypertension remain undiagnosed, and many diagnosed individuals do not initiate treatment due to non-serious behaviour.
- **Poor Blood Pressure Control:** Even among those who initiate treatment, just one in twelve achieves blood pressure control.

Way Forward:

- **Increment in infrastructure:** Controlling hypertension would require a focus on active screening of people,

putting them on treatment, ensuring the availability of medicine close to their homes, and ensuring follow-ups.

- **Primary health care:** It is essential that healthcare systems are planned differently for the management of chronic conditions like hypertension. The local government has to ensure that the medicines are available regularly and at centres close to people's homes.
- **Digitization of Records:** It can help health workers ensure regular follow-ups and stock-taking of medicines.
- **Need to increase the number of registrations and coverage:** To promote opportunistic screening and assign support staff in every health facility to check the blood pressure of all adults visiting the facility.
- **Need to have a database for every visit:** Encourage the use of IT tools for better documentation of visits and send periodic automated reminders for patients who did not return for follow-up visits.
- **Need to improve Blood pressure control Rate:** Improve compliance to **State-specific Hypertension treatment protocol** at all levels of facilities in the public sector.
- **Need to improve the availability of Drugs:** Identify the gaps in procurement systems and strengthen systems to procure annual requirements of drugs based on rational forecasting on time.

WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2023

News Excerpt:

The **Global Tuberculosis (TB) 2023 report** recently released by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** revealed that India accounted for the highest number of TB cases in the world in 2022 accounting for **27% of the global burden**.

Key Highlights of the Report:

Global:

- 7.5 million new cases of TB were recorded in 2022, the highest figure since 1995.
- 30 countries were responsible for 87% of the world's TB cases in 2022.
- **Top 8 high-burden countries:** India (27%) Indonesia (10%), China (7.1%), Philippines (7%), Pakistan (5.7%), Nigeria (4.5%), Bangladesh (3.6%), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (3.0%).
- The net reduction from 2015 to 2022 was 8.7%, far from the WHO End TB Strategy milestone of a 50% reduction by 2025.
- The treatment success rates have improved to **88% for people treated for drug-susceptible TB and 63% for people with Multidrug-Resistant TB (MDR-TB)**.

India:

- India recorded 2.8 million (28.2 Lakh) TB cases in 2022 with a case fatality ratio of 12%.
- 1.1 lakh cases were recorded in India with **MDR-TB**.

About Tuberculosis (TB):

- It is a **bacterial** infection mostly affecting the lungs.

- **Agent:** Mycobacterium Tuberculosis
- **Transmission:** Communicable, Spread from person to person by inhaling the tiny droplets from coughs or sneezes of an infected person.
- **Types of TB:**
 - **Latent TB:** The person carries the infection, but there are no symptoms and it is not contagious. It lies dormant in the body; the immune system prevents it from spreading to other parts of the body. But it may become active one day.
 - **Active TB:** The Immune System weakens and is unable to prevent it. Then it spreads to the lungs or the other parts of the body. The symptoms start developing and it becomes contagious.
 - **Drug-Resistant TB:**
 - **MDR-TB:** It is ineffective or resistant towards the two most powerful first-line drugs **Isoniazid and Rifampicin**. MDR-TB becomes treatable through the second line of drugs.
 - **Extensive Drug Resistant TB (XDR-TB):** It is a more serious form of MDR-TB as it becomes resistant towards the first line as well as the second line of drugs leaving the patients with no further treatment options.

Challenges to Eliminating TB:

- **Detection of TB:** According to WHO, it is difficult to detect TB cases among children. Globally about 1.2 million children less than 15 years of age are being affected by TB every year. 56% of these are not detected placing them at a higher risk of developing TB at a later age.
- **Multi-Drug Resistant TB:** India has recorded a rise in MDR-TB making ~1.1 lakh people non-responsive to the first line of drugs and causing them to develop a more severe form of TB.
- **COVID-19 Pandemic disruptions:** As per the **Global TB 2023 report**, the death of 1.30 million due to TB in 2022 is on an upward trend, reaching the same level as that of 2019. This is attributed to the disruption in access to healthcare and treatment during the pandemic.
- **Social stigma and mental health:** Patients with TB often face **isolation in healthcare systems, are discriminated against** by communities and families and are also likely to give up on the treatment.

India's efforts to eliminate TB:

- **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP):** It aims to reduce the TB burden by 2025 strategically.
- **Ni-kshay Portal:** The Indian government has launched an online portal to track the notified TB cases.
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan:** To augment community involvement to reach India's target to eliminate TB by 2025.
- **Setting up of Machines and Laboratories:** There are

4760 Molecular diagnostic machines covering all districts of the country. Also, 79 Line probe assay laboratories and 96 Liquid culture testing labs have been set up to diagnose MDR and XDR TB.

- **Ni-kshay Mitras:** The government launched the **community engagement program** to remove the social stigma associated with it. Under this program, 71,000 Ni-Kshay Mitras have adopted 10 lakh TB patients.
- **Availability of New Drugs: Bedaquiline and Delamanid** are provided for free for TB patients.

Way Forward:

- As TB remains the **world's second-leading cause of death from a single infectious agent** after COVID-19, more efforts are required toward early diagnosis which should be followed by an affordable treatment.
- India must collaborate globally to **develop new and effective vaccines**.
- A multi-sector approach is needed to understand the key determinants like **poverty, tobacco, lack of awareness, and under-nutrition** causing widespread TB.

WHO's World Malaria Report 2023

News Excerpt:

According to a **new WHO World Malaria Report 2023**, Malaria cases continue to dip in India.

About World Malaria Report:

The World Malaria Report 2023 presents progress against several important health and development goals in global efforts to reduce the burden of malaria and eliminate the disease where possible.

- **These goals are outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework:**
 - The World Health Organization (WHO) **Global technical strategy for malaria 2016–2030 (GTS)**
 - The RBM Partnership to **End Malaria** (formerly known as Roll Back Malaria) **Action and Investment to Defeat Malaria 2016–2030**
 - For most indicators, the report covers the **period 2000–2022**.

WHO on Malaria trends in South-East Asia Region:

- The WHO South-East Asia Region had **nine malaria-endemic countries** in 2022, accounting for 5.2 million cases and contributing to 2% of the burden of malaria cases globally.
- In 2022, India accounted for about 65.7% of all malaria cases in the region.
- Between 2000 and 2022, malaria cases **decreased by 77%, from 22.8 million in 2000 to 5.2 million in 2022**, and incidence decreased by 83%, from 17.6 to 3.0 per 1000 population at risk.
 - **India and Indonesia** accounted for about **94% of all malaria deaths** in this region in 2022. **Between**

2020 and 2022, all countries in the region in which malaria deaths occurred reported an **increase in the malaria mortality rate, except for India.**

Key highlights of the Report:

- **Indian Scenario:** Contrasting the global trend, **India continued to witness a decline in malaria cases** and deaths in 2022 (a decrease of 30% and 34%).
 - According to the **National Institute of Malaria Research**, the decline in malaria cases and deaths in 2022 was due to **good preventive and case management strategies, effective vector control tools, point-of-care diagnostics, and prompt treatment** at the community level.
- **Global Scenario:** According to the World Malaria Report 2023, the number of malaria cases globally dropped from 243 million in 2000 to 233 million in 2019 and **increased during the pandemic.**
- In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, there were 11 million more cases. The figures remained the same in 2021, only to increase in 2022. The number of global malaria deaths was also higher: 608,000 deaths in 2022 compared with 576,000 in 2019.

Challenges presented by the Report:

- **Direct vulnerabilities:** Climate variabilities, such as changes in temperature and rainfall, can impact the behaviour and survival of the **malaria-carrying Anopheles mosquito**. Extreme weather events such as heat waves and flooding may increase the transmission and burden of the disease.
- **Indirect vulnerabilities:** A changing climate has indirect effects on malaria, too. As an example, population displacement may lead to more malaria as people without immunity migrate to endemic areas.
 - Climate variability has also led to malnutrition in many places, a risk factor for severe malaria among young children and pregnant women.
- **Lack of Services:** Millions of people continue to miss out on the services they need to prevent, detect and treat the disease. Conflict and humanitarian crises, resource constraints and biological challenges such as drug and insecticide resistance also continue to hamper progress.

Recommendations by World Malaria Report 2023:

- The currently followed operational strategy focuses on WHO/GMP's role but also acknowledges the importance of a concerted effort across the ecosystem to accelerate progress towards the **GTS 2030 targets**. It is, therefore, fully aligned with both the **GTS** and **WHO's 14th General Programme of Work**.
- The **WHO Global Malaria Programme (WHO/GMP)** has developed a departmental operational strategy for the **2024–2030 period**.
- **Recommendations on Vector Control:** WHO published recommendations to cover two new classes of dual-ingredient insecticide-treated mosquito nets (ITNs) with different modes of action.
- **Recommendation to Rollout of the RTS, S/AS01 malaria vaccine:**

- This kind of vaccine allocation was determined by applying the principles outlined in the vaccine allocation framework, which prioritizes doses to areas of highest need, where the risk of malaria illness and death among children is highest.
- This allocation round uses the supply of vaccine doses available to Gavi via the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- **Recommendation for a second malaria vaccine, R21/Matrix-M:**
 - The addition of the R21 malaria vaccine to complement the ongoing rollout of the first malaria vaccine, RTS, is expected to result in sufficient vaccine supply to benefit children living in areas where malaria is a major public health problem.
 - Tens of thousands of young lives could be saved every year with the broad rollout of these malaria vaccines.

Way Forward:

- WHO's World Malaria Report provides a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of trends in malaria control and elimination across the globe.
- **This year's report includes, for the first time, a dedicated chapter focused on the intersection between climate change and malaria.**
- A substantial pivot in the fight against malaria is needed, with increased resourcing, strengthened political commitment, data-driven strategies and innovative tools.

India reported 1.41 million new cancer cases in 2022

News Excerpt:

According to the **World Health Organization's (WHO)** latest global cancer burden estimates released on February 1, 2024, the number of new cancer cases rose by 20 million in 2022.

The global cancer burden estimates:

- According to WHO, globally -
 - Lung cancer was the most commonly occurring, with **2.5 million new cases or 12.4%**.
 - **Female** breast cancer ranked second (11.6%), followed by **colorectal** cancer (9.6%), **prostate** cancer (7.3%) and **stomach** cancer (4.9%).
- Further, about 9.7 million global deaths due to cancer were reported in 2022, with 916,827 cancer deaths reported in India alone in 2022.
 - The estimates included the deaths of 4.7 lakh men and 4.5 lakh women in the country.
- The International Agency for Research on Cancer (**IARC**) also found that about one in five people develop cancer in their lifetime, **killing one in nine men and one in twelve women.**

India's cancer burden:

- India reported 1.41 million new cases, with a higher proportion of female patients — 6.9 lakh men and 7 lakh women.
 - **Lip, oral cavity, lung and oesophagus cancer** were the four leading types of cancer for men.
 - For women, it was **breast, cervix, uterine cancer and ovarian** cancer.
- Breast cancer had the highest proportion in the country, with 1.9 lakh new cases, accounting for 13.6% of all patients and over 26% of women.
 - The approximation reflected the global estimates that ranked female breast cancer as the second highest reported, with 2.3 million cases worldwide.
- In India, breast cancer was followed by
 - **lip and oral cavity** (143,759 new cases, 10.2%),
 - **cervix and uterine** (127,526 new cases, 9%),
 - **lung** (81,748 new cases, 5.8%),
 - **oesophageal cancers** (70,637 new cases, 5.5%).

Reasons for low cervical cancer screening rates in India:

- **Socio-economic Factors:** Screening prevalence is associated with **education, wealth, and urban residence**. The National Family Health Survey-5 found that screening prevalence was higher among women with higher levels of education and household wealth and urban residents.
 - The share of women screened for **cervical, breast, and oral cancer** stood at 1.2%, 0.6% and 0.7%, respectively, as of 2019-21. In contrast, the share of women screened for **cervical cancer** in advanced economies such as **Sweden, Ireland, the U.S. and the U.K.** was more than 70%.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure and Investment:** Low investment in healthcare infrastructure and the absence of a **nationwide government-sponsored screening program** contribute to the low screening rates.
- **Geographic Disparities:** The South, West, and Central regions have significantly higher cervical cancer screening prevalence than the **North-East and Northern regions**.
- **Lack of Awareness:** A study in an urban community in South India found that almost 85% of the surveyed women had poor knowledge of cervical cancer, and less than 25% were aware of its risk factors or preventive measures.

Cancer burden in Asia:

- A recent study assessing the **cancer burden in Asia published in The Lancet Regional Health**, found that India alone accounted for **32.9 percent of global deaths and 28.1 percent of new cases of lip and oral cavity cancer** in 2019.

- This was on account of the widespread consumption of smokeless tobacco (SMT) such as **khaini, gutkha, betel quid and paan masala** in South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Worldwide, SMT is responsible for 50 per cent of the oral cancer burden.
- In the absence of enforcing **SMT control policies**, such as imposing taxes or implementing regulatory mechanisms, it could increase the risk of not just oral cancer but also esophageal and pancreatic cancer, the study warned.

International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) observation:

- Cervical cancer is the most common form of cancer in women in **25 countries**, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - Globally, **cervical cancer** accounted for **6.6 lakh new cases and 3.5 lakh deaths in 2022**.
- The cancer burden in **2050 will increase by 77 per cent** from the 20 million cases reported in 2022 and reach 35 million new cases.
 - Countries with the highest HDI are expected to have an additional **4.8 million new cases** predicted in 2050 compared to the figures reported in 2022.
 - The rapid rise in the cancer burden is owing to multiple risk factors such as **tobacco, poor diet, alcohol, obesity, air pollution and a lack of exercise**.

CHALLENGES OF CANCER CARE

- 1**

LIMITED AWARENESS

Among patients:

 - Recognition of warning signs and symptoms
 - Emotional barriers and stigmas
 - Screening

Among primary providers:

 - Early detection and timely referral
- 2**

GAPS IN REPORTING

 - Cancer not a notifiable disease
 - Limited reach of existing registries
 - Incomplete / Inadequate data
- 3**

RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

 - Skilled manpower
 - Physical infrastructure
- 4**

UNEQUAL ACCESS

 - Rural-urban disparity
 - High diagnostic and treatment cost

Government Initiatives:

- **National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP):** Aims to reduce tobacco use, a major risk factor for various cancers.
- **Vaccination against HPV:** The government has introduced HPV vaccination for girls aged 9-14 years to prevent cervical cancer.
- **Cancer awareness campaigns:** Regular campaigns are conducted to raise awareness about risk factors, symptoms, and early cancer detection.
- **National Cancer Screening Programme:** Offers free breast, oral, and cervical cancer screening in high-risk groups.
- **Mobile cancer screening camps:** Organize regular camps in rural and underserved areas to provide access to screening services.
- **Telemedicine consultations:** Enable access to specialist consultations for early diagnosis and management.
- **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):** Provides health insurance cover up to Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization, including cancer treatment.

Way Forward:

- Increasing investment in **cancer prevention** and **early detection programs**.
- Expanding access to **quality cancer treatment** facilities and specialists.
- Raising awareness about cancer and **reducing stigma**.
- Promoting research on new and **effective cancer treatments**.

Populism and Public Health

News Excerpt:

Political leaders across the spectrum have leaned towards initiatives that promise immediate results, such as new hospitals, subsidized treatments in private hospitals and populist health policies.

Challenges Faced by India's Public Health System:

- **Lack of awareness:** Low educational status, poor functional literacy, and low priority for health contribute to a lack of awareness about health issues and preventive measures.
- **Lack of specialized courses:** The absence of **specialized courses**, such as **public health engineering**, in India's educational institutions points to a gap in the

multidisciplinary approach required in public health management.

- **Physician-centric approach:** Public health is not just about treating diseases, it is about preventing them. It requires expertise from various fields, such as **environmental science, sociology, urban planning, and economics**.
 - The current physician-centric focus of India's public health system often **fails to capture this comprehensive nature**.
- **Populist tendencies:** Political leaders have **prioritized** immediate results through initiatives like **new hospitals, private subsidized treatments, emergency response, and populist health policies**. However, these measures often lack impact due to a lack of action beyond public announcements.
- **Inadequate funding:** The percentage of total government expenditure on healthcare in India is lower compared to other countries, leading to inadequate funding for the healthcare sector.
- **Negligence of public health functions:** Due to inadequate funding, public health functions are often neglected, leading to a lack of focus on preventive measures and disease surveillance.
 - The increasing burden of chronic diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, and tobacco use, requires a more comprehensive approach to healthcare.
- **Limited government-financed health insurance programs:** While new health policies and schemes have been introduced, insurance remains limited, and many Indians, especially the poor, continue to receive unacceptably low-quality primary and hospital care.



FIGURE: SIGNIFICANCE OF AUTONOMY

The case of dengue:

- Dengue is a disease that has **only symptomatic treatments** and **no definitive cure**. When cases surge, political leaders often mobilize the state machinery to set up **immediate relief camps** at the **expense of long-term strategies** such as understanding **vector bionomics** or developing effective **vaccines**.
 - Dengue stands out as a **classic example of prioritizing immediate response over sustainable prevention**.
- The focus on providing emergency relief **sidelines** the availability of public attention to the **root causes of dengue** and its **long-term prevention** and the research required in vector control, vaccine development, and improvement in public health infrastructure.
- As a result, the **current approach fails** to prevent future outbreaks and strains the healthcare system.

Data:

- The contemporary Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (**POSHAN**) **Abhiyan Scheme** plans to **reduce stunting by 2%, undernutrition by 2%, anaemia by 3%, and low birth weight by 2%** yearly.
 - However, the **fifth National Family Health Survey** found that **35.5% of children** under five were **stunted**, and **32.1%** were **underweight** in 2019-21.
 - The **prevalence of Anaemic** children aged 6-59 months **increased** from 58.6% to 67.1%, and 54.1% to 59.1% among women aged 15-19 years.
 - This **disparity** between prevalence and policy targets highlights a significant **gap in public health efforts**.

Way Forward:

- **Effective public health management** should encompass preventive measures, policy formulation, community health, and environmental health. In public health, adopting a separation of powers approach is essential.
 - To address this, an ideal solution would be to place **Health Ministries** directly under the leadership of elected officials, such as the **Chief Minister or the Prime Minister**, similar to the **management of the space** and the **atomic energy departments**.
 - This structure would provide a degree of autonomy and ensure that health policies are aligned with the people's immediate and practical needs, striking a balance between expert-driven decisions and public aspirations.
- To address the present challenges, India needs to **prioritize public health**, increase funding for healthcare, and focus on preventive measures and disease surveillance.

- This can be achieved through a **combination of government policies, community-based interventions, and public health education programs**.
- Civil servant **Joseph Bhore's** insights from **1946** into the economic and human cost of neglecting preventive health measures still ring true. While not immediately visible, nutrition programme investments have far-reaching health and productivity implications.

Expanded Programme on Immunization

News Excerpt:

The year 2024 commemorates **50 years** since the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the **Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI)** in **1974**. This program focused on **equity in childhood vaccine access**.

Overview of the Essential Program on Immunization:

- Launched in 1974 by the WHO, the EPI's primary objective is to **establish equal access to life-saving vaccination** in **children** across all **geographical locations** and **socioeconomic statuses**.
- The program was introduced as the **eradication of the smallpox virus**, and a need to leverage the then **immunization infrastructure** and a **trained workforce** was recognized to expand the benefit of available vaccines.

Progress in coverage of vaccinations:

- In the early **1970s**, around **5% of children** in **low- and middle-income** countries had received **three doses of DPT**, which **increased to 84%** in **2022** at the global level.
- **Smallpox has been eradicated, Polio has been eliminated** from **all but two countries (Pakistan and Afghanistan)**, and **many vaccine-preventable diseases have nearly disappeared**.
- The number of children with three doses of **DPT (diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus)** has been rising over these years.
- In **India**, the coverage has increased every passing year and in **2019-21, 76% of children** received the recommended vaccines.

Impact of EPI:

- Studies have shown that **vaccines have saved millions of lives** and **prevented billions of hospital visits** since the launch of EPI.
- **Economic analyses** have estimated that vaccines are **highly cost-effective interventions**, with every rupee spent on vaccination programmes ensuring a **seven- to elevenfold return**.
 - In **India**, the **private sector's share of overall health services** is nearly **two-thirds**; however, nearly **85% to 90%** of **all vaccines** are **delivered from government facilities**.

Challenges in universal immunization:

- In early 2023, UNICEF's 'The State of the World's Children' report revealed a concerning trend:
 - For the **first time in more than a decade**, childhood immunization coverage had **declined in 2021**.
 - In **2022**, globally, an estimated **14.3 million children received zero doses** (did not receive any recommended vaccine), while another **6.2 million children were partially immunized**.

Milestones covered under EPI of WHO and UIP of India

1974	WHO launched the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) .
1978	India launched the EPI in 1978, which was later renamed the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) in 1985.
1980	The World Health Assembly declared smallpox eradicated (eliminated) .
1999	The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) was created with the purpose of improving child health in the poorest countries.
2012	The Government of India declared 2012 as the " Year of Intensification of Routine Immunisation. "
2014	India was certified Polio-free by the Regional Polio Certification Commission in March 2014 .

Need for Universal vaccination:

- **Diseases that are preventable with vaccines are becoming increasingly common in the adult population.** Therefore, it becomes imperative that government policies focus on the **vaccination of adults and the elderly**, as is happening in many countries.
- The recent announcement on **HPV vaccines for teenage girls** is a good start. Vaccines for **all age groups** should be made available for free at government facilities.
- The **NTAGI** in India, which **recommends vaccine use**, should also start recommending vaccine use in adults and the elderly.
- Prevailing **myths and misconceptions** about vaccines must be **proactively addressed** to tackle **vaccine hesitancy**.
- Various **professional associations of doctors**, including **community medicine experts, family physicians, and pediatricians**, should work to **increase awareness** about vaccines among adults and the elderly.
- **Medical colleges and research institutions** should generate **evidence on the burden of diseases in the adult population in India**.

Way Forward:

- In **late 2023**, India launched a **pilot initiative for adult BCG vaccination** as part of efforts to '**end TB**' in India. The **COVID-19 vaccination** of the adult population has sensitized the public **to the need** for and benefits of **adult vaccination**.

- In the **50th anniversary of the EPI**, it is time for **another expansion of the programme**, with a focus on **zero-dose children**, **addressing inequities in vaccine coverage**, and **offering vaccines to adults and the elderly**.
- It is time to make EPI an '**Essential Program on Immunization**'.

Ultra-processed Foods Linked to Health Problems and Early Death

News Excerpt:

A recent study by **Harvard University**, spanning over 30 years, has highlighted the risks associated with consuming ultra-processed foods (UPF).

What are Ultra-processed foods?

- Ultra-processed foods are those food items that **contain additives and ingredients not commonly found in home kitchens**, such as **artificial sweeteners, colours, and preservatives**.
 - These products are characterized as **industrial formulations** primarily composed of **chemically modified substances** extracted from foods with minimal to no inclusion of whole foods.
- These are foods that are **high in saturated fats** and **lack nutrients and fibre**.
- UPFs include **packaged snacks, carbonated soft drinks, instant noodles, and ready-made meals**.

Key findings of the study:

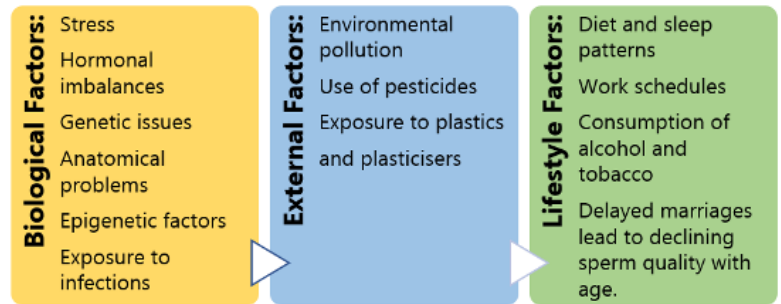
- The data showed those who ate the most **ultra-processed food** had a **4% higher risk of death by any cause** compared to participants who ate the lowest amount.
- The people who regularly consumed **ultra-processed meats** faced a 13% higher likelihood of premature death over the study period.
- Moreover, those with diets **high in sugary and artificially sweetened beverages** saw a 9% increase in the risk of early death.
- There were **direct associations** between a higher intake of **ultra-processed foods** and a **greater risk of dying early, deaths from heart disease, common mental disorder outcomes, overweight or obesity, and Type 2 diabetes**.
- UPFs were also linked with a **higher risk of asthma, gastrointestinal issues, some cancers, and more**.
- The study found "**consistent evidence linking higher intakes**" of such foods with more than **70% of 45 health outcomes assessed**.
- A high intake of ultra-processed food could **increase anxiety by 53%** and the **risk of early death from any cause by 20%**.

How are ultra-processed foods hazardous?

- Excessive intake of **sodium, sugars or saturated fat** can elevate the risk of **chronic diseases**. Excessive sodium consumption, for instance, can **raise blood pressure**, potentially leading to heart disease.

- Consuming significant amounts of **foods and drinks with added sugars** has been associated with a **heightened risk of obesity** and **Type 2 diabetes**.
- Processed foods may also be linked to poor health because it **disrupts a healthy gut microbiome**.
- The heavy consumption of these foods alters the bacteria in our gut system, which can lead to **immune disturbance**.
- So, our **immune system wouldn't be able to stop the early development of cancer** and **cardiovascular diseases**.

Solutions and Interventions



Way Forward:

- There should be more focus on **unprocessed and minimally processed foods**, which include **fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and unprocessed animal products** like **eggs, fish, and meat**.
- This study highlights the importance of public health initiatives to reduce reliance on ultra-processed foods for **better overall health and longevity**.

Breaking the taboo around men's reproductive health

News Excerpt:

As we grapple with the multifaceted challenges of global population dynamics, it is crucial to turn the spotlight on a subject often overshadowed in discussions on reproductive health: male infertility.

- Male infertility remains a stigmatized issue, shrouded in silence and with misconceptions.
- This neglect exacerbates the emotional and psychological toll on those affected and impedes progress towards effective solutions.

Global and National Infertility Statistics:

- **Global Infertility:** In 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that globally, between 60 million to 80 million couples struggle with infertility.
- **Infertility in India:** The exact figures are unspecified by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). It is estimated that 13 to 19 million Indian couples may face infertility issues as per WHO's data, with the incidence likely to increase due to factors such as environmental pollution and lifestyle changes.
- Male infertility accounts for 50% of all infertility cases in the country.

Causes of Male Infertility:

Male infertility can manifest in different ways, such as the absence of sperm, low sperm count, or low sperm motility. The **causes include:**

Lifestyle Interventions:

- **Education and Awareness:** Awareness about reproductive health should start from secondary school and junior college, with parents, particularly fathers, playing a key role.
- **Healthy Habits:** Young men should adopt healthy eating and regular sleep patterns and avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other intoxicants.
- **Limiting Device Use:** Reducing excessive use of mobile phones and laptops, particularly near the body.
- **Stress Management:** Daily exercise, yoga, and meditation to manage stress.
- **Couples' Health:** Both partners should adopt healthy lifestyles to improve their reproductive health.

Medical Treatments:

- **Semen Analysis:** A routine semen analysis after 2-7 days of sexual abstinence is recommended by WHO to diagnose the issue.
- **Surgical Interventions:** For physical or anatomical issues such as blocked sperm flow or undescended testicles.
- **IntraCytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI):** For cases with absence of sperm.
- **Donor Sperm Insemination or Adoption:** Alternative options for couples facing severe male infertility.
 - In cases where the sperm count is very low, there is a chance for the couple to conceive naturally if sperm motility is very good.
- **Intrauterine Insemination (IUI), In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), or ICSI:** For cases with low sperm count and motility.
- **Genetic Counselling:** It is important for infertility due to gene mutations before opting for assisted reproductive technologies (ART).

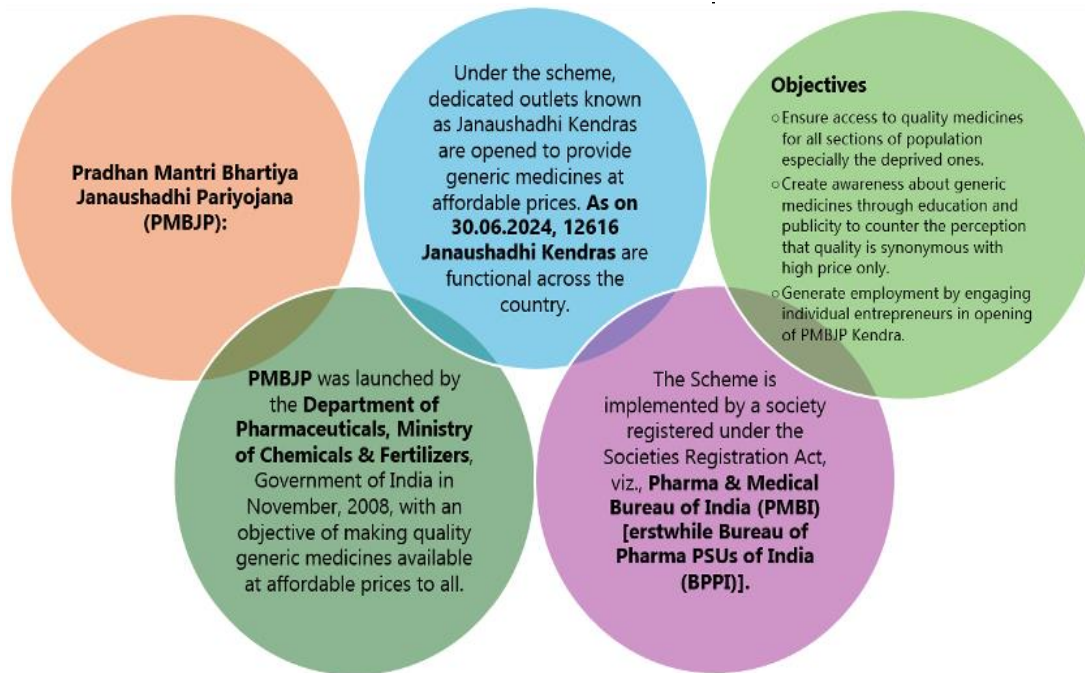
Way Forward:

It is time to recognize and address the significant issue of male reproductive health. Awareness building, sex education, and timely medical interventions are key to supporting couples on their journey to parenthood. By breaking the taboo surrounding male infertility and fostering a more informed and supportive environment, we can help many couples realize their dream of having children.

State of Healthcare in Rural India, 2024

News Excerpt:

According to the **State of Healthcare in Rural India 2024** report, there is a lack of health insurance coverage in rural areas, and family members are still primary caregivers.



Key findings of the report:

- **Only half** of the rural households have government health insurance while **34% lack any health insurance** coverage at all and **61% of those surveyed lack life insurance**.
- Additionally, only **12.2%** of households in the survey have access (within commutable distance from their villages) to subsidized medicines from **Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras**, while **21%** lack a commutable medical store.
- Of the surveyed households, **farming (43%)** and **daily wage labour (21%)** are their main income sources.
- There is a **lack of diagnostic facilities** in rural areas mostly because of a shortage of trained personnel.
- Only **39%** of the respondents confirmed that there was a **diagnostic facility** within a commutable distance from their village where they could visit only for **blood tests or medical imaging**. However, **90%** of respondents do not get a routine health checkup done on their own wish unless and **until the doctor suggests** that they do so.
- Accessibility to **affordable medicine at government medical stores** is a challenge for the rural population.
- A total of **61% of respondents** had access (within commutable distance from their village) to a private medical store, whereas only **26% of respondents** had access to a **government medical store** located within the premises of a health facility that provides free medicines.
- Around **21%** do not have a **medical store** within commutable distance.
- Also, regarding sanitation and environmental hygiene, which are important interventions for disease control in a community, one in five reported no **drainage system** in their villages, and only **23%** had a covered drainage network system. **43%** of households **did not have any**

scientific system of waste disposal and ended up dumping their waste everywhere.

- Only **11% burn the dry waste** and convert their wet waste into compost, while **28%** reported that the **local panchayat has made plans** to collect household waste.
- Meanwhile, the report further notes that **73%** of the **households with elderly members need constant care**, and the **majority (95.7%) prefer family caregivers**, predominantly female (**72.1%**), highlighting the need for caregiver training on home-based care.
- Engaging an **external caregiver** as a paid service does not seem to have much traction in rural India, with only **3%** of such households ever having opted for it.
- **Only 10% of the households rely on neighbourhood support in the absence of family caregivers**. Key caregivers for pregnant women include husbands (**62.7%**), mothers-in-law (**50%**), and mothers (**36.4%**).
- **According to the report, there is a need for strong social networks and supportive environments, and a need for capacity building for family members. It recommended focus on a people-centred system that integrates systems and schemes locally to address well-being and healthy lifestyle.**

About the report:

- The **State of Healthcare in Rural India Report – 2024**, unveiled at the India Rural Colloquy, provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and innovations in rural healthcare.
- The survey was jointly undertaken by the non-government organization **Transform Rural India** and the **Development Intelligence Unit**, which works in the healthcare sector.
- The survey encompassed **5,389 rural households with an average size of 5.7 members and spanned 21 States, including — Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Punjab, Tamil Nādu, and Uttar Pradesh**.
- Central to the report is the introduction of the **“Neighbourhoods of Care”** model, which advocates for a shift from traditional health delivery methods to a more holistic and personalized approach.

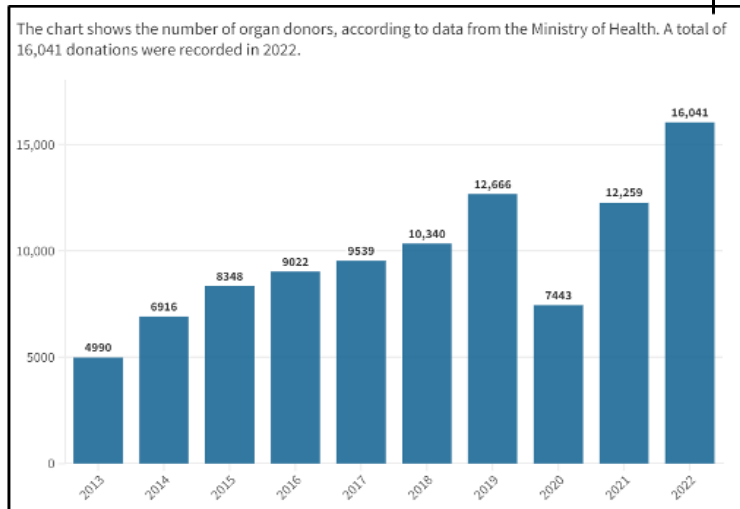
India Faces a Shortage of Cadaver Organ Donations

News Excerpt:

The country's increase in organ donors has not kept pace with demand, according to experts, and around three lakh patients wait for organ donation.

More about the news:

- With a waiting list of over three lakh patients and at least 20 persons dying each day waiting for an organ, India's paucity of organ donations, especially deceased donations, has been exacting a steep toll.
- According to the **Health Ministry's** own data, the number of donors (including the deceased) only grew from 6,916 in 2014 to about 16,041 in 2022.



- Even worldwide, **only 10%** of patients needing organs get them in time. Spain and the US have better organ donation systems, clocking 30-50 donations per million.
- Data from **2022** show India's poor record in deceased donations. The country registered 1,589 kidney transplants, 761 liver and 250 heart transplants in the deceased category in 2022.
- Kidney and pancreas transplants grew from three in 2014 to 22 in 2022. In contrast, living donor kidney transplants rose from 4,884 in 2014 to 9,834 in 2022. Liver transplants in this category grew from 1,002 to 2,957.
- In 2022, the **National Organ Tissue and Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)** reported 15,561 organ transplants, with only 2,765 from deceased donors. Living donors comprise 82% of all donors in India, most of whom are sisters, mothers and wives.
- One person is added to the waitlist every 10 minutes in the country.

The complexity of organ donation in India:

- **Lack of public awareness:**
 - Organ donation and transplantation enable either a deceased or a living donor to offer life-saving opportunities to another individual. A healthy organ is extracted from a donor who doesn't require it and transplanted into someone in need. Even individuals

in good health can donate certain organs and tissues without compromising their own well-being, as with chronically ill kidney and liver patients.

- In India, the demand for organ donations far exceeds the available supply. Currently, **over 300,000** patients await organ donations. The need is for 65 organs per one million population. **Fifteen lakh deaths** occur annually in road accidents, yet the government has not harnessed this potential because of a lack of public awareness.
- **Inefficient hospital systems and lack of infrastructure:**
 - The importance of skilled teams, trained staff and hygienic ICUs in creating a culture of trust and successful donations cannot be overlooked.
 - Many hospitals lack the transplant infrastructure, and staff are often overworked and focused on critical patient management.
- **Cultural and religious barriers:**
 - In India, both the donor's and the family's wishes count. Families often get emotional and angry and refuse to donate their relatives' organs.
 - Cultural and religious beliefs, such as concerns about the donor organ entering the body of someone with bad karma, the caste of a donor being lower than the recipient's, or the donor being born with a mutilated body, contribute to this reluctance.
 - Mistrust in the healthcare system also plays a role.

About National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO):

- NOTTO is a National level organization set up under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, located in New Delhi.
- It has the following two divisions:
 - "National Human Organ and Tissue Removal and Storage Network"
 - "National Biomaterial Centre".
- National Network division of NOTTO would function as apex center for All India activities of coordination and networking for procurement and distribution of Organs and Tissues and registry of Organs and Tissues Donation and Transplantation in the country.

Legal and ethical barriers:

- Legal and ethical barriers contribute to the shortage of cadaver organ donations.
 - The Indian government is aware that the number of donors is a mere one per million population, far below the **needed 65 per million**.
- **Psychological barriers and misconceptions:**

- Grief-stricken families often refuse to donate their deceased relatives' organs, hoping to keep the patient alive using life support.
- They don't realize that organs become damaged if kept on a ventilator beyond a period of time, as per medical advice.

- These are food products which are not processed in any manner other than washing, peeling, chilling, trimming, cutting or irradiation by ionising radiation.
- The reference to "Fresh" is forbidden if the processing endeavours to achieve an extension in the shelf-life of the product.

- **Original** describes formulation of food products with a traceable origin which has remained unchanged over time.

Way Forward:

While NOTTO has regularized the sharing of organs, the government needs to review transplant policies holistically.	Empowering NOTTO to implement its commitments, as declared in their Transplant Manual 2022 , is crucial.	Setting up fully equipped, affordable transplant centers with well-paid, motivated doctors and trained staff across every state is necessary.	Additionally, the government should offer financial aid and free medication, fund post-transplant treatment to recipients regardless of their state, provide funeral aid to donor families and honour donors nationally to inspire other donors.	Ensuring that medical insurance companies issue policies to post-transplant recipients is also essential.	Public awareness campaigns, efficient hospital systems, comprehensive policies, medical insurance policies, addressing cultural and religious barriers, etc. are also crucial steps.
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- **Pure** is used for single-ingredient foods where nothing has been added and are devoid of all avoidable contamination.

- **Nutritional claims** are either about the comparison with other products or specific contents of a product.

- **Claims of equivalence** can be defined through example such as "contains the same of (nutrient) as a food"

or as much (nutrient) as a (food) both labelling can be used but have different meaning.

NUTRITION

Food Safety in India

News Excerpt

The Advertisement Monitoring Committee at the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) flagged 32 fresh cases of food business operators (FBOs) making misleading claims and advertisements.

About the Food Advertising in India

- Food advertising has been considered as "fairly violative sector" by Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI).
- ASCI also informs that most complaints of misleading Ads were associated with the nutrition of a product, its benefits and the ingredient mix.
- The advertisements and claims should be adhered to truth, unambiguous, meaningful, not misleading and should be helpful for consumers for information comprehension.
- Claims should be substantiated with the validated methods of quantifying the ingredient.

FSSAI

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) was established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

It is an autonomous statutory body under **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**, GoI.

Important terms used in the Food Advertising Ecosystem in India

- **Natural**
 - When a food is a single food derived from a recognised natural source with no other ingredient added to it.
 - Composite Foods are considered natural ingredients made food but not as natural food.
- **Fresh**

Regulations related to Misleading Ads and Claims in India

- **The Food Safety and Standard Act, 2006**

It consolidates the laws relating to food and to establish the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India for laying down science-based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import, to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- **The Food Safety and Standards (Advertisements & Claims) Regulations 2018** makes companies accountable for their claims on food products and catering interests of customers.

- **The Consumer Protection Act 2019** set up Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) as a regulatory body in matters of wrong advertisements for the protection of rights of consumers.

- Misleading advertisement has been defined under section 2(28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- **The Programme and Advertising Codes** underlines that advertisements must not give claims which are difficult to be proved, these are prescribed under the Cable Television Network Rules 1994.

Impact of misleading Food Advertisements

- **Health Factor:** These advertisements may give wrong health information or may leave consumer in confusion and later may impact its health.
- **Misguide consumers:** These are harmful for consumers as they confuse and misguide consumers regarding food product, sometimes consumers cross their budgets to buy such fake products.
- **Makes Fake image of Food Product:** These advertisements show food product in the false ambit of nutrition and health or beauty which might be completely false or fake.

- **Extends market on one hand but at the cost of vulnerable sections of society:** Vulnerable sections of society may include ill, poor, influenced people.
- **Long term losses:** Continuing food products with false information may lead to long term losses in terms of health, finances etc as it makes false health and beauty standards.

Conclusion

Looking at the consequences, any Food products should be avoided with any unscientific and exaggerated claims. Advertisement should be based on promoting quality of their product not misleading the consumers.

The information or advertisements should have consonance with Good Clinical Practices (GCP) and reviewed scientific journal. People should be made aware of these issues which will help them to choose healthy food products.

Food Processing, Polishing and Nutrition

News Excerpt

As per studies, nutrients in millets are affected by processing and polishing which has highlighted the challenges related to food security.

About Millets

- These are particularly cultivated in the tropical parts of Africa and Asia.
- Millets are high in nutrition and dietary fibre like protein, micronutrients and phytochemicals.
- Millets contain 7-12% protein, 2-5% fat, 65-75% carbohydrates and 15-20% dietary fibre.
- Arid and Semi arid regions with low rainfall are suitable for their growth. It can grow in temperature from 30°C to 35°C.
- It can grown in different soil types, from poor to fertile and are tolerant to some degree of alkalinity.
- Rainfall required is between 250-300mm, which is quite less making it suitable for water scarce and drought prone regions.
- Pericarp's (outer covering) function is to protect the kernel from inhospitable conditions, disease and damage along with husk, endosperm (largest part of kernel and is a storage center with protein covering called as aleurone) and germ are the three major parts of millet kernel.

Millets in India

- Millets are kharif crop which are grown in nine varieties over 20 states in India.
- As per Agricultural and Processed Foods Development Authority, India is the world's largest producer of millets. In 2021-2022, the country accounted for 40.51% of the world's pearl millet production and 8.09% of sorghum.
- Leading producers include Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.
- For the year 2021-22, Millet constitutes around 5 % of the national food grain basket as about 16 million tonnes millets has been produced in India
- Government declares MSP for jowar, bajra and ragi and also bajra has the highest market share followed by jowar.

Impact of Processing on nutrients

- Outer covering or husk when removed can remove crude and dietary fiber and reduce the phytic acid and polyphenol contents.
- Due to the loosing of bran, process like milling and sieving make the flour more digestible and visually attractive but also reduce nutrient content.
- Processes such as Germination and fermentation improve the nutritional characteristics of millets.

Impact of Polishing

- The process includes the removal of outer layers of the grain, including the bran and the germ.
- It can severely lead to nutrient loss in all cases.
- The process is long and with every step there is loss of more protein, fat, and fiber contents.
- But at the same time if we peruse process for limited time then nutrient content are preserved. Eg. Polishing barnyard millet for just two to three minutes.
- It can remove 60-80% of iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and manganese in both indica and japonica varieties.
- It leads to loss of bran and bran loss leads to compromised fiber content.

Government initiatives

From coarse cereals or cereals of the poor, millets has been renamed as nutria-cereals.

The Indian Institute of Millets Research, Hyderabad will be supported as the Centre of Excellence to make India a global hub for 'Shree Anna' (millets).

2018 was declared as 'National Year of Millets'.

Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) was a scheme as a initiative for Nutritional Security through Intensive Millets Promotion (INSIMP) to increase millet production between 2011-14.

Through **National Food Security Mission** Millet was implemented in 212 districts of 14 states.

POSHAN Mission also includes millets.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 provides eligible households with rice, wheat, and coarse grain at Rs 3, Rs 2, and Re 1 per kg respectively.

Way forward

- **Research:** More research should be done on how to maintain the nutritive value of food along with their refining and production.
- **Awareness:** Consumers should be made aware about the nutritive value of food products and what to consume and what not.
- Processing and Polishing methods **needs a balance** coping with the demand of people.
- Food Authorities should be made responsible for looking at refining process of food so that they don't loose their nutritive content.
- Raw food should be given priority, as compared to refined food. For eg. Rice with bran are highly nutritious as compared to rice without bran.

Hunger across India

News Excerpt

India is among the largest producers of agricultural commodities, yet millions are still starving in the world's most populous country.

About State Hunger Index (SHI):

- The calculation of the SHI score involves combining the normalised values of the four indicators using the techniques recommended by the GHI.
- The SHI scores range between 0 and 100, with higher scores indicating more hunger. Scores below 10 signify low hunger, 10-20 moderate, 20-30 serious, 30-40 alarming, and 50 or above extremely alarming.

Major observations from the report:

- States with the problem of Serious Hunger (above 20):
 - **Alarming category:** Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh- scored 35.
 - **Above average:** Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, and West Bengal- all scored above 29.
- **Moderate hunger category states:** Chandigarh scored 12, and Sikkim, Puducherry, and Kerala- all scored below 16. Manipur, Mizoram, Punjab, Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Tamil Nadu also fall under this category.
- No State falls under the 'low hunger' category.
- **Punjab** led the list, with **Kerala** and **Andhra Pradesh** following closely as *top performers*.

Reasons behind low performance:

- **Undernourishment:** India's GHI score has deteriorated primarily due to the increasing prevalence of calorie undernourishment.
 - According to the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, the proportion of calorie undernourishment in India has been escalating since 2017, reaching 16.3% in 2020.
 - **The National Sample Survey (NSS)** (2011-12) on nutritional intake has also been conducted, which offered insights into the prevalence of calorie undernourishment.
- **Child malnutrition:** India ranks unfavourably in child wasting, performing worse than many low-income African nations.
 - The **NFHS-5** indicated that one-third of children under the age of five are stunted and underweight, while every fifth child suffers from wasting.
- **Child Stunting and Mortality:** Despite India's notable progress, for example, Child stunting (low height for age) has declined from 38.7% to 35.5% between 2014 and 2022 and child mortality under 5yrs has dropped from 4.6% to 3.3% in the same comparative period, still challenges persist in addressing the disparity in food insecurity, hunger, and child malnutrition.

Other side of the coin?

- The data collected from the **government-run rural childcare centres** showed that more than 43 lakh children in the 0-5 age group were identified as obese or overweight last month, accounting for around 6% of the total children surveyed at Anganwadi centres across the country.
- There has been a notable increase in the percentage of children under five years of age who are overweight in **NFHS-5 (2019-21)** compared to **NFHS-4 (2015-16)**.
- **States with over weighted children (0-5 yrs):** *Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir* recorded the highest percentages, followed closely by Sikkim and Tripura.
- **States with lower weighted children (0-5 yrs):** *Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh* reported the lowest percentages.
- **Causes of increase in overweighed children:**
 - **Fast food:** A study found out the purchase of marketed snacks is increasingly influenced by children's preferences, leading them to consume fast foods and sugary drinks, accumulating empty calories that their sedentary lifestyle.
 - **Low Income and Cost effect:** The cost of nutritious vegetables, fruits, and protein sources has become unaffordable for many low-income families.
 - **Behavioural Issue:** Addressing childhood obesity must begin with proper parenting. Raising awareness among parents about what constitutes a balanced diet is crucial.

Initiatives by Government to tackle Hunger Issues:

- **Zero Hunger Programme:** It was started in **2017** by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) and the **M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation** to improve agriculture, health and nutrition. This Programme aims at:
 - Decreasing child stunting for children below 2 years.
 - Making sure access to food all year round
 - Creating stable food systems
 - Increasing small farmer productivity and income
 - Eliminating food wastage.
- **National Food Security Mission (NFSM):** It was launched in **2007-08** with the aim to increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses through Expansion of area and productivity enhancement, Restoring soil fertility and productivity, Generating employment opportunities and Enhancing farm level economy.
- **SDGs (Goal 2: Zero Hunger):** The SDGs aim to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, making sure all people—especially children—have sufficient and nutritious food all year. This involves promoting sustainable agriculture, supporting small-scale farmers and equal access to land, technology and markets. It also requires international cooperation to ensure investment

in infrastructure and technology to improve agricultural productivity.

Way Forward:

Identifying vulnerable population groups, and contributing to evidence to inform decision-making and effective action through the appropriate targeting and design of policies and programmes are necessary to fill the gaps. The role of local governments as fundamental actors in leveraging multilevel and multi-stakeholder mechanisms can prove effective in making healthy diets available and affordable for all.

Protocol for Management of Malnutrition in Children at Anganwadi

News excerpt:

The 'Protocol for Management of Malnutrition in Children', jointly prepared by the Ministry for Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, was launched during the national event Suposhit Bharat-Sashakt Bharat.

What is Malnutrition?

- Malnutrition refers to **deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in a person's energy and/or nutrient intake.**
- Malnutrition represents both **under and over-nutrition.**
- The term malnutrition covers 2 broad groups of conditions:
 - **Under-nutrition** includes:
 - stunting (low height for age),
 - wasting (low weight for height),
 - underweight (low weight for age),
 - micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of essential vitamins and minerals).
 - **Over-nutrition:** It includes overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer).

Proposed Framework:

- In India, the **highest burden of undernutrition occurs between birth and two years of age;** therefore, preventive measures must predominantly address **children under two years.**
- It is the first-ever national protocol under which severe acute malnourished (SAM) children without medical complications will be managed at Anganwadi centres instead of **nutrition rehabilitation centres (NRC).**
- The protocol lists that children with bilateral pitting oedema and failed appetite tests will be enrolled in the NRCs.
- This protocol includes the concept of "**Buddy mothers**" between mothers of a healthy child and of a malnourished child, enabling joint supervision and exchange of guidance between both with respect to the health of a malnourished child.

- It creates '**malnutrition-free gram panchayats**', highlighting that panchayats can be a helpful convergence platform for mothers groups to meet and discuss nutrition-related issues.

Proposed Protocol for Assessment and Management of Malnutrition in Children:

- **Step-1: Growth Monitoring:** Identification of malnourished children should be done using the Growth Monitoring Data (**Weight-for-height and Weight-for-age**). The anthropometric measures of children (height and weight) should be entered each month in the **POSHAN tracker** to identify the degree of Malnutrition and growth.
- **Step-2: Appetite Test for SAM Children:** This test has to be carried out in front of a family or guardian. The Children who pass this test shall be considered beneficiaries under the Supplementary Nutrition Programme.
- **Step-3: Medical Assessment:** Infants less than 6 months of age who are visibly wasted or too weak should be immediately referred to the nearest health facility/NRC for evaluation and treatment by ASHA/AWW/ ANM.
- **Step-4: Deciding the level of care based on physical condition (Weight-and-age)**
- **Step-5: Nutritional management:** All SAM children who fail appetite tests and/or with medical complications should be referred to NRC for further management.
- **Step-6: Medical management:** All the SAM children without medical complications and SUW children who need medical care as per the assessment done at step-3 shall be treated as prescribed by the Medical Officer.
- **Step-7: Nutrition, Health Education and counseling, including WASH practices.**
- **Step-8: Visit by AWW and referral:** The child's progress should be monitored and recorded in the POSHAN Tracker.
- **Step-9: Duration of Monitoring:** MAM Child needs to complete two months after achieving proper

Related Terms:

- **Bilateral pitting oedema** is swelling in both legs characterised by an indentation, or 'pit', that remains when pressure is applied to the swollen area.
- **NRC** is a unit in a health facility where children with SAM are admitted and managed.
- **SAM** is a condition in which a child has a very low weight in relation to height, as per WHO growth standards.

height and weight. SAM child needs to complete up to the age of 6 years.

- **Step-10: Follow-up Care:** Follow-up should be done for the children who become normal by height and weight.

Government initiatives to address Malnutrition:

- **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Erstwhile Integrated Child Development Services-ICDS):** The Integrated Nutrition Support Programme seeks to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers through a strategic shift in nutrition content and delivery to respond to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education on the one hand and break the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality on the other.
 - Beneficiaries- children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers and adolescent girls in the age group 14-18 years (Only in Aspiration Districts).
- **PM-POSHAN scheme (Mid-Day Meal Scheme):** It is implemented by the Ministry of Education to meet the nutritional standards specified in the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.
 - Under this, children of Bal Vatika (just before class I) and children studying in classes I-VIII or within the age group of 6-14 years are entitled to one mid-day meal free of charge every day except on school holidays, in all Government and Government aided schools.

Way forward:

- **Decentralization Policy for Program implementation:** Panchayats/Block level/Districts should be allowed to have a more significant say in running welfare schemes.
 - Planning of services in discussion with District Health Officers.
 - Fund flow and positioning of workforce and training.
 - Infrastructure strengthening, if required at AWC.
 - Quarterly review of the programme performance.
- **Role of Medical Officers:**
 - Based on clinical history, treatment should be provided, keeping consistency and monthly progress reports submitted. This will bring transparency to the healthcare system, eventually leading to better health results in Rural India.

Global Hunger Index – 2023

News excerpt:

Alliance 2015, a peer network of seven European non-government organizations, recently released the Global Hunger Index 2023.

About the Global Hunger Index - 2023:

Global Observations:

- The 2023 GHI score for the world reflects a dangerous array of overlapping global and local crises, including the fallout of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the **Russia-Ukraine war**, and **multiple violent conflicts** and **climate disasters** worldwide.
- Many countries are experiencing severe hunger in 2023, which is expected to worsen yearly.
- The Russia-Ukraine war contributed to global food price spikes in 2022, threatening food security.

Regional Observations:

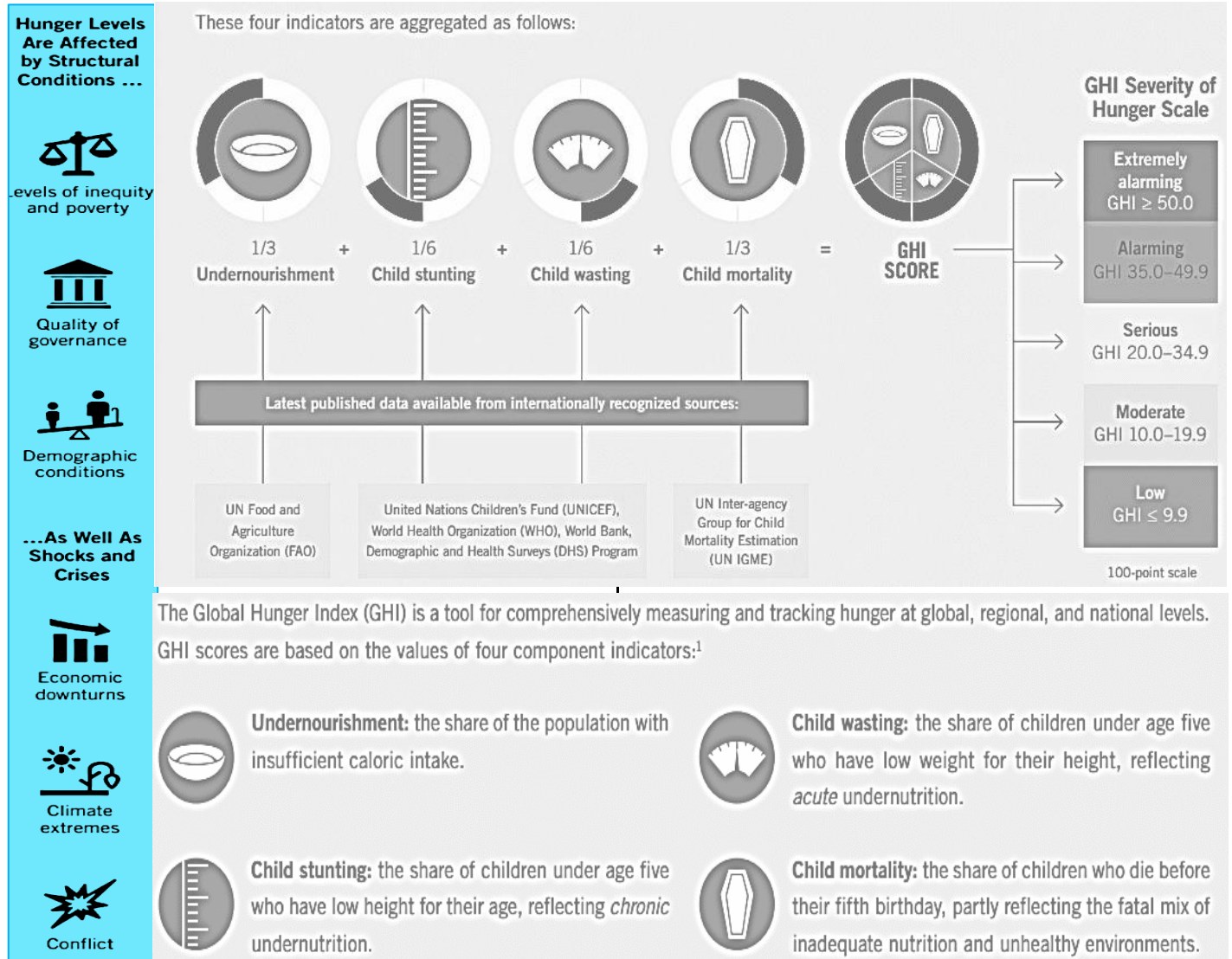
- India's ranking in the Global Hunger Index 2023 **fell to 111 out of 125 countries from 107 in 2022**.
- India has the highest **child-wasting rate in the world at 18.7 percent**, reflecting acute undernutrition.
- With a score of 28.7, **India** has a level of hunger that is "**serious**". India's neighbouring countries, Pakistan (102nd), Bangladesh (81st), Nepal (69th) and Sri Lanka (60th) fared better than it in the index.
- **South Asia and Africa South** of the Sahara are the world regions with the **highest hunger levels**, with a GHI score of 27 each, indicating severe hunger.
- Improving young people's **access to knowledge and education** is the key to strengthening their capacities to act as change agents in food systems transformation.

Indian Scenario:

- India has the **highest child-wasting rate** in the world, at 18.7 per cent, reflecting acute undernutrition. (*Wasting is measured based on children's weight relative to their height.*)
- According to the index, the rate of **undernourishment** in India stood at 16.6 per cent and under-five mortality at 3.1 percent.
- The prevalence of **anaemia in women** aged between 15 and 24 years stood at 58.1 percent. The Women and Child Development Ministry said the index suffers "serious methodological issues and shows a malafide intent".

Causes of rising hunger all over the Globe:

- **Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Jeopardize the Life Chances of Youth:** According to the reports, the youth are *emerging into adulthood in a context of inherently unequal and unsustainable food systems* that fail to deliver food and nutrition security and are highly vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. These shortcomings are particularly problematic given youth's unique food and nutrition needs, and the data showing these needs are not being met in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Current Food Systems Are Largely Failing Youth:** At the most basic level, current food systems must provide all people with sufficient nutritious food. Approximately 735 million people were affected by hunger in 2022, and



more than 3.1 billion could not afford nutritionally rich diets in 2022.

- **Gender discrimination:** Gender also plays a role in youth's experiences of hunger and undernutrition. Women and girls make up about 60 percent of severely hungry people. In many low- and middle-income countries, women, particularly in Lower-income groups are responsible for producing and preparing food and obtaining water and firewood. During food scarcity, women and girls often eat last and least, making them more vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity.
- **The Loss of Food Sovereignty Weakens Food Systems:** The loss of food sovereignty, particularly in the world's low- and middle-income countries, has been hastened by several major factors, including colonialism, poor governance, and the intensive capitalization of food systems, the widespread growth of monocultures in agriculture, and some of the adverse outcomes of the Green Revolution. In many areas, local farmers are excluded from seed systems and have limited control over what they plant, relegating indigenous crops to neglected crops.

KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE REPORT:

- **Global hunger remains too high, and progress on reducing hunger has largely stalled.** The 2023 global GHI score is 18.3—considered moderate—down less than one point from the 2015 global score of 19.1. The right to adequate food is violated for nearly three-quarters of a billion people daily.
- **This stagnation relative to 2015 primarily reflects the combined effects of several crises.** These include the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, economic stagnation, the impacts of climate change, and the intractable conflicts facing many countries worldwide. Their compounding effects have led to a cost-of-living crisis and exhausted the coping capacity of many countries, especially those where hunger was already high before the crises hit due to power imbalances and structural obstacles to food and nutrition security.
- **The crises have aggravated inequalities between regions, countries, and groups.** While some countries have weathered them relatively well, others have experienced deepening hunger and nutrition problems.

- **The global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and higher food prices may be easing somewhat in 2023. However, climate conditions are worsening, and for many people, the food price is still unaffordable in many areas.** Less resilient regions, countries, and communities worldwide are expected to experience lasting hunger and nutrition setbacks and stand less prepared for future crises.
- **According to GHI projections, 58 countries will not achieve low hunger by 2030 at the current pace.** Projections suggest that none of the GHI indicators will meet the 2030 targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): the prevalence of undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting, and child mortality are all off track.
Many youth in low- and middle-income countries are particularly vulnerable to food security and nutrition crises. This vulnerability is worrisome, given the importance of young people's health and nutrition status for future generations' well-being.

India's Reservations about GHI:

- **Methodological issues:**
 - 3 of the 4 indicators used are related to children's health and cannot represent the entire population.
 - The 4th indicator, estimating the Proportion of Undernourished (PoU) population, is based on an opinion poll conducted on a small sample size of 3000.
- GHI ignores efforts made by the Government to ensure food security for the population. E.g.- IMF lauds **PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana** for preventing extreme poverty.
- Scores not comparable across years: The index makes some specific years with benchmark values as reference years, there is no way of knowing whether India did better or worse than the previous year.
- Over and underestimation: Using a uniform calorie benchmark to arrive at deficiency prevalence for India, GHI fails to recognise the enormous regional imbalances. E.g.- The Kerala and Tamil Nadu population may get counted as calorie deficient despite being better in nutritional outcome indicators.
- GHI puts a higher emphasis on undernutrition than on hunger and its hidden forms, including micronutrient deficiencies. It should be more precisely called 'The Global Human Nourishment Index.'

Way Forward:

- **Food sovereignty needs attention to four critical factors:** People and their rights, the quality of food produced, cultural aspects of food systems, and environmental well-being.
 - A global forum held in Nyeleni Village, Mali, in 2007 declared food sovereignty as "**the right of peoples**

to healthy and culturally appropriate food' produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.

- In this way, **gender discrimination** can also be tackled.
- **Need for nutrition and food security assistance:** Food produced in an indigenous manner has long-term nutritious values and positive effects on human health. The current youth generation will eventually turn towards a dependable population, leading to a **rise in non-communicable diseases** if, at present, they are not prevented from intake of bad cholesterol.
 - **Water, sanitation, and hygiene** must be handled to help families live and eat better.
- **Promote behavioural measures** like Poshan Vatika, WASH practices, and **cultural knowledge**.
- **Policy making and Youth participation:** The share of youth in formal decision-making forums is negligible, and the increased focus on youth participation in some policy dialogues is necessary for a meaningful impact.
- **Economic recovery and market systems through up-skilling the entrepreneurial energy:** In the coming years, the **skilling-up programmes** can open new possibilities for business; training provided by the private sector can help to improve skills and product quality.

Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP

News Excerpt:

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have released the report "**Hunger Hotspots**", which predicts a worsening of **food insecurity** in **18** hunger hotspots, including **22 countries** from **November 2023 to April 2024**.

Key findings of the report:

- In the hunger hotspots, parts of the population will likely face a significant **deterioration** of already high levels of acute **food insecurity**, putting lives and livelihoods at risk.
- **Highest concerns - hotspots with catastrophic conditions:**
 - **Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan, and Sudan** are among the countries with the highest concern level due to their populations **facing starvation or risk of catastrophic conditions**.
 - **Palestine** was added due to the escalating **conflict** in October 2023, requiring urgent attention due to critical food insecurity and aggravating factors.
- **Very High concerns - hotspots with deteriorating critical conditions:**
 - Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen are high-risk hotspots.

- They have high levels of acute **food insecurity** and worsening drivers are expected to intensify **life-threatening conditions**.
- Since the May 2023 edition, **Chad, Djibouti, Niger, Palestine, and Zimbabwe** have been **added** to the list of hunger hotspot countries/territories.

World Food Programme (WFP):

- It is a **humanitarian organization founded in 1961**, saving and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.
- For its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas, WFP was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2020**.

Food insecurity drivers:

- **Organised violence and conflict risks:**
 - Armed violence, mainly civilian targeting, is likely to continue driving global **displacement**. The **Gaza Strip's** hostilities are expected to intensify humanitarian issues, with potential regional implications.
 - Instability and violence in the **Sahel region**, including **recent coups** in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, are also escalating. The withdrawal of peacekeeping missions from Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia could amplify security voids, allowing increased Non-State Armed Group (**NSAG**) activities and attacks against civilians.
 - Insecurity and conflicts are also expected to exacerbate **food access**, leading to displacement, **market disruption**, and **abandoned cultivated areas**, further deepening food crises.

Country-wise key drivers/ risk narratives of food insecurity:

- **Asia and Pacific:**
 - Afghanistan: protracted economic crisis.
 - Pakistan: Economic deterioration.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Below-average rainfall, high prices and above-average seasonal hurricanes.
- **West Africa and the Sahel:** Conflict.
- **Economic risks:**
 - The global economic outlook for 2024 is **sluggish**, with **tight** monetary policies following a decline in 2023.
 - International **food prices** remain **high** but are expected to rise due to oil price dynamics and El Nino conditions.
 - Low- and middle-income countries face challenges in **importing goods**, with **high** commodity **prices**, weak currencies, and depleted foreign exchange **reserves**.

- Limited economic access and reduced **donor support** further exacerbate the situation.
- **Natural hazard risks:**
 - Hunger hotspots like Afghanistan, Haiti, Palestine, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Malawi, Uganda, and Cox's Bazar face ongoing **reductions** and **gaps** in emergency agriculture, food, and livelihood assistance.
 - **Weather extremes** like heavy rains, tropical storms, cyclones, flooding, drought, and climate variability drive acute food insecurity.
 - **El Nino**, which reached its **peak** activity in September 2023, is expected to persist in the coming six months, **negatively** impacting regions in Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Way Forward:

- The report provides recommendations on priorities for:
 - **Anticipatory action** – short-term protective interventions to be implemented before new humanitarian needs materialise.
 - **Emergency response** – actions to address existing and emerging humanitarian needs.
- **Humanitarian intervention** in terms of **financial resources** and **capacity generation** is of vital importance in regions where severe hunger is likely to develop to save lives, preserve livelihoods, and avert starvation and death.
- **Weather forecasts, technical know-how** and their effects on output need to be continuously monitored. To save livelihoods and expand access to food, all 18 hunger hotspots need immediate and increased support.

74.1% of Indians can't afford a healthy diet: FAO

News Excerpt:

The Food and Agriculture Organization (**FAO**) launched a report titled- '**Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and Trends**'.

India related findings:

- **74.1%** of **Indians** could not afford a **healthy diet** in 2021, compared to 76.2% in 2020.
- The report states that **16.6%** of the country's population is **undernourished**, impacting health, nutritional well-being, and economic and social costs.
- India recorded the **highest rate** of **stunted** growth among **children under five** years of age, with **18.7%** facing this major health problem.
- The report also noted that **53%** of the country's **women** aged **between 15 and 49** had **anaemia**.
- The report warns that **1.6%** of the country's **adults** are **obese** as of 2000, which has increased to **3.9% by 2016**.
- India has improved its prevalence of **exclusive breastfeeding** among **infants** 0-5 months of age, with

a percentage of **63.7%**, higher than the world prevalence of 47.7%.

- India has the **region's highest prevalence of low birth weight (27.4%)**, followed by Bangladesh and Nepal.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO):

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- It was founded in 1945 and headquartered in Rome. India is a member of FAO.
- Its goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.
- With 195 members - 194 countries and the European Union, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide.
- World Food Day is celebrated on 16th October every year to mark the anniversary of the FAO.



Asia and Pacific-related findings:

- In **Pakistan, 82.2%** and in **Bangladesh, 66.1%** of the population faced difficulty finding healthy food.
- **Sri Lanka, Iran, Indonesia, Myanmar, Fiji, and Mongolia** are the **only** countries showing an **increase** in the percentage of people unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021 compared to 2020.
- Rising **food costs**, if not matched by **rising income**, will lead to more people **being unable** to afford a healthy diet.
- Asia and the Pacific region, which account for half of the world's severe food insecurity, continue to suffer from protracted effects during the **COVID-19** pandemic and the "**5Fs**" crisis – **Food, Feed, Fuel, Fertilisers, and Finance**.
- **Southern Asia** showed a higher **severe food insecurity** prevalence than other sub-regions, while **Eastern Asia** had the **lowest prevalence**.
- The report highlights the progress in meeting **Sustainable Development Goals** and World Health Assembly (**WHA**) global nutrition targets.

Causes of rising hunger:

- **Food insecurity and malnutrition jeopardize the life chances of youth:** The youth are emerging into adulthood in a context of inherently unequal and unsustainable food systems that fail to deliver food and nutrition security and that are highly vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation.
 - These shortcomings are particularly problematic given the youth's unique food and

nutrition needs, and the data showing these needs are not being met in low- and middle-income countries.

- **Gender discrimination:** Women and girls make up about 60 per cent of severely hungry people.
 - In many low- and middle-income countries, women, particularly in lower-income groups, are responsible for producing and preparing food and obtaining water and firewood.
 - During periods of food scarcity, women and girls often eat last and least, making them more vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity.
- **The loss of food sovereignty weakens food systems:** The loss of food sovereignty, particularly in the world's low- and middle-income countries, has been hastened by several major factors, including colonialism, poor governance, and the intensive capitalization of food systems, the widespread growth of monocultures in agriculture, and some of the negative outcomes of the Green Revolution.
 - In many areas, local farmers are excluded from seed systems and have limited control over what they plant, relegating indigenous crops to the status of neglected crops.

Way Forward:

- **Food sovereignty needs attention to four critical factors:** people and their rights, the quality of food produced, cultural aspects of food systems, and environmental well-being.
 - A global forum held in Nyeleni Village, Mali 2007 declared food sovereignty as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food" produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.
 - In this way, gender discrimination can also be tackled.
- **Need for nutrition and food security assistance:** Food produced in an indigenous manner has long-term nutritious values and positive effects on human health.
 - Water, sanitation, and hygiene need to be taken care of to help families live and eat better.
- **Policy making and Youth participation:** Although policymakers have begun to seek out young people's voices and perspectives, the share of youth in formal decision-making forums is negligible, and the increased focus on youth participation in some policy dialogues is necessary for a meaningful impact.
- **Economic recovery and market systems through up-skilling the entrepreneurial energy:** In the coming years, the skilling-up programmes can open new possibilities for business; training provided by the private sector can help to improve skills and product quality.

Nutritional crisis in India

News Excerpt:

India has ranked **high** in a study calculating the **prevalence of children** aged 6-23 months who have **not eaten anything** over a 24-hour period across 92 low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

About the study:

- The research, recently published in the journal **JAMA Network Open**, looked at 276,379 babies aged 6 to 23 months in 92 LMICs.
 - Of the total sample size, 51.4% were boys.
- The researchers gathered **data** from Demographic And Health Surveys (**DHS**) and multiple indicator cluster (**MICS**) surveys conducted from May 20, 2010, to January 27, 2022. The **National Family Health Survey's** 2019-2021 data was used for India.
 - DHS and MICS surveys used standardized questions on feeding practices, covering **common and country-specific** solid or semisolid foods.
- The researchers also **warned** that it used data reported by individuals in household surveys.
 - Parents or caregivers might not accurately remember what the child ate 24 hours before the survey, introducing a **recall bias** that could either **underestimate** or **overestimate** the prevalence of zero-food instances.
 - **Zero-food children** are the ones who did **not consume** any animal milk, formula or solid or semisolid food during the **last 24 hours**.

Key findings of the study:

- The data showed that **13.9 million children**, or 10.4% of the sample, had **not eaten anything** in the studied countries.
 - In the total sample, 20% of children **aged 6 to 11 months** had zero food, which decreased to 6.6% for those **aged 12 to 17 months** and further to 4.1% for those **aged 18 to 23 months**.
- **Prevalence rate of zero food children:**

- The **highest** rates are seen in **South Asia** (15.7%) and **West and Central Africa** (10.5%).
- **Latin America** and the **Caribbean** had the **lowest** prevalence and number of zero-food children, at 1.9%.
- **East Asia** and the **Pacific** had the **second-lowest** prevalence, at 2.9%.
- **India** has the third **highest** prevalence among 92 LMICs.
 - With **19.3%** of 'zero-food' children, India was third highest globally after West African countries **Guinea** (21.8%) and **Mali** (20.5%).

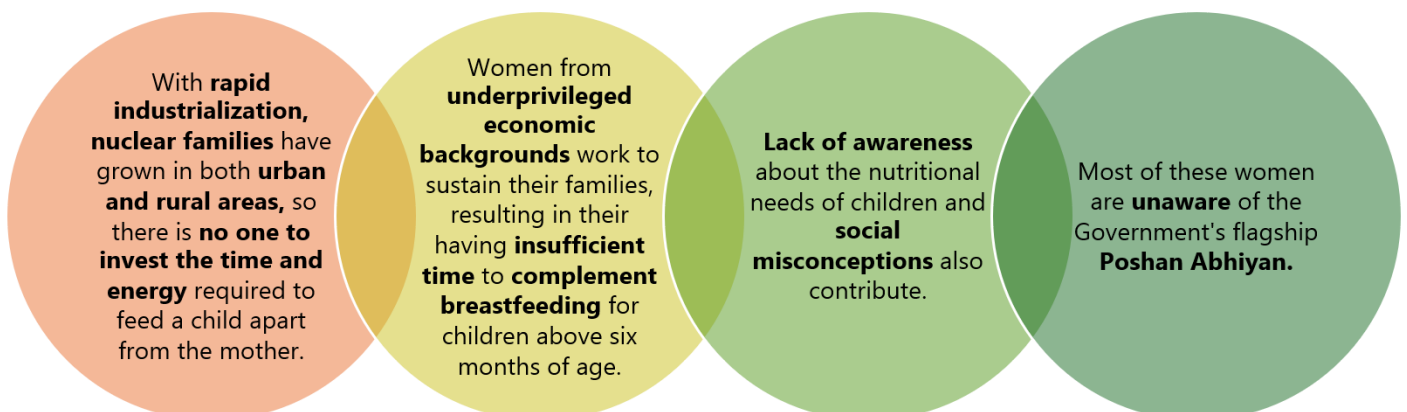
YOUNG & UNHEALTHY

	1-4 yrs	5-9 yrs	10-19 yrs
DISEASES OF OVERNUTRITION (%)			
Overweight		3.7	4.9
Obesity		1.3	1.1
Pre-diabetes		10.3	10.4
Diabetes		1.2	0.6
Hypertension			4.9
High total cholesterol		3.2	3.7
DISEASES OF UNDERNUTRITION (%)			
Anaemia	40.6	23.5	28.4
MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES (%)			
Iron	32.1	17.0	21.5
Vitamin D	13.7	18.2	23.9
Vitamin A	17.5	21.5	15.6
Vitamin B12	13.8	17.2	30.9
Zinc	19.0	16.8	31.7

Source: ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition Report on Dietary Guidelines for Indians

- **Absolute numbers of zero-food children:**
 - **India** had the most '**zero-food**' children at **6.7 million** — **almost half** of all the zero-food children in the surveys.
 - **Nigeria** had the **second-highest number** of zero-food children (962,000), followed by Pakistan (849,000).
 - **Pakistan, Ethiopia** and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** also showed substantial numbers of zero-food children.

Factors leading to many 'zero food children' in India:



- The states of **Uttar Pradesh** (28.4%), **Bihar** (14.2%), **Maharashtra** (7.1%), **Rajasthan** (6.5%), and **Madhya Pradesh** (6%) account for nearly two-thirds of the zero-food children in India.
- More than **99% of the children** who experienced **zero-food** situations had been **breastfed**.
 - This suggests that nearly all these children received some calories even during the 24-hour period when they did not receive other food sources.
- **Short- and Long-term benefits of adequate feeding:**
 - Reduced risk of mortality, malnutrition, stunting, underweight and micronutrient deficiencies.
 - Improved brain development, cognition and school readiness.

Recommendations provided by the study:

- According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the **share of other food contributing to calorific requirements** should be **about 50%** for children aged nine to 11 months (~300 out of 700 Kcal/day).
 - In contrast, the **share of breastmilk should be greater than that of other food for children aged six to eight months** (400 out of 600 Kcal/day).
- **Breastfeeding alone cannot provide infants** with the **necessary nutrition** after they are **six months old**.
 - **Introducing solid or semisolid foods alongside breastfeeding** is pivotal in early childhood growth and development.
- The design and implementation of interventions should be context-specific, accounting for **cultural practices** and **local challenges**.
 - Strategies should include enhancing **access to nutritious foods**, improving maternal and caregiver **knowledge** about appropriate **feeding practices** and **strengthening health systems** to ensure the availability of necessary resources and support.
 - It is crucial to tackle the **socioeconomic** and **environmental factors** that contribute to food insecurity.

New Nutrition Guidelines

News Excerpt:

The **National Institute of Nutrition (NIN)** has published comprehensive guidelines on the diet of vulnerable groups, including pregnant and lactating women, children and the elderly.

More about the news:

- With **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** — **cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes, etc.** — rising and affecting adolescents and even children, NIN has published comprehensive guidelines on the diet of vulnerable groups.

Significance of a healthy diet:

- The guidelines say an estimated **56.4% of India's total disease burden** can be **attributed to unhealthy diets**.
- **A healthy diet** and **physical activity** can prevent **80% of Type 2 diabetes cases** and **significantly reduce the burden of heart disease** and **high blood pressure**.

Dual nutrition challenge:

- Incidence of **micronutrient (zinc, iron, vitamins) deficiencies** ranged from **13% to 30% of children between ages 1 and 19**.
- The **prevalence of anaemia** in the country is at **40.6%, 23.5%, and 28.4%** in **children under age 5, ages 5-9, and 10-19** respectively.
- The **prevalence of anaemia** has risen due to **deficiencies in iron and folic acid**, stemming from the **consumption of unhealthy, highly processed, high-fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) foods**.

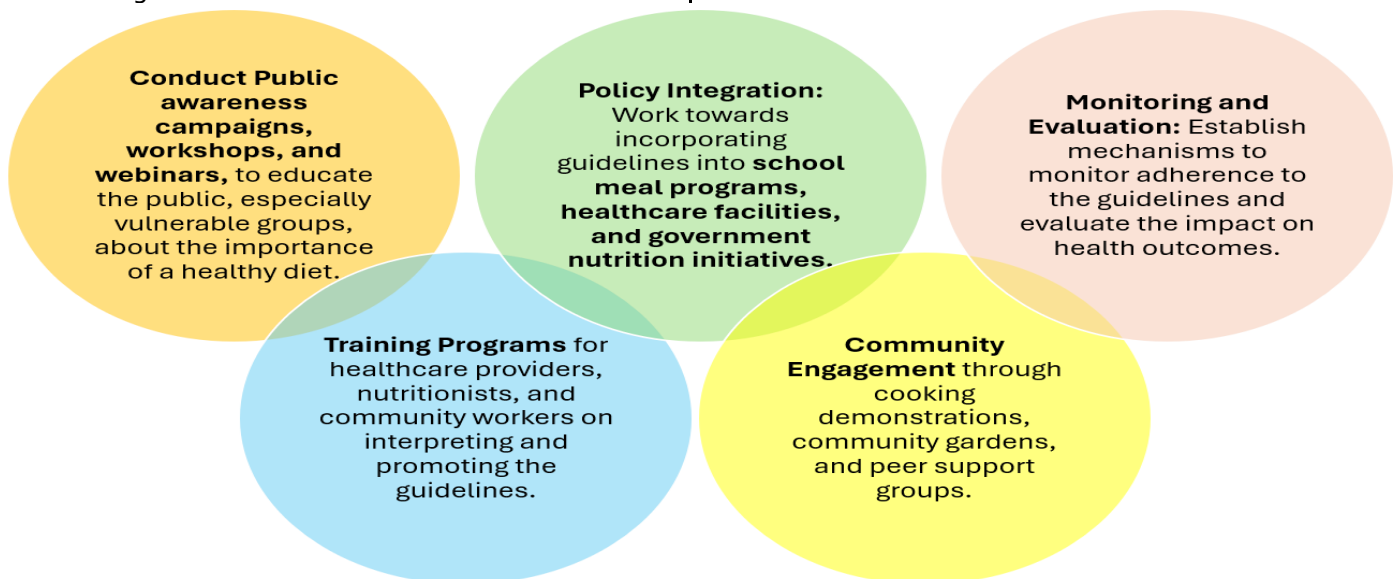
General Guidelines:

- The guidelines recommend getting the required nutrients from **at least eight food groups**, including **vegetables, leafy vegetables, roots and tubers, dairy, nuts, and oils**.
 - Consumption of **cereals** — the staple of Indian meals — **should be restricted**.
 - They should contribute only **45% of the total energy** (instead of the 50-70% they currently do).
 - **More proteins (pulses, meat, poultry, fish)** should be consumed, making up **14% of the total daily energy** (instead of only 6-9% now).
 - Achieving adequate levels of **essential polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA)** and **B12** is a challenge for vegetarians.
 - **The guidelines recommend the consumption of flax seeds, chia seeds, walnuts, vegetables, and greens**.
 - **Salt and Sugar:**
 - **Salt** consumption should be restricted to **5g a day**.
 - Guidelines strongly recommend **against** consuming highly processed foods that are typically high in fats, salt, and sugar.
 - NIN has advised Indians to **restrict sugar intake to 20 to 25 grams a day**.
 - **Oils and Fats:**
 - The institute also okayed **air-frying** as a mode of cooking for usually oil-intensive food items.
 - Another key suggestion is to **decrease the use of cooking oil** and obtain essential fatty acids through **nuts, oilseeds, and seafood**.
 - Guidelines advise avoiding **protein supplements**.
 - The NIN has also introduced guidelines for **interpreting packaged food labels** for the **first time**.
- #### Group-specific guidelines:
- **Pregnant women:**
 - **Small frequent meals** for those experiencing nausea and vomiting.

- The guidelines recommend the consumption of **lots of fruit and vegetables**, especially those **high in iron and folate content**.
- **Infants and children:**
 - For the **first six months**, infants should **only be breastfed** and **must not be given honey, glucose, or diluted milk**.
- **Elderly:**
 - The elderly should consume **foods rich in proteins, calcium, micronutrients, and fibre**.
 - Apart from pulses and cereals — with at least **one-third as whole grains** — at least 200-400 ml of **low-fat milk** or milk products, a fist full of nuts and oilseeds, and 400-500g of **vegetables and fruit** should be consumed.
 - **Exercise** is important to maintain bone density and muscle mass.
- **Cooking Utensils:**
- NIN has termed **earthen cookware as the safest utensil** for cooking food and **warned about non-stick pans**.
 - Earthen pots are **eco-friendly, require less oil** for food preparation, and **preserve the nutrition of food**.
- NIN has also issued guidelines for **using metal, steel, non-stick pans and granite stones**.
 - **Metal:** Storing acidic foods like chutneys and sambar in aluminium, iron, unlined brass, or copper vessels is unsafe.
 - **Stainless steel:** Generally considered safe, it doesn't leach.
 - **Non-stick pans:** Risky if heat is more than 170°C. Discard it if the coating is worn out or damaged.
 - **Granite stone:** Considered safe unless it contains Teflon coating. If so, medium-high temperature is advisable.

Way Forward:

Implementing the nutrition guidelines effectively can involve various strategies such as:



Food Security Information Network (FSIN) on food crisis

News Excerpt:

According to the UN agencies and development groups, Food insecurity worsened worldwide in 2023.

Key Points:

- With some **282 million people suffering from acute hunger** due to conflicts, particularly in Gaza and Sudan.
- **Extreme weather events and economic shocks** also increased the number of people facing acute food insecurity, which grew by 24 million people compared with 2022, according to the latest **Global report on food crises** from the **Food Security Information Network (FSIN)**.
- 2023 was the fifth consecutive year of rises in the number of people suffering acute food insecurity, defined as when populations face food deprivation that threatens lives or livelihoods, regardless of the causes or length of time.
 - Much of last year's increase was due to the report's expanded geographic coverage and deteriorating conditions in 12 countries.
- More geographical areas experienced "**new or intensified shocks**" while there was a "**marked deterioration in key food crisis contexts such as Sudan and the Gaza Strip**".
 - Some 700,000 people, including 600,000 in Gaza, were on the brink of starvation last year, a figure that has since climbed yet higher to 1.1 million in the war-ridden Palestinian territory.
- The report found that, on a positive note, the **situation improved in 17 countries in 2023, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ukraine**.

Children starving:

- Since the first report by the **Global Food Crisis Network** in 2016, the number of food-insecure people has risen from **108 million to 282 million**.

- Meanwhile, the share of the population affected within the areas concerned has doubled, **from 11 percent to 22 percent.**
- Protracted major food crises are ongoing in **Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Syria and Yemen.**
- **War, climate chaos, and a cost-of-living crisis,** combined with inadequate action, meant that almost **300 million people faced an acute food crisis in 2023.**
 - One of the reasons is that Funding is not keeping pace with need.
 - This is especially true as the **costs of distributing aid have risen.**
 - For 2024, progress will depend on the end of hostilities, who stressed that aid could **"rapidly"** alleviate the crisis in Gaza or Sudan, for example, once humanitarian access to the areas is possible.

Food Security Information Network (FSIN):

- Technical global platform for exchanging expertise, knowledge, and best practices in food security and nutrition analysis.
- Purpose is to promote timely, accurate, independent and consensus-based food security and nutrition information while also highlighting and addressing critical data and information gaps.
- Plays a leading role in food security and nutrition data analysis and information, particularly in countries facing acute hunger.
- Supports evidence-based decision-making and promoting effective actions to eradicate hunger and malnutrition.
- Since 2017, FSIN has worked closely with the **Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC).**
- FSIN's work spans the effort of 16 global and regional partners committed to improving the availability and quality of food security and nutrition analysis for better decision-making.
- Funded by the European Union, FSIN is supported and guided by a Steering Committee and operates through a Secretariat.

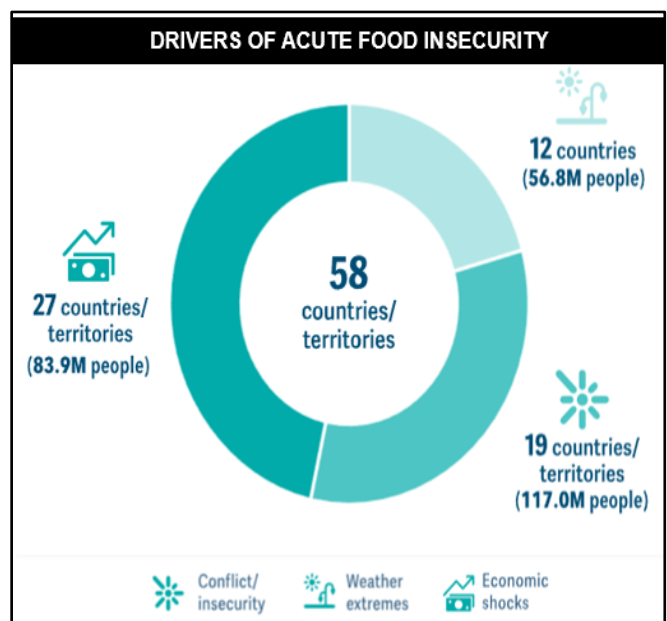
Drivers of food insecurity:

- **Conflict/insecurity**
 - This includes **interstate and intrastate conflicts, internal violence, banditry and criminality, civil unrest, and political crises, which often lead to population displacements and/or disruption of livelihoods and food systems.**
 - Worsening conditions in **Haiti** were due to political instability and reduced agricultural production, **"where in the breadbasket of the Artibonite Valley, armed groups have seized agricultural land and stolen crops"**.

According to the report, situations of conflict or insecurity have become the main cause of acute hunger in **20**

countries or territories where 135 million people have suffered.

- **Weather extremes**
 - These include **droughts, floods, dry spells, storms, cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons and the untimely start of rainy seasons.**
 - Weather extremes drive food insecurity by directly affecting crops and/or livestock, cutting off roads and preventing markets from being stocked.
 - Extreme climatic events such as floods or droughts were the **main cause of acute food insecurity for 72 million people in 18 countries, and economic shocks pushed 75 million people into this situation in 21 countries.**



- **Economic shocks**
 - Macroeconomic shocks may lead to increases in acute food insecurity through, for instance, **a contraction in GDP leading to high unemployment rates and consequent loss of income for those affected households or a significant contraction in exports and/or a critical decrease in investments and other capital inflows, bringing a significant currency depreciation and high inflation, increasing production costs and food prices and worsening terms of trade** which may lead to increases in acute food insecurity.
- **Crop pests and animal diseases**
 - Transboundary plant pests and diseases can easily spread to several countries and reach epidemic proportions.
 - **Outbreaks and upsurges can cause huge losses to crops and pastures, threatening farmers' livelihoods and the food and nutrition security of millions at a time.**

WAY FORWARD



POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

Male-domination in India's Workforce

News Excerpt

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data shows that in 2016-17, females comprised only 15.3 per cent of the labour force in India. This fell to 12 per cent in 2019-20 and fell further to a mere 10.3 per cent in 2022-23.

Labour force participation rate (LFPR)

- The LFPR is the share of the working-age population (aged 15 years and above) that is employed or unemployed, willing and looking for employment.
- Labour force participation rate is defined as the section of working population in the age group of 16-64 in the economy currently employed or seeking employment.
 - People who are still undergoing studies, housewives and persons above the age of 64 are not reckoned in the labour force.

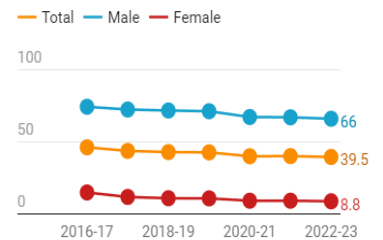
- The labour force participation rate is the measure to evaluate working-age population in an economy.

About the Low LFPR

- India's labour force participation rate (LFPR) fell to **39.5%** in the financial year **2022-23**.

India's Labour Force Participation Rate continues to fall

LFPR (in %) is the share of the working age population (aged 15 years and above) that is employed or unemployed, willing and looking for employment.



- Only **39.5% Indians aged 15 years and above**, are asking for a job. Among men, this proportion was **66%** and among women, just **8.8%**. This is the **lowest LFPR since financial year 2016-17**.
- It is noteworthy that the fall has happened despite the fast growth rate of the economy. For instance, the **GDP grew by 7.2% in 2022-23**.
- Data shows that the bulk of the decline happened before the Covid pandemic. This was the time when the economy was decelerating sharply. The GDP in 2019-20 grew by less than 4%.
- India's workforce is becoming increasingly male-dominated, thanks to India's starkly low female LFPR.
 - CMIE data shows that in 2016-17, females comprised only 15.3 per cent of the labour force in India. This fell to 12 per cent in 2019-20 and fell further to a mere 10.3 per cent in 2022-23.

Reason for the low LFPR

- Typically, this happens when workers fail to get a job for long periods of time, get discouraged and decide to sit out of the labour force.
- The Covid-19 pandemic also affect the labour force. A lot of labour force displaced due to pandemic and now they are worried about their social and economic security in outside home.
- One reason cited for low LFPR is that the employment rate among the women is abysmally low.
- Increased mechanisation is also a one of the reasons that decrease LFPR. Unskilled or semi-skilled worker are losing their job due to mechanisation.

Reason for the huge difference between men and women in LFPR

- The root causes of the observed decline in female labour force participation in India, which include:
 - Increasing attendance in educational institutions;
 - Increased household income;

- Social pressure, fertility rates and the age of marriage
- Changes in measurement methodology across surveys; and
- Insufficient job opportunities for women.
- A possible explanation for the lack of available job opportunities for women is that men benefit disproportionately from increased demand for highly skilled workers. This is likely in India as men remain more skilled and more educated on average than women.
- Nonetheless, the nature of economic growth in the country has meant that jobs were not created in large numbers in sectors that could readily absorb women, especially for those in rural areas.
- Women continue to face many barriers to enter labour market and to access decent work and disproportionately face a range of multiple challenges relating to access to employment, choice of work, working conditions, employment security, wage parity, discrimination, and balancing the competing burdens of work and family responsibilities.

Govt. Initiative to Increase LFPR

- Central Government has targeted the issue by taking various prominent steps to increase female labour participation rate which includes
 - The Code on Social Security, 2020 has the provisions for enhancement in paid **maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks**, provision for mandatory **crèche facility** in the establishments having 50 or more employees, **permitting women workers in the night shifts** with adequate safety measures, etc.
 - The Code on Wages 2019 has provisions that there shall be **no discrimination in an establishment or any unit thereof among employees on the ground of gender in matters relating to wages** by the same employer, in respect of the same work or work of similar nature done by any employee.
 - To enhance the employability of female workers, the **Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes.**
- Government has implemented the **National Career Service (NCS) Project** which comprises a digital portal that provides a nation-wide online platform for jobseekers and employers for job matching in a

dynamic, efficient and responsive manner and has a repository of career content.

- A new Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has been established to coordinate the skill development schemes across various sectors.
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) to enhance the employability of youth.
- The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) was launched to incentivize employers for creation of new employment and restoration of loss of employment during Covid-19 pandemic.

Way forward

- The policy makers in India and throughout the region should take a comprehensive approach to improving labour market outcomes for women through improving access to and relevance of education and training programs, skills development, access to child care, maternity protection, and provision of safe and accessible transport, along with the promotion of a pattern of growth that creates job opportunities.
- Beyond standard labour force participation rates, policy-makers should be more concerned about whether women are able to access better jobs or start up a business, and take advantage of new labour market opportunities as a country grows.
- A policy framework encouraging and enabling women's participation should be constructed with active awareness of the "gender-specific" constraints that face most women. Gender responsive policies need to be contextually developed.

Multidimensional Poverty

News Excerpt

The latest update of the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) praise India for its significant progress.

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

- The global MPI was developed by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative: OPHI, with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) for inclusion in UNDP's flagship Human Development Report in 2010.
- It has been published annually by OPHI.
- It complements traditional monetary poverty measures by capturing the acute deprivations in **health, education, and living standards** that a person faces simultaneously.
- The MPI measures "interlinked deprivations in health, education and standard of living that directly affect a person's life and wellbeing".

TABLE: Global MPI – Dimensions, Indicators, Deprivation Cutoffs, and Weights

DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY	INDICATOR	DEPRIVED IF LIVING IN A HOUSEHOLD WHERE...	WEIGHT	SDG AREA
Health (1/3)	Nutrition	Any person under 70 years of age for whom there is nutritional information is undernourished.	1/6	SDG 2: Zero Hunger
	Child mortality	A child under 18 has died in the household in the five-year period preceding the survey.	1/6	SDG 3: Health and Well-being
Education (1/3)	Years of Schooling	No eligible household member has completed six years of schooling.	1/6	SDG 4: Quality Education
	School attendance	Any school-aged child is not attending school up to the age at which he/she would complete class 8.	1/6	SDG 4: Quality Education
Living Standards (1/3)	Cooking fuel	A household cooks using solid fuel, such as dung, agricultural crop, shrubs, wood, charcoal, or coal.	1/18	SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
	Sanitation	The household has unimproved or no sanitation facility or it is improved but shared with other households.	1/18	SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
	Drinking water	The household's source of drinking water is not safe or safe drinking water is a 30-minute or longer walk from home, roundtrip.	1/18	SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
	Electricity	The household has no electricity.	1/18	SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
	Housing	The household has inadequate housing materials in any of the three components: floor, roof, or walls.	1/18	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
	Assets	The household does not own more than one of these assets: radio, TV, telephone, computer, animal cart, bicycle, motorbike, or refrigerator, and does not own a car or truck.	1/18	SDG 1: No Poverty

Key points of the report

- According to the report, countries with different incidences of poverty have halved their global MPI value. While 17 countries that did so had an incidence under 25% in the first period, India and Congo had a starting incidence above 50%.
- Report stated that **25 countries**, including India, successfully **halved their global MPI values within 15 years**, showing that rapid progress is attainable.
 - These countries include **Cambodia, China, Congo, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Serbia, and Vietnam**.
- According to the MPI, 2023 release, 1.1 billion out of 6.1 billion people (just more than 18%) live in acute multidimensional poverty across 110 countries.
 - Sub-Saharan Africa (534 million) and South Asia (389 million) are home to approximately five out of every six poor people.
- Nearly two-thirds of all poor people (730 million people) live in middle-income countries, making action in these countries vital for reducing global poverty.
 - Although low-income countries constitute only 10% of the population included in the MPI, these are where 35% of all poor people reside.
- Children under the age of 18 account for half of MPI-poor people (566 million). The poverty rate among children is 27.7%, while among adults, it is 13.4%.

- In over half the countries covered, there was either no statistically significant reduction in child poverty or the MPI value fell more slowly among children than among adults during at least one period. This suggests that child poverty will continue to be a pressing issue, particularly in relation to school attendance and under-nutrition.
- Poverty predominantly affects rural areas, with 84% of all poor people living in rural areas. **Rural areas are poorer than urban areas across all regions of the world.**
- Countries halved their MPI in periods as short as four to 12 years, demonstrating the feasibility of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of halving poverty according to national definitions within 15 years.
- A press release issued by the UNDP stated that judging from the few countries where data were solely collected in 2021 or 2022 – Mexico, Madagascar, Cambodia, Peru, and Nigeria – momentum on poverty reduction may have persisted during the pandemic.
- Cambodia, Peru, and Nigeria showed significant reductions in their most recent periods, offering hope that progress is still possible.
 - In Cambodia, the most encouraging case among these, the incidence of poverty fell from 36.7% to 16.6%, and the number of poor people halved, from 5.6 million to 2.8 million, all within 7.5 years, including the pandemic years (2014–2021/22).

Factors played key role to achieve the milestone

All 12 parameters of the MPI have shown marked improvements. Flagship programmes like-

- The Poshan Abhiyan and Anaemia Mukta Bharat have contributed to reduced deprivations in health.
- Initiatives such as Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) have improved sanitation across the country. The impact of these efforts is evident in the swift improvement in sanitation deprivations.
- The provision of subsidized cooking fuel through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) has positively transformed lives, with improvement in cooking fuel deprivations.
- Initiatives like Saubhagya, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), and Samagra Shiksha have also played a major role in significantly reducing multidimensional poverty in the country.
- The remarkable progress achieved through extremely low deprivation rates especially for electricity, access to bank accounts and drinking water, reflects the Government's unwavering commitment to improving citizens' lives and creating a brighter future for all.
- Consistent implementation across a diverse set of programmes and initiatives that have strong interlinkages has led to a significant reduction in deprivations across multiple indicators.

Way Forward

- According to the MPI report India still has more than 230 million people who are poor. So, India should take the population "vulnerable" to multidimensional poverty seriously.
- Govt. should work for reducing regional disparity and inequality across state and nation.
- Increasing awareness through civil society, media and other factor and participation in planning, budgeting, scheme or programme implementation will be more effective step for poverty eradication.
- One of the major steps for the poverty eradication will be proper implementation of current programmes and schemes of the government.

Rise in road accidents

News Excerpt:

The annual report on "Road Accidents in India-2022" has been published by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)**.

Key findings of the report:

- India experienced a **12% increase** in road accidents in 2022, reaching **over 4.6 lakh**, resulting in **19 deaths per hour**, with **53 accidents** occurring **every hour** in the country.
- Out of the total **accidents** recorded -

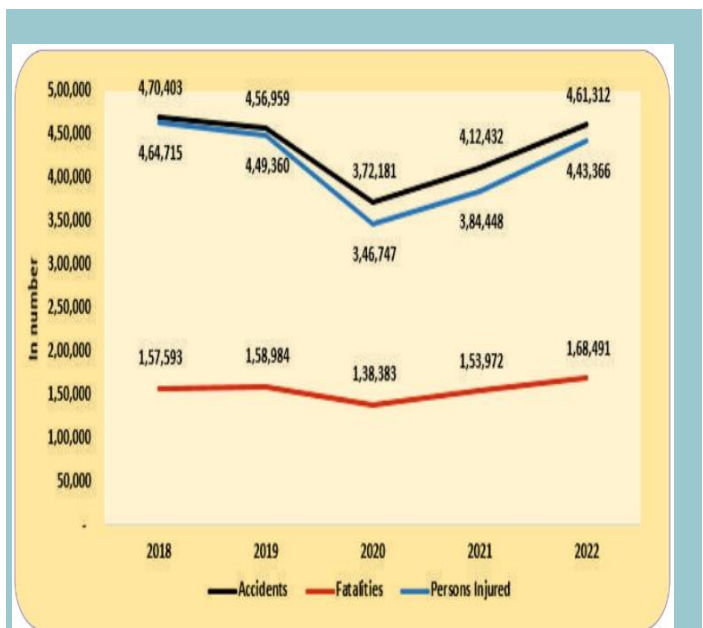
- **32.9%** of the accidents took place on **National Highways** including Expressways,
- **23.1%** took place on **State Highways**,
- **43.9%** on **Other Roads**.
- Out of the total **fatalities** reported -
 - **36.2%** were on **National Highways**,
 - **24.3%** were on **State Highways**,
 - **39.4%** were on **Other Roads**.
- For the **fourth consecutive year** in 2022, the **fatal road accident victims** largely constituted young people in the productive age groups.
 - **66.5 %** of victims: **Young adults** in the age group of **18-45 years**.
 - **83.4 %** of total fatalities: People in the working age group (**18-60 years**).
- **Two-wheelers** accounted for the **highest share** in total accidents and fatalities, followed by light vehicles.
 - The share of two-wheeler riders in total fatality was the highest (44.5%), followed by pedestrian road users, with **19.5%** of persons **killed** in road accidents.

State-related findings:

- **Tamil Nadu** recorded the **highest number** of road accidents on **National Highways** in 2022, followed by **Madhya Pradesh** (11.8%).
- **Uttar Pradesh** topped the states regarding **fatalities** due to road accidents, followed by **Tamil Nadu** (10.6%).

Causes of accidents:

- **Over-speeding** (71.2%) was a major killer, followed by **driving on the wrong side** (5.4%).
- Human error, road environment and vehicular condition.



Trends in number of Accidents, Fatalities and Persons Injured: 2018 to 2022

Rural-Urban scenario:

- Rural Areas: **68%** of road accident deaths.
- **Urban areas:** **32%** of total accident deaths.
- **Million Plus Cities** (fifty in number)- **16.6%** of the total number of **accidents** and **10.1%** of total accident fatalities.

International scenario:

- A **comparison** of select indicators published in **World Road Statistics, 2022** of the International Road Federation has been undertaken.
- **Chinese Taipei** has the **highest rate** of injury accidents per **1,00,000 population**.
- The **United States** has the **highest** total number of injury accidents.
- **India**, Indonesia, and Brazil have **relatively low** injury accident rates per 1,00,000 population.
- **India** has the **highest number** of total **persons killed** due to road accidents, followed by **China** and the **United States**.
- **Venezuela** has the **highest rate** of persons killed per 1,00,000 population. Several countries, such as Brazil, Pakistan, and Nigeria, have low rates of persons killed per 1,00,000 population.

Measures taken by MoRTH:

- **Education Measures:**
 - Publicity measures and **awareness campaigns** through social media, electronic media and print media.
 - **Scheme** to provide **financial assistance** to various agencies for administering **Road Safety Advocacy**.
 - Observance of **National Road Safety Month/Week** every year.
 - Scheme for setting up of Institute of Driving Training & Research (**IDTRs**), Regional Driving Training Centres (**RDTCs**) and Driving Training Centres (**DTCs**) at state/district level across the Country.
- **Engineering Measures:**
 - **Road engineering:**
 - Road Safety Audit (**RSA**) of all highway projects has been made mandatory at all stages.
 - High priority to identification and rectification of **black spots /accident spots** on National Highways.
 - Five stretches of NH having a higher number of accidents/blackspots are being developed as **Model Safe Roads**.
 - The **Electronic Detailed Accident Report (e-DAR) Project** has been initiated to establish a central repository for reporting, management and analysis of road accident data across the country.
 - **Vehicle engineering:**

- Mandatory provision of an **airbag for the passenger** seated on the front seat of a vehicle, next to the driver.
- Norms related to safety measures for **children below four years of age**, riding or being carried on a motorcycle.
- Seat Belt Reminder (**SBR**), Over speed warning system, **Reverse Parking Alert** System, Anti-Lock Braking System (**ABS**), Crash Norms, and **Vehicle Scrapping Policy**.
- **Enforcement Measures:**
 - **The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019** provides for strict penalties for ensuring compliance and enhancing deterrence for violation of traffic rules and strict enforcement through the use of technology.
 - **Electronic Monitoring and Enforcement of Road Safety rules** specify the detailed provisions for placement of electronic enforcement devices, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (**ANPR**), etc.
- **Emergency Care:**
 - Rules for the protection of **Good Samaritan**.
 - Enhanced **compensation of victims of hit-and-run motor accidents**.
 - National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) provisions for **ambulances** with **paramedical staff**/Emergency Medical Technicians/Nurses at **toll plazas**.

Multidimensional Poverty in India

News Excerpt:

According to a discussion paper released by NITI Aayog, **the share of India's population living in multidimensional poverty is estimated to have fallen.**

National MPI:

- India's national MPI measure uses the globally accepted and robust methodology developed by the **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)** and the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- **NITI Aayog**, as the nodal agency for MPI, has been responsible for constructing an indigenous index for monitoring the performance of states and Union Territories in addressing multidimensional poverty.
- **India's definition of multidimensional poverty** is measured using **12 indicators**, including nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, maternal care, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, bank accounts and assets.

Highlights of the report:

- In absolute numbers, NITI Aayog estimates a total of **24.82 crore people** escaped multidimensional poverty in the **last nine years**.

Snapshot of Multidimensional Poverty in India			
Year	Headcount Ratio (H)	Intensity of Poverty (A)	MPI (H x A)
2019-21	14.96%	44.39%	0.066
2015-16	24.85%	47.14%	0.117

- According to the Discussion Paper, India has registered a significant decline in multidimensional poverty from **29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23**, i.e., a reduction of **17.89 %** points.
- **Uttar Pradesh** registered the largest decline in the number of poor, with 5.94 crore people escaping multidimensional poverty during the last nine years, followed by **Bihar** at 3.77 crore, **Madhya Pradesh** at 2.30 crore and Rajasthan at 1.87 crore.
- According to the estimated share of MPI (Multidimensional Poverty Index) poor in 2013-14 and 2022-23, **Bihar recorded a 53 % drop** from 56.3 % share of MPI poor in 2013-14 to 26.59 % in 2022-23.
- In 2005-06, the share of MPI poor in India's total population was 55.34 %. The discussion paper uses previously released MPI data based on **National Family Health Surveys (NFHS)** conducted in 2015-16 and 2019-21, and also uses NFHS-3 data from 2005-06 to understand long-term poverty trends.
- As a result, India is likely to achieve its multiple **SDG targets** of halving multidimensional poverty well before 2030.
- UP, Bihar, MP, Odisha and Rajasthan recorded the steepest decline in the number of MPI poor.

beneficiaries, providing food grains to rural and urban populations.

- Free food grain distribution will be extended under **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** for another five years.
- Various programs addressing maternal health, clean cooking fuel distribution through **Ujjwala Yojana**, improved electricity coverage via **Saubhagya**, and transformative campaigns like **Swachh Bharat Mission** and **Jal Jeevan Mission** have collectively elevated people's living conditions and overall well-being.
- Flagship programs like **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** and **PM Awas Yojana** have played pivotal roles in financial inclusion and providing safe housing for the underprivileged.

Critical analysis of declining multidimensional poverty:

- Post welfare transfers, deprivation in many dimensions has been considerably reduced.
 - The **moot question** is **how long** welfare support can continue. It is **not a long-term solution**.
- The **depth of poverty** should also be looked upon. It is **not correct** to apply uniform **calorie requirement norms** to all. The government should look **beyond food consumption**.
- Even the **World Bank** and **International Monetary Fund** estimates of Indian poverty differ by a wide **margin of 10 percentage points**.
- The **absence of household consumption data** blindfolds current research.
 - Consumption data is used to estimate poverty prevalence and gain insights into wages, inflation and other indicators.



prevalence and gain insights into wages, inflation and other indicators.

• In a **paper** written by economist Partha Dasgupta in the early 1970s. He concluded that if there is **only one thing** we must focus on, it is **life expectancy at age one**.

◦ It captures the quality of pre- and post-natal care, healthcare status, family income and well-being in general.

• India is slipping on **hunger and nutrition rankings**.

◦ It was placed **111th out of 125 nations** in the **Global Hunger Index 2023**, signifying a severe hunger level.

• **COVID-19** interrupted the **education** of over **200 million children**

with weak online access, setting them back by two years.

Way Forward:

- The government should look for more stable **long-term strategies** for reducing poverty, such as **creating jobs in the formal sector** and **increasing capital expenditure** and **social sector spending**.

Reasons behind declining multidimensional poverty:

- Initiatives like **Poshan Abhiyan** and **Anaemia Mukh Bharat** have significantly enhanced access to healthcare facilities, substantially decreasing deprivation.
- One of the world's largest food security programs, the **Targeted Public Distribution System** under the **National Food Security Act** covers 81.35 crore



- The **household consumption data** should be included in calculating multidimensional poverty. It will give a clear picture of the daily and monthly **wages and inflation**.
- India's substantial **reduction** in the **poverty headcount ratio** reflects transformative government initiatives. There is a **need** for the **commitment to comprehensive development**, which will note improvements in all **12 MPI indicators**, showcasing holistic progress and positioning India to **achieve SDG targets** well before 2030.

Human Development Report (HDR) 2023-24

News Excerpt:

According to the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** report '**Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarised World,**' **India ranks 134 out of 193** countries on the global Human Development Index (HDI).

Key highlights of the report:

- **India:**
 - With an HDI value of 0.644, the latest HDR places **India** in the **medium human development category**.
 - **Between 1990 and 2022**, the country's **HDI** (Human Development Index) value **increased by 48.4 per cent**, from 0.434 in 1990 to 0.644 in 2022.
 - **India** has also shown **progress in reducing gender inequality, ranking 108th out of 166 countries in the GII** (Gender Inequality Index) 2022.
 - The GII measures gender inequalities in three key dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market.
 - The country's GII value of 0.437 is better than the global average of 0.462 and the South Asian average of 0.478*.
 - **India's reproductive health performance is better** than that of other countries in the medium human



development group or **South Asia**.

- India's adolescent birth rate in 2022 was 16.3 (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19), an improvement from 17.1 in 2021.
- **India** has one of the **largest gender gaps in the labour force participation rate** - a 47.8 percentage point difference between women (28.3%) and men (76.1%).
- India's southern neighbour, **Sri Lanka**, is **ranked much ahead at 78**, while **China is ranked 75**. Both are classified under the **High Human Development category**.
- **India ranks below Bhutan**, which is 125th, and **Bangladesh**, which is 129th.
 - India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh are all in the Medium Human Development category.
 - **Switzerland** has been **ranked number one**.
 - Nepal (146) and Pakistan (164) have been ranked lower than India.
- **India's life expectancy at birth has slightly improved from 67.2 years in 2021 to 67.7 years in 2022**.
 - There was an **overall increase (5.88%) in expected years of schooling (EYS) from 11.9 to 12.6**, which improved 18 places when the EYS aspect was considered.
- **India's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita has improved** from \$6,542 to \$6,951.
- **Global:**
 - The report notes that **inequality worldwide is rising again**: after 20 years of convergence, the gap between the richest and poorest countries has started to widen from 2020.
 - These global inequalities are compounded by **substantial economic concentration**.
 - **Almost 40% of global trade in goods is concentrated in three or fewer countries**.
 - In 2021, the market capitalization of each of the three largest tech companies surpassed the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of more than 90% of countries that

year.

- **India's loss in HDI due to inequality is 31.1%.**

- South Asia's loss in the HDI due to inequality is among the highest in the world (after sub-Saharan Africa), followed by the Pacific.

The report proposes four areas for immediate action to break through the current deadlock and reignite a commitment to a shared future:

- **Planetary public goods for climate stability** as we confront the unprecedented challenges of the Anthropocene.
- **Digital global public goods for greater equity** in harnessing new technologies for equitable human development.

- **New and expanded financial mechanisms** include a novel international cooperation track that complements humanitarian assistance and traditional development aid to low-income countries.
- **Dialling down political polarisation** through new governance approaches focused on enhancing people's voices in deliberation and tackling misinformation.

Recommendations for how to improve the provision of different types of global public goods

Aggregation	Provision prognosis	Recommendations
Best-shot (for example, scientific breakthrough)	Likely to be provided if incentives are strong enough for the best shooter to contribute	Rich or dominant country fosters provision, but multilateral institutions can pool actions or coordinate among multiple potential best shooters
Summation (for example, climate change mitigation)	Tendency for underprovision due to free or easy riding because contributions are perfectly substitutable	Grants and loans are needed to foster fairness, and multilateral institutions are needed to monitor and track contributions
Weakest link (for example, disease control)	More likely to be provided if interests and capacities are similar; if there is a need to shore up poor countries, free riding concerns may emerge if support is to be pooled across high countries; risk of a "spoiler" blocking provision	Capacity building is essential to enhance the contributions of those least able to contribute; income redistribution makes provision more likely

Source: Human Development Report Office based on Buchholz and Sandler (2021).

India's fertility rate

News Excerpt:

A recent **Lancet study** on global fertility rates indicates a **decline in India's total fertility rate (TFR)**.

Total Fertility Rate (TFR):

- It is the **average number of children a woman would give birth to during her lifetime** if she were to pass

through her childbearing years (15-49 years) experiencing the present-day age-specific fertility rates.

- It is **calculated** by adding up all the age-specific fertility rates, multiplying this sum by five (the width of the age-group interval), and then dividing by 1,000.

Key highlights of the study:

India's fertility rate:

- In **2021**, India's TFR was **1.91 children per woman**, below the necessary **replacement fertility level** of **2.1**.
- India's TFR has been seeing a **decline** over the last century, with the fertility rate falling from 6.18 children per woman in 1950 to a projected **1.29 children per woman by 2050**. It can **further fall** to **1.04 children per woman** in the year 2100.

Global fertility rate:

- The study estimates that by **2050**, **155 of the 204 countries** will have **fertility below the replacement level**. This figure is expected to rise to **198 countries by 2100**.
- By 2100, the **estimated fertility rates** will be **below the replacement level** in more than 95% of the world's countries and territories, but disparities in rates will remain.

Factors contributing to the decline of TFR in India:

- **Delay in marriage and pregnancy:** The age of marriage is being delayed, leading to a decrease in the average age of first pregnancy.
 - Women are opting for pregnancy in their mid to **late 30s** instead of their **mid-20s**.
- **Increase in female literacy and workforce participation:** Higher levels of education and increased participation of women in the workforce are leading to a shift in priorities.
 - Women are **focusing** more on their **careers** and **personal aspirations**, which is decreasing their desire for large families.
- **Urbanisation and busy lifestyles:** Busy lifestyles in urban areas and high-stress jobs are causing individuals to reconsider having children altogether. The demands of modern urban living may **discourage** individuals from **starting or expanding** their **families**.
- **Economic unviability:** For many families in India, having more children is not economically viable.
 - **Rising living costs, education expenses**, and the desire for a higher standard of living can **deter couples** from having more children.
- **Social changes:** Social norms and values regarding family size and dynamics are evolving. Today, the notion that **large families** are necessary for **social security** is considered **outdated**.

Implications of low fertility for the economy:

- **Ageing population:** With a declining fertility rate, India will likely face an ageing population in the future.
 - This demographic shift can **strain public services**

such as **healthcare** and **pension systems**, as **fewer working-age individuals** will be available to support the elderly population.

- **Labour force shortages:** A decrease in the number of young people entering the workforce due to lower birth rates can lead to labour force shortages.
 - This could impact various **economic sectors**, including manufacturing, agriculture, and services, affecting productivity and **economic growth**.
- **Economic productivity:** A shrinking workforce resulting from lower fertility rates can potentially **hamper** economic productivity.
 - With fewer individuals contributing to the labour force, there may be challenges in **sustaining economic growth** and development.
- **Pension systems:** A lower birth rate means fewer individuals entering the workforce to support social security and pension systems.
 - This could **strain government budgets** and **necessitate reforms** to ensure the sustainability of these systems in the face of demographic changes.

Way Forward:

- **Scandinavian nations**—like Sweden and Denmark promote gender parity as they **finance healthcare**, offer **inexpensive child care**, and launch **extensive programs** aimed at engaging men.
- **Men** would need to shoulder more of the **caregiving and home responsibilities** if they wanted women to be able to balance professions and parenthood.
- In addition to **social security and pension reforms**, economic measures that promote growth and **job creation** will be crucial for adjusting to and lessening the effects of lower birth rates.
- To address the implications of declining fertility rates, policymakers may need to **implement reforms** to encourage **family formation** and support **working parents**.
 - Measures include **affordable childcare**, **parental leave policies**, and **incentives for larger families**.

INDIAN SOCIETY

Regulation of Online money gambling

News Excerpt

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has announced new regulations to protect online gamers from harmful content and addiction. New online gaming rules have been included as an amendment in the IT Rules of 2021.

Online Game:

The Indian government defines an online game as "a game that is offered on the Internet and is accessible by a user through a computer resource or an intermediary. Permissible online games are those games, real money or otherwise, that do not involve wagering, user harm in its content and do not create any addictive consequences for children.

Differences between video games and RMGs		
ISSUE	VIDEO GAMES	ONLINE REAL MONEY GAMES
Legal view	Considered entertainment products and art forms	International laws govern them under the Online Gambling Act of their respective lands
Primary industry concerns	Age-appropriate content regulation	Socio-economic impact on individuals
Primary incentive & benefit for players	Entertainment, leisure, and career development to become an esports athlete and/or game streamer	Cash winnings
Emotional response triggers for players	Winning or losing virtual in-game activities (gameplay)	Winning or losing cash prizes and deposited money
Monetisation	Buy to Play model - player pays or subscribes to play; Free to Play model - income generated from in-game purchases of virtual items and from advertisements	Operators charge a percentage as commission/platform fees from the deposit and/or earnings of every player on every game
Consumer age group	Ages 3 and above. games have age rating certificates based on content maturity level	Ages 18 & above only due to heavy involvement of real money
Nature of IP	Company-owned original IP or licensed IPs of multimedia brands like Disney, DC, or Marvel	Mostly public domain IPs of pre-existing real-world games/activities
Peripheral industry benefits	E-sports and game streaming industries license video game IPs for films & series production and for merchandising	Not applicable
Artistic merits	Video games are globally recognised as a form of new-age narrative arts medium and are recognised with prestigious international awards	Not applicable
Academic merits	Video games have helped advance R&D in scientific, sociological, and educational domains and facilitated the creation or evolution of new forms of technology	Not applicable
Ancillary industry Benefits	AI, machine learning, computer vision, VFX, simulations, virtual filmmaking, psychology, neuroscience, education & training	Not applicable

Real money gaming

- Real-Money Gaming means the offering, distribution, advertising, promotion and sale of any type of game, e.g., casino, bingo, poker, sports or sporting events, skill games, etc. played through Online Media in which real money is wagered on the outcome of the game.
- As per the All India Gaming Federation – The Online Gaming in India – The GST Conundrum’ report, the online real money players are expected to grow from 80 million in 2020 to 150 million by 2023.
- The real money gaming segment is divided into two categories i.e. Fantasy Sports and Online Card Games. Both categories lack strict KYC checks, overlook regulatory guidelines as platforms allow relative anonymity to increase the player traffic. This leads to various types of frauds that impact the reputational, regulatory, and financial aspects of the businesses.

About new rules

The new rules can be summarised into the following points:

- The government will set up several SROs with representatives from various sectors. These SROs will decide if a game is allowed or not.

- Gaming firms or platforms must not offer, publish, or share online games that have harmful or banned content. They must verify the identity of online gamers.
- Online games that involve any kind of gambling (including ads) will be prohibited.
- SROs will also make sure games follow guidelines to prevent addiction and mental harm through parental controls, frequent warning messages, and age-rating systems.
- The gamers will have the option to opt-out after reaching their own limits for time or money spent.
- Aside from the above, real money gaming is allowed but it will become unpermissible if money is staked on the result of the game. He added that any SRO that permits such games will be breaking the rules.
 - This was in response to a question about some apps that offer cash prizes based on the outcome of IPL cricket matches.

Aim of new rules

The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has asked SROs to prominently mention on their websites and/or mobile apps a framework for verifying an online real money game. This framework will be put in place to guarantee the following:

- Prevent user harm, such as self-harm and psychological harm, from online gaming
- Safeguard children from inappropriate or harmful online games by using parental or access control and age-rating mechanism
- Reduce the risk of gaming addiction, financial loss and financial fraud by warning users repeatedly and allowing them to exclude themselves upon user-defined limits being reached for time or money spent
- Ensure that online real money games are not against the interests of sovereignty and integrity of India.

Importance of new Amendment

- The legal framework provided by the new rules will boost investor confidence.
- The release of the new online gaming rules is a watershed moment for the industry, as it recognizes online gaming intermediaries and distinguishes them from gambling.
 - The rules will go a long way in helping India to become a global leader in gaming and also contribute to the continued success of Brand India and Create in India.
- The new guidelines will promote innovation and boost 'create in India' and 'brand in India' initiatives. "It will ensure the responsible and transparent growth of the industry, safeguarding consumer interests while curbing the proliferation of illegal offshore gambling sites.
- The clear definition of real money and permissible games will be crucial in catalyzing the growth of legitimate industry players.
 - This framework will allow us to innovate and operate freely while ensuring that the necessary guardrails are in place to safeguard the users.

The rise and rise of Online Gaming in India

- According to Statista, India had nearly 27 crore online gamers in the 2018 fiscal, with the figure rising to 36.5 crore in 2020 and expected to reach 51 crore in the 2022 fiscal.
- A Deloitte report said that the country's online gaming industry was expected to grow to \$2.8 billion in 2022, up from \$1.1 billion in 2019.
- There were over 400 gaming start-ups in India as of August 2020, according to Maple Capital Advisors.
- Nikkei said in 2021 that India accounted for 15% of global gaming traffic.
- Maharashtra accounts for 17% of online casino traffic, followed by Telangana (10%), according to a study.

Challenges

- **Some Games are Legal and Some Are Illegal:** The laws concerning Online Gaming in India falls under the state legislature. Only states in India are entitled to formulate laws for such activities within their respective states.
- **Indian Laws Are Quite Unclear for Using Gambling Site:** Major gambling sites welcome Indian customers

but they are operating overseas and aren't necessarily being governed by Indian Law.

- **Banking Methods for Online Gaming in India:** Indian resident can access online casinos that accept INR without the fear of prosecution. Credit cards, debit cards, wire transfers, prepaid cards, e-Wallets, and Cryptocurrencies (such as Bitcoin, Litecoin, and Ethereum) are some of the Indian online casino banking methods. Each method has its minimum and maximum deposit limits.

Way forward:

- New rules should be implemented properly and awareness about online gaming and its risk, technicality and other things should be advertised.
- Everyone should know about the online gaming before playing and also they should be aware about monetary benefits and risk.
- Government should do something to aware people about online gaming and regulatory laws.

National Population Register and Census

News Excerpt

If citizens want to exercise the right to fill the Census form on their own rather than through government enumerators, they will have to first update their National Population Register (NPR) details online.

About Census

- A population Census is the process of collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating demographic, social, cultural and economic data relating to all persons in the country, at a particular time (ten years interval in India for population census).
- The Indian Census has a very long history behind it. The earliest literature 'Rig Veda' reveals that some kind of Population count was maintained during 800-600 BC.
- Kautilya's Arthashastra, written around 321-296 BC, laid stress on Census taking as a measure of State policy for purpose of taxation.
- During the regime of Mughal king Akbar, the administrative report 'Ain-e-Akbari' included comprehensive data pertaining to population, industry, wealth and many other characteristics.
- The first complete census of an Indian city was conducted in 1830 by Henry Walter in Dacca.
- In 1849 Government of India ordered Local Government to conduct quinquennial returns of population.
- The Census of 1881 which was undertaken by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India was a great step towards a modern synchronous census. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
- The census of 1881 took in entire continent of British India (except Kashmir) which also includes feudatory

states in political connection with the Government of India. However it did not include French and Portuguese colonial possessions.

- The first census of Independent India had 14 questions while the last one had 29 questions. The government has proposed 31 questions for the current census.
- The responsibility of conducting the decadal census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Way forward

"The effort is to hold a digital Census but the dates are yet to be decided. Even if the Census is conducted before the general elections, the findings can be made available only by 2024-25. The Census enumeration will be preceded by house-listing enumeration where the exercise for NPR.

Hate groups on the Internet

News Excerpt

In order to explore the topic of social physics, renowned physicist **Dr Neil Johnson** has examined and modelled the dynamics of online hate societies.

About Online Hate Communities

- Online hate organisations, also referred to as "**anti-X**" **groups**, are notable for their rapid growth and persistence despite efforts by platform administrators to thwart them.
- Dr Johnson's research focuses on using **fluid dynamics analogies** and **mathematical modelling** to understand the dynamics of these communities.
- The study found five important factors that must be considered to comprehend how online hate communities behave:
 1. These communities' changing internal dynamics
 2. Their independence from location
 3. constant expansion
 4. rapid nuclear reactions
 5. Their presence on several platforms.

The method used to study Online Hate Community Dynamics:

- In order to develop their model, Dr Johnson and his team have amassed a **comprehensive database of online hate organizations** on various social media platforms since 2016.
- The aggregation and **de-aggregation of individuals within these communities were studied**, and equations resembling those describing turbulent fluid dynamics were devised.
- These equations take into consideration **shock waves**, which are disturbances that travel faster than the speed of sound and can be recognised by rapid changes in pressure, temperature, and density.

- The model properly captures **individual traits, shifting interpersonal dynamics between communities, and the unique "flavours" of hatred** present within each society.

Significance of Identifying and Combating Hate Speech:

- It will have significant implications for **identifying and combating hate speech** on social media platforms.
- Instead of focusing solely on individual examples, researchers might better understand **how incendiary information spreads by examining networks** of well-known hate speech communities.
- The "**innuendo problem**" that machine learning algorithms in detecting hate speech present, may be resolved by the model's prioritisation of following repeat offenders and their networks.
- This approach offers a more **thorough understanding of the dynamics of hate speech** and more efficient content filtering strategies.

Conclusion

- Dr Neil Johnson's research provides exceptional insights into the dynamics of online hate networks through the study of social physics.
- Physics can offer **light on group behaviour inside social systems** by using mathematical modelling and drawing comparisons with fluid dynamics.
- **To effectively oppose hate speech and promote a safer online environment**, it is essential to understand how online hate networks emerge, persist, and interact with one another.
- The groundbreaking work of Dr Johnson creates new opportunities for **interdisciplinary cooperation** and the creation of **focused interventions** to combat hate speech in the digital era.
- Society may work to create an **online environment that is more accepting and inclusive** with further research and practical actions.

Ban on smartphones in schools

News Excerpt

UNESCO recommended a universal ban on the usage of smartphones in schools.

Global Scenario

- Normally countries use age restriction of 16 years, students can bring smartphones in classrooms.
- **Finland** allows smartphones from the age of 12 years. They can keep it with them even when the classes are on.
- In **England**, children are allowed to bring in from the age five. But they have to deposit their phones.
- Earlier **Australia** had no restrictions, but after pandemic they have somewhat restricted the usage of smartphones.
- **Netherland** and **France** have banned the usage of smartphones in school and academic performance improved as a result.

- **Spain, Norway** and **Belgium** have already banned mobile phones in school.
- USA and Australia have framed policies to limit screen time for children.

Case of making smartphones as an object of Inquiry:

- Smartphones can be used to encourage techno skepticism i.e., questioning our relationship with technology and finding limits. E.g., students can be encouraged to use navigational apps in place of paper maps, students can explore the algorithm of their social media or how notifications get their attention.
- **Techno fasts:** Teachers can encourage students to go on techno fasts i.e., abstaining from the use of technology for a specific period. This will give students time to reflect on the time they spend away from the devices.
- **Digital Mindfulness:** Awareness about digital mindfulness can be spread among students. It means differentiating between digitally important tasks and digital distractions.

Arguments in favor of ban:

- **Distractions:** UNESCO has warned against embracing digital products in educational settings in its report "Restrictions on the use of mobile phones in school premises under rule 43 of DSER 1973". It highlighted that proximity to a mobile device was found to distract students.
- **Academic performance:** Children's get too much involved in social media, they play games and their focus on academic tasks completely goes off track. According to London School of Economics, not allowing smartphones increases the academic performance of children.
- **Behavioural issues:** Psychologists advocate that mobile phones are addictive in nature, hinder concentration, and social skills. Their circadian rhythm gets affected, creating emotional, behavioural and mental issues.
- **Regulatory issues:** India still does not have data protection laws specially child data protection laws. Also, School safety policy is required because if some mishappening happens schools will be the easy target.
- **Social exchange:** Banning will promote healthier face to face interactions, students will get a space to vent out by sharing their feelings.
- **Cyber security:** School is a safe zone, allowing smartphones will make them vulnerable to cyberbullying and comparisons. Resulting in depression and feelings of inadequacy. Prohibiting will give relief from such pressures.
- **Inequalities:** Smartphones might raise disparities among students belonging to various socioeconomic backgrounds. Students with access to smartphones will have an advantage over the students who do not have access.

Arguments against the ban:

- **Availability:** Smartphones are ubiquitous, children have easy access to it as parents are giving it to them. The generation is born in digital world.
- **Edtech sector and AI:** With the ever-increasing edtech products, smartphones are an essentiality to get access to them. Personalized learning, smart content delivery, tutoring and assistance will help students in long term, banning smartphones will hinder their career.
- **Digital India:** With the government giving so much emphasis on digitalization, banning is not in line with the goal. The NEP 2020 also gives a lot of importance to smartphones as the new curriculum has QR codes which can be accessed through smartphones.
- **Lack of research:** There is a lack of indigenous studies and research that shows what kind of damage smartphones can do.
- **Duty of school:** The duty of the school is to prepare students for life and sensitize them about their surroundings. Digital literacy should be provided instead of banning smartphones, so that they can use a smartphone in a better way.
- There is no surety that if banned; children will not bring it. They can bring it discreetly to the classes. As a result, frisking will be done which will bring pressure on school.
- **Age appropriateness:** Like we have an age for driving license, an age for voter id card, similarly we can have an age for mobile phones.

Way forward

All the stakeholders connected with the education ecosystem such as students, teachers and parents should arrive at a **consensus** on the minimum use of mobile phones in the school so that a distraction free and learning atmosphere could be created.

- Any decision on this issue must prioritize student wellbeing by taking all pros and cons of the issue. The implication of such a choice must be carefully considered.
- There is need to explore some kind of **alternatives** like enhancement of digital spaces, availability of laptops and tablets in schools. This would require school to invest in digital infrastructure.

Annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

News Excerpt:

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), under Ministry of Home Affairs released the 70th edition of the annual 'Crime in India' report, which contains an exhaustive set of crime statistics for the year 2022.

About the Report:

- The **National Crime Records Bureau publishes the report under the Ministry of Home Affairs**. This is the oldest and the most prestigious publication brought out by NCRB.

- The data for the report is **collected by the State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB)** from the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB) and sent to NCRB at the **end of every calendar year** under the reference.

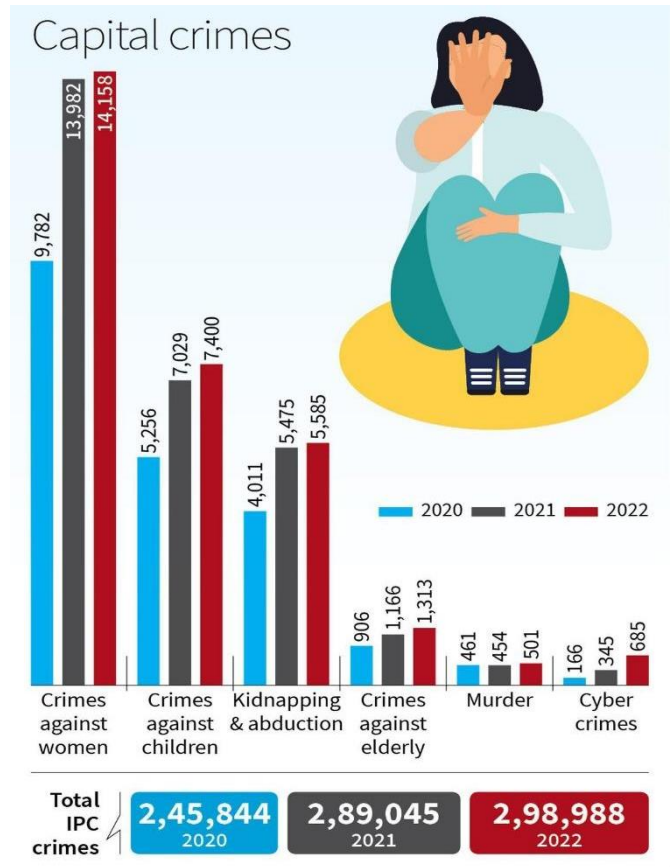
Key Highlights:

- Overall Crime:** A total of 58,24,946 cognizable crimes comprising 35,61,379 Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes and 22,63,567 Special & Local Laws (SLL) crimes were registered in 2022. It shows a **decline** of 4.5% in case registration over 2021. During 2022, registration of cases under IPC and SLL Crimes have declined **by 2.8% and 7.0%, respectively, over 2021.**
- The crime rate registered per lakh population has declined from 445.9 in 2021 to 422.2 in 2022.
- Crime Against Women:** The majority of cases under crime against women under IPC were registered under **'Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives' (31.4%), followed by 'Kidnapping & Abduction of Women' (19.2%), 'Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty' (18.7%), and 'Rape' (7.1%).** The population's crime rate registered per lakh women was 66.4 in 2022 compared to 64.5 in 2021.
- Cyber Crime:** There has been a sharp **increase** in Cyber Crime Cases registered in States and 19 Metro cities. A total of 65,893 cases were registered under Cyber Crimes, showing an **increase** of 24.4% in registration over 2021 (52,974 cases). The crime rate under this category **increased** from 3.9 in 2021 to 4.8 in 2022.
- Extortion and human trafficking:** A total of 501 incidents of murder were reported in the city. It also recorded 106 cases of human trafficking. At least 492 minor boys were trafficked in Delhi as compared to 113 girls in 2022 — **all of whom were recovered.**
- The State/UT reporting the highest Charge-sheeting Rate under IPC Crimes are Kerala (96.0%), Puducherry (91.3%), and West Bengal (90.6%).
- Acid Attack:** West Bengal reported 31 incidents of acid attacks, with 35 victims throughout the state. There were seven victims in seven incidents of "attempt to acid attack." Uttar Pradesh, with 25 victims in 23 incidents and one incident of an attempt to acid attack, is second on the list, and Madhya Pradesh, with 11 victims in seven incidents, is third.

Observations made by the Report:

- Delhi unsafe for Women:** Delhi is the most unsafe metropolitan city for women in the country, recording an average of three rape cases daily, according to the annual report of the NCRB.
 - Delhi recorded 14,158 incidents of crime against women in 2022, the highest number among 19 metropolitan cities for the third consecutive year, with about 186.9 crimes reported for every 1,00,000 women.
 - According to a recent observation, in most incidents of rape and assault, the victim and the accused are

generally known to each other, which makes it difficult for the police to directly prevent such incidents from taking place as the victim refrains from registering a complaint due to various factors.



Source: NCRB

- Awareness is rising:**
 - Awareness drives are carried out to **explain safe and unsafe touch** and what to do when women and girls find themselves in such situations. Several such sessions at schools and colleges to make policing accessible have been conducted.
 - The police have been conducting **self-defence training camps** for women and efficiently working on converting complaints into FIRs.
 - The **increase in cases registered** for incidents of crime against women also reflects police efforts to check crime.
 - The number of unreported cases has decreased as more women register cases. According to the latest NCRB data, 7,400 incidents of crime against children were recorded in the city, which included 22 incidents of murder.

Way Forward:

- The Supreme Court judgment of 2014 on furnishing identity proof for acid purchases and registration for selling is nowhere near implementation. Thus, awareness still needs to be increased about the existing laws and judgments

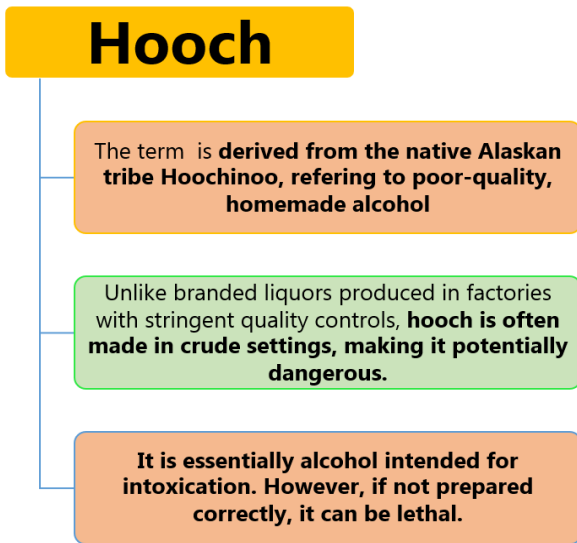
- 'Rise in crime' and 'increase in registration of crime by police' are clearly two different things that require better understanding. Thus, an oft-repeated expectation from certain quarters that an effective police administration can keep the crime figures low is misplaced.

Kallakurichi hooch tragedy

News Excerpt:

The Kallakurichi hooch tragedy in Tamil Nadu has resulted in 39 deaths and numerous hospitalizations due to the consumption of spurious liquor.

Understanding Hooch: Production, Dangers & Impact:

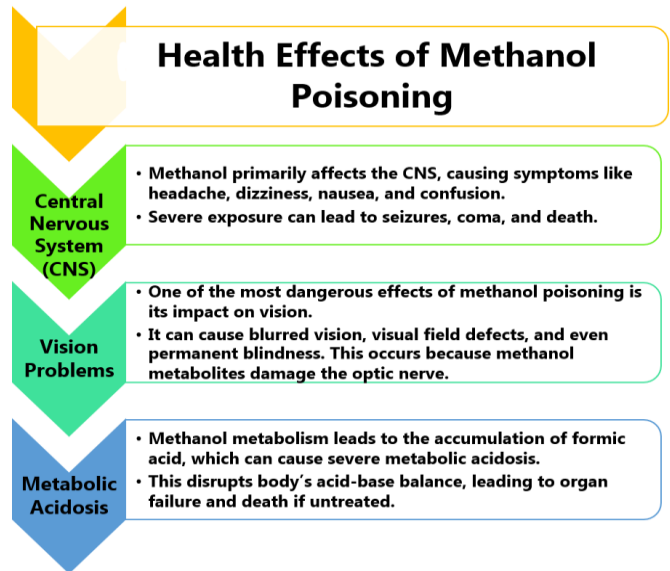


How is Hooch Produced?

- Hooch is produced by distilling a fermented mixture, usually of locally available yeast and sugar or fruit (often fruit waste). All alcohol is made through two fundamental processes: **fermentation and distillation**.
- **Fermentation:** When heated, yeast reacts with sugar (from grains, fruits, sugarcane, etc.) to produce an alcohol-containing mixture. This ancient process is used to create beverages like beer or wine.
- **Distillation:** This process separates alcohol from a fermented mixture using evaporation and condensation. Different components of the mixture have distinct boiling points. By heating the mixture to the correct temperature, alcohol can be isolated from water and other substances.
 - Distilled beverages, or spirits, are much stronger than fermented ones.

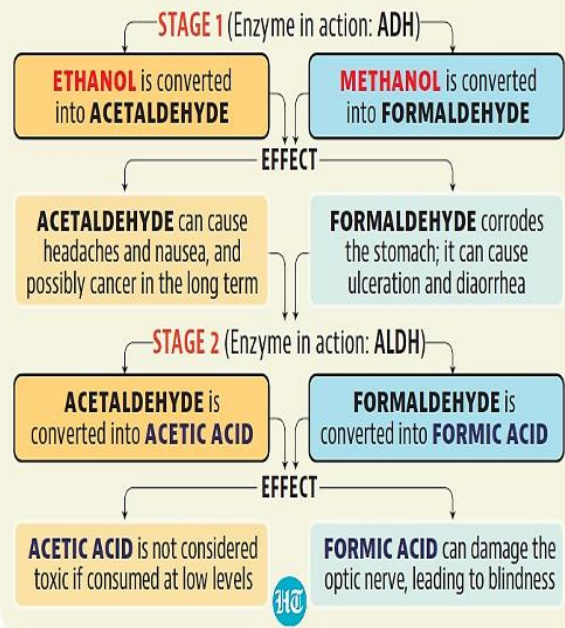
Why is Methanol Dangerous in Illicit Liquor?

- Methanol is not intended for human consumption. It is used industrially as a solvent, antifreeze, and fuel.
- When ingested, methanol is **metabolized in the liver to formaldehyde and formic acid**, which are highly toxic compounds.



How a body responds to alcohol

The body metabolises alcohol in a two-step process. For ethanol, a harmful product at step 1 is removed in step 2; for methanol, products at both stages are highly toxic.



Treatment for Hooch Poisoning:

- Intravenous **injections of ethanol and fomepizole** are the recommended treatment for hooch poisoning.
- However, fomepizole is not always available and can be costly in many areas of India. In such cases, physicians administer a **1:1 ratio of ethanol to water**.
- **Ethanol aids in the body's natural elimination of methanol**, preventing its conversion into toxins through dialysis or natural metabolic processes.

Way Forward:

- The government should **regulate alcohol production and not rely on complete prohibition**, as it would only

drive the illegal liquor trade further underground and put more lives at risk.

- Since liquor revenue is substantial, efforts should be made to **ensure that safe and quality-controlled liquor vendors are increased** so that there are fewer areas that can be used by illegal sellers. This is not to suggest that alcohol consumption should be encouraged but to **ensure that only legal and controlled alcohol is in the market.**
- There should be a **national alcohol policy** as prescribed by WHO for much more aggressive awareness campaigns on the problems of liquor abuse along the lines of tobacco.

World Drug Report – 2024

News Excerpt:

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) unveiled its World Drug Report for 2024 during a special Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) session.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):

- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is a United Nations office that was established in **1997**.
- It was established as the **Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention** by combining the **United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP)** and the **Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division in the United Nations**.
- The agency's focus is the **trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice, international terrorism, and political corruption.**
- UNODC** has its headquarters in **Vienna, Austria**.

More about the News:

- This event coincided with the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (World Drug Day), emphasizing the theme "The evidence is clear: invest in prevention."

Key highlights of the Report:

- The impacts of the **global drug problem** are escalating due to the rise of new **synthetic opioids** and unprecedented supply and demand for various drugs.
- Drug production and trafficking** are worsening **instability and inequality**, causing significant **harm to health, safety, and well-being**.
- Cannabis** remains the most commonly used drug (228 million users), followed by **opioids** (60 million users), **amphetamines** (30 million users), **cocaine** (23 million users), and **ecstasy** (20 million users).
- Nitazenes**, a group of **synthetic opioids** more potent than **fentanyl**, have recently surfaced in several high-income countries, leading to more overdose deaths.

- Women** are particularly **underserved**, with only one in 18 women with drug use disorders in treatment compared to one in seven men.

Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime:

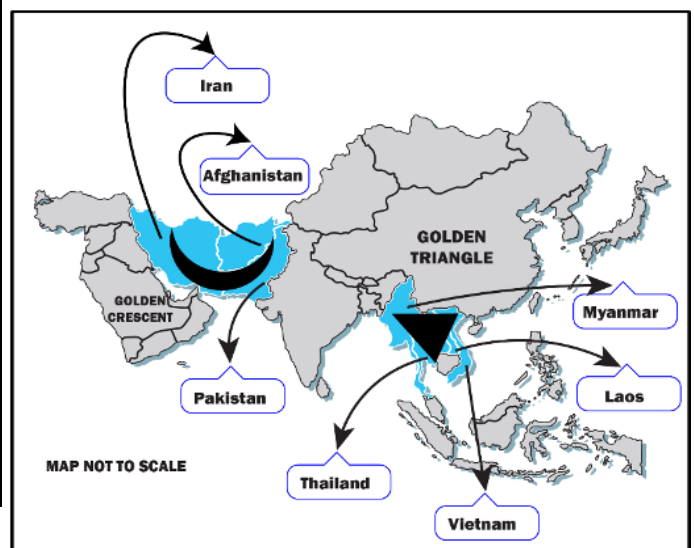
- In the **Golden Triangle**, drug traffickers are branching into other illegal economies, such as **wildlife trafficking, financial fraud, and illegal resource extraction**.
- These activities harm **displaced, poor, and migrant communities**, who may resort to **opium farming or illegal resource extraction** to survive, often falling into debt with crime groups or turning to drug use.
- These illicit activities also cause **environmental degradation** through **deforestation, toxic waste dumping, and chemical contamination**.

Impact of Cannabis Legalization:

- As of January 2024, **Canada, Uruguay, and 27 jurisdictions in the United States** have **legalized cannabis for non-medical use**, with various legislative approaches emerging globally.
- In the Americas**, legalization has accelerated harmful cannabis use and **diversified cannabis products**, many with high THC content.
- Hospitalizations related to **cannabis use disorders** and the proportion of people with **psychiatric disorders** and attempted suicide associated with regular cannabis use have risen in **Canada** and the **United States**, especially among young adults.

The Golden Triangle

- The Golden Triangle is a region where the **jungles of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar converge**.
- It has long been infamous as a **hub for the illegal drug trade**.
- This illicit industry is managed, controlled, and safeguarded by **military leaders** who operate like warlords in alliance with regional organized crime figures.



Opium Ban in Afghanistan:

- **Afghanistan's opium production** drastically **decreased by 95%** from 2022 to 2023, while **production in Myanmar increased by 36%**, leading to a **74% drop in global opium production** in 2023.

Way Forward:

- The report underscores that the **right to health** is an **internationally recognized human right** that applies to everyone, **including drug users**, regardless of their legal status. This right extends to their children, families, and communities.
- To solve this problem, we must provide **evidence-based treatment** and **assistance to people** affected by drug use, **target the illicit drug market**, and make considerable **investments in prevention**.

Multidimensional Vulnerability Index

News Excerpt:

In a significant move, the United Nations General Assembly has officially launched the **Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)**.

More about MVI:

- It is a new data-driven tool designed to provide a more nuanced assessment of **economic vulnerability for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** and other developing nations.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS):

- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a distinct group of **39 States and 18 Associate Members of United Nations** regional commissions that face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.
- SIDS are located in the **Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (AIS)**.
- SIDS were recognized as a special case both for their environment and development at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- The aggregate population of all the **SIDS is 65 million**, slightly less than 1% of the world's population, yet this group faces unique social, economic, and environmental challenges.
- SIDS face a host of challenges, including, for many, their remote geography.
- This innovative index is intended to **complement traditional metrics such as GDP**, aiming to facilitate access to low-interest financing for countries that are not necessarily poor in GDP terms but are still highly susceptible to external shocks.

Objectives of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index:

- The primary objective of the MVI is to offer a comprehensive measure of vulnerability that transcends economic indicators and **includes social, environmental, and structural dimensions**.
- By doing so, it provides a more accurate representation of a **country's resilience and susceptibility to crises, such as climate change, pandemics, and regional conflicts**.

Components of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index

The MVI incorporates a variety of indicators to assess a nation's vulnerability. **These include:**



Import Dependency:

Evaluating the reliance on imports for essential goods, **which can affect economic stability and self-sufficiency**.



Exposure to Extreme Weather Events and Pandemics:

Assessing the frequency and impact of natural disasters and health crises, which can significantly disrupt economies and societies.



Impacts of Regional Violence and Refugees:

Considering the effects of regional conflicts and the presence of refugees on a country's stability and resources.



Demographic Pressure:

Analyzing population dynamics that may strain resources and infrastructure.



Water and Arable Land Resources:

Measuring the availability of critical natural resources that are vital for sustaining life and economic activities.



Mortality of Children Under Five:

Using this health indicator as a proxy for broader social vulnerabilities.

A Step Forward for Vulnerable Nations

- The introduction of the MVI marks a response to long-standing calls from SIDS for an index that **recognizes their unique challenges**, even if they do not qualify as low-income countries by traditional standards.
- **The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has hailed the adoption of the MVI as a monumental step forward.**
- The MVI is **designed to be used alongside existing development policies and indices**, enhancing their effectiveness by providing a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by developing nations.
- While the **use of the MVI is voluntary**, the UN resolution encourages its consideration by **UN organs and multilateral development banks** to support informed **decision-making and policy development**.

Way Forward:

The MVI is a credible complement to current approaches. The next steps toward broad usage could include:

- The MVI framework proposed in this report should be adopted by the UN General Assembly as the basis of any future work, alongside a decision on the future custodian arrangements and governance.
- Donors, including international financial institutions (IFIs), should be encouraged to explore how the MVI could be incorporated into existing policies and practices, pursuing a common approach to the extent possible.
- Assessment of country external debt sustainability and the need for concessional debt restructuring could use the MVI, in addition to current, mostly income-based, assessments.

ART AND CULTURE

Samarth Ramdas

News Excerpt:

Samarth Ramdas, a prominent figure in Indian history, was a saint, philosopher, and social reformer who made significant contributions to society during the 17th century.

Early Life and Spiritual Journey:

- Samarth Ramdas, originally named **Narayan Suryaji Thosar**, was born in Jamb, Maharashtra, in 1608.
- From a young age, he displayed an inclination towards spirituality and a deep longing for spiritual knowledge. He renounced his family and worldly possessions at the age of 11 and embarked on a spiritual quest.
- His teachings, writings, and reforms continue to inspire generations and have left an indelible impact on Indian society.
- Under the tutelage of Guru Ramdas, Samarth Ramdas received spiritual training and imbibed the teachings of the Bhakti movement, emphasizing devotion to God and the principles of social equality.

Teachings and Philosophy:

- Samarth Ramdas' teachings were grounded in the belief that true spirituality lies in the service of humanity. He emphasized the importance of **moral values**, **righteousness**, and **compassion**.
- His philosophy encouraged individuals to lead a disciplined life, practicing devotion and selflessness.
- He advocated for the eradication of social evils and the upliftment of the marginalized sections of society.

Literary Contributions:

- Samarth Ramdas penned several literary works that continue to inspire and guide people.
- His most renowned composition is the **"Dasbodh"**, a spiritual treatise in Marathi that contains profound insights into various aspects of life, including self-realization, ethics, and social responsibility.
- His other notable works include **"ManacheShlok"** and **"Karnashtake."**

Social Reforms and Influence:

- Samarth Ramdas played a crucial role in initiating social reforms during his time. He strongly condemned the caste system and worked towards eradicating social discrimination.
- He advocated for the empowerment of women and promoted education for all, regardless of gender or social status. His efforts to uplift the oppressed and bring about social equality left a lasting impact on society.
- His commendation to Lord Hanuman, Maruti Stotra, is still commonly recited by school children as well as wrestlers akhadas across Maharashtra.
- His teachings and contributions continue to resonate with people from all walks of life. His emphasis on spirituality, social reforms, and ethical living holds relevance even in contemporary times.
- Many organizations and institutions have been established in his name, dedicated to spreading his teachings and promoting his ideals.
 - His emphasis on compassion, righteousness, and selfless service has inspired countless individuals to work towards creating a just and equitable society.

Conclusion:

Samarth Ramdas, through his life and teachings, exemplified the principles of spirituality, social reform, and compassion. His profound insights and reforms continue to guide and inspire individuals to lead a life of righteousness and service to society.

Heritage sites in India

News Excerpt

Every year on April 18, World Heritage Day is observed to raise awareness of the importance and preservation of all World Heritage Sites.

About

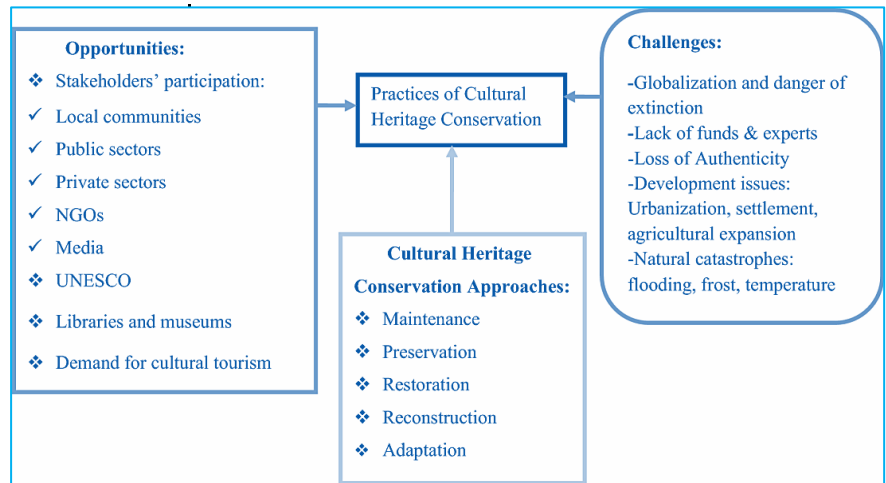
- India has 40 World Heritage Sites at present and has constantly had its heritage structures added to the UNESCO list.
- India has officially joined the Super-40 club for nations that have been inscribed as World Heritage Sites, joining nations like Italy, Spain, Germany, China, and France.
- Archaeological sites and monuments not only play an important part in advancing India's tourist prospects, but also serve as a treasure trove of our rich and diversified cultural history.
- The Archaeological Survey of India is in charge of the upkeep, restoration, and environmental improvement of 3692 Centrally Protected Monuments.

About World Heritage

- World Heritage is an official designation given to a site following careful consideration of a proposal submitted by the country and evaluations undertaken Heritage

Committee decides whether to grant a property this distinction.

- Once a year, the Committee composed of 21 nations representing all geographical regions meets to discuss whether the proposed locations satisfy certain requirements and exhibit what is known as the "**Outstanding Universal Value.**"
- The OUV designation means that a cultural or natural site is "as exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity."



Global Challenges for World Heritage sites

- There are environmental threats and challenges, such as climate change, global warming, pollution of the environment, depletion of the ozone layer and water supplies, sea level rise, extinction of raw materials and biological species, energy issues, etc. that can result in environmental catastrophes.
- The development of mass culture as a whole, which includes the fusion of tastes, perceptions, and preferences as well as the commercialization of culture, poses another set of cultural global challenges and dangers.
- National cultural traditions are at odds with the cultural convergence brought forth by cultural globalization.

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (or AMASR Act) 1958:

It is an act of the Indian Parliament that provides for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites, and remains of national significance, as well as the regulation of archaeological excavations and the protection of sculptures, carvings, and other similar objects. This statute governs the activities of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Heritages related challenges in India

- **Lack of human resource:**
 - The most serious difficulty that the institutions (tasked with looking after the country's heritage sites and monuments) face is a lack of qualified skilled manpower and competent employees to look after the monuments and carry out conservation operations.
- **Natural calamities and pollution:**
 - India being a tropical country, changeable environmental circumstances such as severely hot or cold weather, relative humidity, light levels, and pollutants are major challenges.
- **Absence of specifications of conservation works:**
 - Lacking list of standards for conservation work, the CPWD criteria, which are not meant for conservation work, are being followed by the ASI.

- Although ASI declared a revised national conservation policy in 2014, the policy is little recognized even among ASI staff at the circle level.
- **Lack of funds:**
 - Lack of finances is also a problem for the ASI, which is straining to carry out the mission of maintaining and managing more than 3500 sites with its limited resources.

Way forward

It is necessary to ensure the correlation of the national legislation with international experience and UNESCO's standards, taking into account new challenges and threats. Modern technologies such as photogrammetry, 3D laser scanning, block chain technology, and so on may be studied and used to improve monument documentation wherever possible, because quality documentation now allows for quality scientific research in the future.

UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in India			
S. No.	Site	Place	Year of declaration
1.	Taj Mahal	Uttar Pradesh	1983
2.	Ellora Caves	Maharashtra	1983
3.	Ajanta Caves	Maharashtra	1983
4.	Agra Fort	Uttar Pradesh	1983
5.	Sun Temple, Konark	Odisha	1984
6.	Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram	Tamil Nadu	1984
7.	Khajuraho Group of Monuments	Madhya Pradesh	1986
8.	Group of Monuments at Hampi	Karnataka	1986
9.	Fatehpur Sikri	Uttar Pradesh	1986
10.	Churches and Convents of Goa	Goa	1986

11.	Group of Monuments at Pattadakal	Karnataka	1987
12.	Great Living Chola Temples	Tamil Nadu	1987
13.	Elephanta Caves	Maharashtra	1987
14.	Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi	Madhya Pradesh	1989
15.	Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi	Delhi	1993
16.	Humayun's Tomb, Delhi	Delhi	1993
17.	Mountain Railways of India	Tamil Nadu	1999
18.	Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya	Bihar	2002
19.	Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka	Madhya Pradesh	2003
20.	Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus	Maharashtra	2004
21.	Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park	Gujarat	2004
22.	Red Fort Complex	Delhi	2007
23.	The Jantar Mantar	Rajasthan	2010
24.	Hill Forts of Rajasthan	Rajasthan	2013
25.	Rani-Ki-Vav	Gujarat	2014
26.	Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University)	Bihar	2016
27.	Jaipur City	Rajasthan	2020
28.	Historic City of Ahmedabad	Gujarat	2017
29.	Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai	Maharashtra	2018
30.	The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement	Chandigarh	2016
31.	Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple	Telangana	2021
32.	Dholavira	Gujarat	2021

UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites in India:			
S.No.	Site	State	Year of declaration
1.	Kaziranga National Park	Assam	1985
2.	Keoladeo Ghana National Park	Rajasthan	1985
3.	Manas Wildlife Sanctuary	Assam	1985
4.	Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers	Uttarakhand	1988, 2005
5.	Sundarbans National Park	West Bengal	1987
6.	Western Ghats	Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala	2012
7.	Great Himalayan National Park	Himachal Pradesh	2014
UNESCO Mixed World Heritage Sites in India			
S.No.	Site	State	Year of declaration
1.	Khangchendzonga National Park	Sikkim	2016

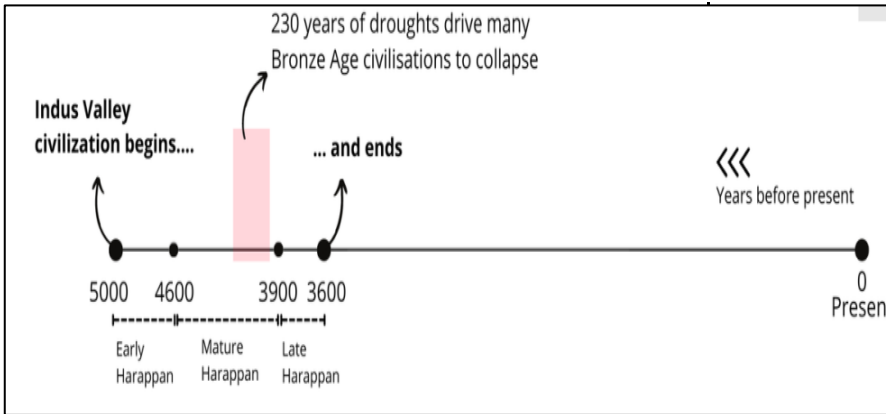
The Indus Valley Civilization

News Excerpt:

Recently, the study published in the journal Communications Earth & Environment, discovered three long-term droughts that lasted between 25 to 90 years during Indus Valley Civilization.

About

- The Indus Valley Civilization, also known as the Harappan Civilization, flourished around 2600 to 1900 BCE in the northwestern regions of the Indian subcontinent.
- It was one of the world's earliest urban civilizations, characterized by advanced urban planning, sophisticated drainage systems, and remarkable craftsmanship.
- Recent research and archaeological evidence suggest that prolonged droughts might have played a significant role in ending the era of mega cities during the Indus Valley Civilization.
- The Indus Valley Civilization was spread across a vast area including Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, were remarkably well-planned and featured advanced systems of sanitation, brick-laid houses, public baths, and complex urban infrastructures.
- This ancient civilization boasted extensive trade networks, evidence of script-like symbols, and a robust agricultural system.



Prolonged Droughts and their Impact on IVC

- The Indus Valley Civilization thrived in a region where monsoon rains are crucial for agricultural productivity.
- However, research suggests that during the latter stages of the civilization, the region experienced an extended period of drought.
- This prolonged dry spell severely affected the availability of water for irrigation and domestic use, making it challenging for the Harappans to sustain their agricultural practices and support the growing population in their urban centers.

Diminished Crop Yields and Food Shortages:

- The prolonged droughts likely resulted in reduced crop yields, leading to food scarcity and escalating prices. The reliance on the monsoon rains for irrigation made the civilization vulnerable to climatic variations.
- The lack of sufficient rainfall and depleted water sources would have severely affected the agricultural productivity of the region, leading to a decline in food production. This, in turn, could have triggered social unrest, migration, and even conflicts over scarce resources.

Impact on Trade and Economy:

- The Indus Valley Civilization was a thriving commercial center, engaging in long-distance trade with Mesopotamia and other ancient civilizations.
- However, the prolonged droughts disrupted the agricultural surplus, which was the backbone of trade and economic prosperity.
- Reduced agricultural output would have hindered the surplus food supply necessary for trade, destabilizing the economy and disrupting the complex network of exchange and commerce that characterized the civilization.

Social Disruptions and Migration:

- As the droughts persisted, the adverse effects on agriculture and trade likely led to social disruptions within the Indus Valley Civilization.
- Food shortages, economic hardships, and the collapse of urban infrastructure would have put immense pressure on the social fabric.

• The lack of resources may have triggered migrations from urban centers to rural areas, causing the abandonment of mega cities and ultimately leading to the decline and disintegration of the civilization.

Conclusion:

While the Indus Valley Civilization faced multiple challenges throughout its existence, recent research indicates that prolonged droughts played a significant role in the decline of the mega cities that once thrived along the Indus River. The disruption of agricultural practices, diminishing food supplies, and economic instability caused by the droughts likely led to social unrest, migrations, and the ultimate downfall of this great civilization.

Sengol

About

Recently, Indian prime minister installed a historic sceptre 'Sengol' next to the Lok Sabha Speaker's seat in the newly constructed Parliament building.

About Sengol

- Sengol comes from a Tamil word "Semmai" which means righteousness.
- It is a sceptre made of gold and silver and is decorated with many precious stones. The Sengol is 5 feet long and

'Sengol' etched in history

A symbol of governance in Tamil kingdoms of yore, Sengol was made by then Madras-based jeweller Vummidi Bangaru Chetty along with Vummidi Ethirajulu and Vummidi Sudhakar. It was displayed at the Allahabad Museum after being handed over to Jawaharlal Nehru

SYMBOL OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

Lord Mountbatten asked Nehru about a ceremonial transfer of power, following which the latter consulted C Rajagopalachari or Rajaji, who identified the Chola dynasty's model where the transfer of power from one king to the other was sanctified and blessed by high priests. He approached the Dharmic Mutt in Tamil Nadu's Tanjore district – the Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam. The leader of the Adheenam commissioned jeweller Chetty for Sengol's preparation.

SCEPTRE HANDED OVER TO NEHRU

Three people were flown in from Tamil Nadu – deputy high priest of Adheenam, a Nadaswaram player and Oduvar (singer) – who came carrying the Sengol and conducted the proceedings. The priest gave the Sengol to Mountbatten, and took it back. The Sengol was purified with holy water and then taken in a procession to Nehru's house, where it was handed over to him. A special song was rendered, as told by the high priest.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: In a report on August 17, 1947 HT presented details of the ceremony

India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru holds the sceptre

5 FEET

Made of silver and gold

carries a golden orb at the top. The orb has a carving of Nandi, the bull that is precious to Lord Shiva.

- The Sengol is a powerful symbol of the Chola Kings authority and their commitment to justice.
- Sengol is considered to be the symbol of justice, transfer of power, and good governance. It was presented to India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on August 14, 1947. This was marked as the transfer of power from the British Government to India.
- On 28 May 2023, after a gap of more than 75 years, the very same Sengol has been signified as the transfer of power symbol.
- The sceptre is a reminder of India's rich history and the culture. It originated from the Chola dynasty which was one of the most important and powerful dynasties in the history of India.
- "Sengol symbolises a just and fair governance by a king. Its converse is authoritarianism or Kodungol in Tamil. Sengol finds reference even in Tholkappiyam, the earliest treatise on Tamil grammar,"
- Sengol was one of the 10 constituents of a kingdom besides venkotrakudai (white umbrella), murasu (drum), kodi (flag), thanai (Army), aaru (river), malai (mountain), thar (garland), yaanai (elephant) and kuthirai (horse). Different literary works have included different things.
- It was created during the time of Independence in 1947 when the British handed over power to India. It was made by Vummidi Bangaru Jewellers, a well-known jeweller in Chennai.

Gandhi Peace Prize 2021

News Excerpt

The Gandhi Peace Prize for the year 2021 is being conferred on Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

Gandhi Peace prize

- Gandhi Peace Prize is an annual award instituted by Government of India in 1995, on the occasion of 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi as a tribute to the ideals espoused by Mahatma Gandhi.
- The award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or gender.
- The award carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a citation, a plaque and an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item.
- Recent awardees include Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al Said, Oman (2019) and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (2020), Bangladesh.
- The Jury headed by the Prime Minister, after due deliberations on 18th June, 2023 unanimously decided to select Gita Press, Gorakhpur as the recipient of the Gandhi Peace Prize for the year 2021, in recognition of its outstanding contribution towards social, economic

and political transformation through non-violent and other Gandhian methods.

Gita press, Gorakhpur

- It was Established in 1923.
- Gita Press is one of the world's largest publishers, having published more than 41 crore books in over a dozen languages, including 16.21 crore Shrimad Bhagvad Gita.
- The institution has never relied on advertisement in its publications, for revenue generation.
- Gita Press along with its affiliated organizations, strives for the betterment of life and the well-being of all.



Ram Prasad Bismil

About

Recently on 11th June, Ram Prasad Bismil's 126th birth anniversary celebrated.

Early life

- He was born on June 11, 1897 in a nondescript village in the United Provinces' (now Uttar Pradesh) Shahjahanpur district.
- Born into a Rajput Tomar family, he learnt Hindi from his father and Urdu from a maulvi who lived nearby. He also went to an English medium school in Shahjahanpur. His exposure to multiple languages would develop his instincts as a writer and poet at a very early stage in his life.
- He joined the Arya Samaj and became a prolific writer and poet, penning patriotic verses in Hindi and Urdu under pen names like 'Agyat', 'Ram', and the one that is most known – 'Bismil'
- At the age of only 18, he penned the poem Mera Janm (My Birth), venting out his anger over the death sentence handed out to Arya Samaj missionary Bhai Parmanand.

Revolutionary life

- He is one of India's most revered freedom fighters, known as much for his revolutionary zeal as for his poetic profundity.
- Fighting against the British Raj, he was involved in the Mainpuri Conspiracy of 1918 as well as the more famous Kakori Train Action of 1925.

The Mainpuri Conspiracy, 1918

Ram Prasad Bim formed a revolutionary organisation named Matrived (Altar of Mother), and sought help from Gends Lal Out, a school teacher from Auraiya, who had established the first independent secret society in UP named Shivaji Samiti.

Bum and Dixit got involved in the Mainpuri Conspiracy in which they distributed prohibited literature. On 28 January, 1918, Bamil distributed two of his writings to people a pamphlet titled Destwasyon ke Naam Sandesh (A Message to Countrymen) and Mainpuri Pratigy (Vow of Mainpuri)

The Kakori Train Action, 1925

The train robbery at Kakor was the HRA's first major action, in August 1925. The Number Down Train ran between Shahjahanpur and Lucknow. On fateful day, it carried treasury bags meant to be deposited in the bish treasury in Lucknow

The revolutionaries planned to rob the money, which they believed legitimately belonged to Indians anyway. Their objective was both to fund the HRA and garner public attention for their work and mission

On August 8, 1925, as the train was passing the Kakor station, about 15 km from Lucknow revolutionaries looted the train and exceto Lucknow

Hindustan Republican Association, 1924

Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSA), previously know the **Hindustan Republican Army** and **Hindustan Republican Association (MRA),** was a radical left wing Indian revolutionary

This organization founded by Ram Prasad Bim Ashfaquilla Khan, Sachindra Nath Baksh Sachindranath Sanyal and logesh Chandra Chatterjee A written constitution and published a manifesto titled The Revolutionary, were produced as evidence in the Kakon conspiracy case of 2925.

- He founded the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA, later Hindustan Socialist Republican Association) and was hanged for his revolutionary activities in 1927.
- Ram Prasad Bismil has also become a **symbol of communal harmony** due to his close friendship with fellow revolutionary poet Ashfaquallah Khan. In his last letter, written just before his hanging, Bismil made an enduring call for Hindu-Muslim unity in the service of the nation.
- After an eighteen-month long trial (for their involvement in the Kakori train action), Bismil, Ashfaquallah and Rajendranath Lahiri were sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out on December 19, 1927. Ram Prasad Bismil was just 30 years old when he died.

Lord Jagannath's 'Rath Yatra'

About

Recently, Ratha Yatra, also known as the Gundicha Yatra or chariot festival of Lord Jagannath, Devi Subhadra, and Lord Balabhadra, was celebrated.

About Lord Jagannath's Rath yatra

- As per the Odia calendar, this festival is celebrated on the second day of Shukla Paksha of ashadha month.

Jagannath Temple

The Jagannath Temple at Puri is one of the most revered Vaishnava sites of worship in India

It was constructed by a famous king of Ganga Dynasty Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva dating back to 12th century at the seashore part

The main temple of Shri Jagannath an impressing and amazing structure constructed in Kalinga architecture, with a height of 65 meters placed on an elevated platform

Shri Jagannath Purt Temple is one of the most impressing monuments of the Indian State Ddisha

- Lakhs of devotees from the state, as well as every part of the country, travel to the city of Puri, to catch a glimpse of the three deities, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra as they are carried in ornate chariots (made from neem wood) called Rathes which are pulled by the devotees.
- The auspicious festival begins with the Snana Yatra where the three deities are washed thoroughly in Ganges water. This is followed by the Anasara period where

the deities are laid to 'rest'.

- Thereafter, deities are carried to the Gundicha Temple where they reside for about eight to nine days. Afterwards they return to their temple through a procession known as Bahuda Yatra.

Religious Significance

- As per Hindu sacred texts such as the Brahma Purana, Padma Purana, Kapila Samhita etc, Subhadra, the younger sister of Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra desired to travel to Puri where her aunt lived.
- To fulfill her wish, the two brothers left for the city in a chariot. Since the 1500s (the first festival dates back to 1558), the people of Puri have celebrated this annual procession to commemorate the divine sibling's journey from their paternal home to aunt's home.
- The Rath Yatra, is the only Hindu festival where deities are taken from their 'home' and placed elsewhere.
- All the three chariots in which the deities are carried have their own name. Lord Jagannath's chariot is referred to as Nandighosh while the chariots of Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra is called Taladhwaja and Darpadalana respectively.
 - Only women devotees pulled the chariot of Devi Subhadra.

- The three deities were pulled in chariots in a procession known as 'GotiPahandi' a day after Rath Yatra on Tuesday at Baripada, known as the second 'Srikhetra' after Puri.

International Yoga Day

News Excerpt

Recently, on 21st June, 2023 India celebrated the 9th international yoga day. Besides spreading awareness about the benefits of yoga and meditation worldwide, this time, India promoted the skill of its tribal artisans.

International Yoga Day

- It is celebrated on 21st June of every year since 2015.
- International Day of Yoga 2023 theme is "Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which represents our collective desire for "One Earth, One Family, One Future."
- Indian Prime Minister proposed a dedicated yoga day during his speech at the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2014.
- On December 11, 2014, all 193 United Nations member states unanimously agreed to observe the International Day of Yoga on June 21, 2015.
- The primary goal is to raise awareness about yoga as a holistic practise for mental and physical well-being.
- This observance is significant in that it sheds light on the significance of psychological and physical wellness in today's world.



Key points

- **The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED)** is collaborating with Ministry of Ayush to supply 34,000 yoga mats procured exclusively from tribal artisans across the country. These will bear the distinct designs and motifs representative of their respective communities.
- Each mat is a vibrant testament to the diverse cultural heritage of India's tribes, reflecting their stories, folklore, and artistic legacy according to Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The effort is aimed at celebrating India's rich cultural heritage, bolstering economic prospects of tribal

communities, and contributing towards the preservation and promotion of their unique artistic traditions.

- TRIFED highlighted the products and communities including: **Madurkathi Mats from Medinipur (West Bengal), Sabai Grass Yoga Mats from Mayurbhanj, (Odisha) and Gondha Grass mats from Jharkhand.**
- **Yoga from Arctic to Antarctica** is another feature, in which Ministry of external affairs (MEA) is coordinating with the Ministry of Ayush to organise yoga in countries falling in and around the Prime Meridian line besides UN member countries.
- **Yoga at the North Pole and South Pole** will be held in coordination with Ministry of earth science (MoES) at Himadri, the Indian research base in the Arctic and Bharati - the Indian research base in the Antarctica.
- **Yoga Bharatmala** has also been conceptualised. This involves Army troops along with ITBP, BSF, BRO making a Yoga chain. **Yoga Sagarmala** will feature yoga along the Indian coastline.

Mesolithic-era rock paintings

News Excerpt

Recently, A Mesolithic period rock painting depicting a person tilling a piece of land has been found in Orvakallu village in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.

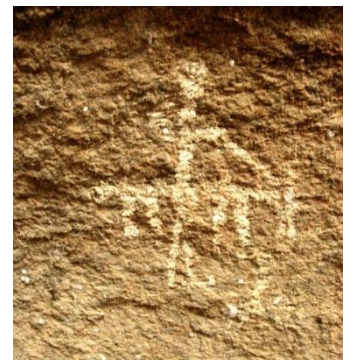
Mesolithic period rock painting

About finding

- It has been found by D. Kanna Babu, former Superintending Archaeologist of the Temple Survey Project (Southern Region) of the Archaeological Survey of India, Chennai.
- While surveying the lower River Krishna Valley to ascertain the architectural features of shrines, he identified a new prehistoric rock painting on the walls and ceiling of natural rock shelters on a hillock at Orvakallu.
- After an intensive exploration, it was noticed that these were shelters for prehistoric humans who lived at this place.
- Among these five naturally formed caves, two are embellished with distinguished depictions of rock paintings on the back walls and ceilings executed by people of Mesolithic Age, roughly [from] 5000 BC.

About painting

- The paintings were made with "natural white kaolin and red ochre pigments", as well as that most of them had been "badly damaged" due to exposure to "air and wind".



- Ochre is a pigment composed of clay, sand, and ferric oxide. Kaolinite is a soft, earthy, and usually white mineral produced by the chemical weathering of aluminium silicate minerals like feldspar.
- One of the paintings depicted a man catching wild goat with his left hand while wielding a hook-like implement to control it. Another showed two couple standing with their hands raised while a child stood behind them.
- He singled out a painted figure of a man holding a plough and appearing to be tilling land -- an indication, in his telling, "of a semi-settled life pattern" in which members of this community domesticated animals and cultivated and harvested crops.
- Earlier, in 2018, archaeologists had uncovered prehistoric rock art estimated to be from the Neolithic era, circa 1500-2000 BC, on natural limestone formations near Dachepalli in Guntur district.

Rani Durgavati

News Excerpt

Madhya Pradesh government launched the six-day Rani Durgavati Gaurav Yatra and marked June 24 as a day of sacrifice, when the queen is believed to have died while fighting the Mughals in the mid-16th century.

Background

- Rani Durgavati is said to have been born in 1524 in Mahoba's Chandela dynasty. The region comes under present-day Uttar Pradesh.
- Chandelas were known for building the famous Khajuraho temples.
- She married to Dalpat Shah, the son of the Gond King Sangram Shah of the kingdom of Garha-Katanga which is noted as one of the most powerful kingdoms of the Gond tribe.
- Durgavati was widowed in 1550 and her young son Bir Narayan presided over the throne and she ruled the country with great vigour and courage.

The Mughal attack on Garha-Katanga

- The painting by Beohar Rammanohar Sinha shows Durgavati preparing for a battle with the Mughals in Narhi.
- The period of the mid-16th century witnessed early Mughal expansion in India under Akbar.
- During her reign, Durgavati fought with Baz Bahadur, the sultan of the neighbouring Malwa who was eventually defeated by Akbar, but the frequent battles continued even after the takeover.
- Mughals fortified the area and overwhelmed the Gonds. While fighting them in battle, she was struck by two arrows and it is believed she stabbed herself with her dagger to not surrender to the Mughal forces.

Significance

- Abul Fazl described Durgavati as a combination of beauty, grace and manlike courage and bravery.

- He adds that the prosperity of the kingdom was such that people paid their taxes in gold coins and elephants.
- In 2021, an award was instituted in the name of the Gond king Sangram Shah, the father-in-law of Queen Durgavati, of Rs 5 lakh for works in tribal art and culture.
- Another Gond queen, Rani Kamlapati, had Bhopal's Habibganj station renamed after her recently.

Hul Diwas

News Excerpt

Hul Diwas is **celebrated on June 30** for remembering the sacrifice of Adivas is in their fight against British colonial authorities.

About

- The **Santal rebellion or 'Hul'** literally mean revolution. It began in 1855, two years before the uprising of 1857 which is often referred to as first war of independence.
- It was an "**organised war against colonialism**" led by the Santals, standing against the myriad forms of oppression they were subjected to by the British and their collaborators.
- **Led by brothers Sidhu and Kanhu**, it saw the participation of as many as 32 caste and communities rallying behind them.
- The movement also had role of women.
- The rebellion took place in the lush **Damin-i-Koh region** (Damin-i-Koh meaning the skirts of the hills) and took the British by complete surprise. This region falls in present-day Jharkhand, more specifically, around the **Rajmahal Hills of eastern Jharkhand's Sahibganj district**.
- Every year, the state of Jharkhand celebrates June 30 as 'Hul Diwas', marking the beginning of the rebellion, even though some historical accounts date it to the first week of July instead.

Santals

- Today, the Santal community is the **third largest tribal community** in India, spread across Jharkhand-Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal.
- The Santal people or Santalis were **not the original inhabitants** of modern day Santhal Pargana. They had **migrated from the Birbhum** and Manbhum regions (present-day Bengal), starting around the late 18th century.
- The **1770 famine in Bengal** caused the Santals to begin moving and soon, the British turned to them for help.
- With the enactment of the **Permanent Settlement Act of 1793**, the East India Company was desperate to bring an ever-increasing area in its control under settled agriculture.

- They, thus, chose the area of **Damin-i-Koh**, at the time heavily forested, to be settled by the Santals, in order to collect a steady stream of revenue.
- However, once settled, the Santals bore the brunt of colonial oppression, the Santal **migration was forced** by the British merely to collect more revenue. **Predatory money-lenders** and the police were a by product of this system.

Accounts of the prisoners after the 'Hul'

- Tribal icon **Birsa Munda accounts** by an IAS officer K Suresh Singh have mention of a deity appearing in Munda's dream. In the case of 'Hul' too similar accounts have come into picture.
- The book '**Hul Document**' stated that a deity appeared in front of Kanhu Santal after he sent a 'Parwana' (an order) to the 'Bada Sahib' in Calcutta.
- In a **judicial recording** of one of the main participants, it was said that we consulted for two months that Pontent (Britisher who was in charge of the area) and others don't listen to our complaints and no one acts as our Father and Mother then God descended from heaven in the form of cartwheel and said to me to kill Pontent then you will have justice and Father, Mother.

Reasons

- **Social Conditions:** Zamindars, the police, the revenue and courts have exercised a combined system of **extortions, oppressive extractions, forcible dispossession** of property, abuse and personal violence and a variety of petty tyrannies upon Santals.
 - Exorbitant interest on loans of money ranging from 50 to 500 per cent.
 - False measures at the *haut* and the market;
 - Willful and uncharitable trespass by the rich on the growing crops etc.
- **Organisation and Leadership:**
 - By 1854, there was talk of rebellion in **tribal councils** and meetings. The rebellion finally began after a massive assembly of over 6,000 Santhals representing around 400 villages that took place on June 30, 1855.
 - With **Sidhu and Kanhu** taking the lead, the rebellion saw the mobilisation of Santal people across the region, who picked up arms and declared their autonomy from the British.
- **Potential Recruits:** As per some accounts, approximately 60,000 Santals took part in this rebellion.

Significance

- **Indigenous Resistance:** The Santals rose up against the unjust land policies, forced labor, excessive taxation, and other forms of exploitation imposed by the British administration. They sought to protect their traditional way of life and regain control over their land and resources.

- **Scale and Organization:** The rebellion involved a substantial number of Santal tribes people participants. The Santals demonstrated a high level of organization, led by their leaders who provided strategic direction and mobilized their people effectively.
- **Symbol of Tribal Assertion:** The rebellion represented a collective effort to defend their rights, autonomy, and way of life against colonial encroachment.
- **Influence on Indian Nationalism:** It served as an inspiration for subsequent freedom fighters who drew upon the spirit of resistance displayed by the Santals.
- **Landmark Legal Case:** The Santal rebellion led to the enactment of the **Santal Parganas Tenancy Act in 1855**. This legislation provided certain protections for tribal land rights and sought to prevent the exploitation of the Santal community.
- **Cultural Impact:** The leaders and participants of the rebellion are revered as heroes in Santal history and their stories continue to be passed down through generations.

Lambani Craft

News Excerpt

As part of the third **G20 culture working group (CWG)** meeting in Hampi, a **Guinness world record** was created for the 'largest display of Lambani items'.



About

- The Lambani embroidery is an intricate form of textile embellishment characterised by **colourful threads, mirror-work and stitch patterns**.
- It is practised in **several villages of Karnataka**.
- The Lambani craft tradition involves stitching together small pieces of discarded fabric to create a beautiful fabric.
- The **sustainable practice of patch-work** is seen in many textile traditions of India and around the world.
- The **embroidery traditions** of the Lambanis are shared in terms of technique and aesthetics with textile traditions across Eastern Europe, West, and Central Asia.

Significance

- **Over 450 women artisans and cultural practitioners** from Lambani came together to create embroidered patches with GI-tagged Sandur Lambani embroidery, creating 1,755 patchwork pieces.
- The display titled **'Threads of Unity'** celebrates the aesthetic expressions and design vocabulary of Lambani embroidery.
- The promotion of this craft will not only preserve a living heritage practice of India but will also **support the economic independence of women**.
- The G20 CWG is also espousing **'Culture for LiFE'**, an initiative for an environment-conscious lifestyle and a concerted action towards sustainability.

Alluri Sitarama Raju

News Excerpt

Year-long **125th birth anniversary celebration** of legendary freedom fighter **Alluri Sitarama Raju** was celebrated in **Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh**. A 30 feet tall bronze statue on the occasion was also unveiled by Honourable PM.

About

Alluri Sitarama Raju

- Alluri Sitarama Raju was **born on 04 July 1897**, in a village called Mogallu near Bhimavaram in Andhra Pradesh.
- He was a **sanyasi and a strong believer in justice** who raised his voice and waged many a battle against unlawful British policies.
- Raju completed his initial years of schooling in his native village and then shifted to Visakhapatnam for his higher studies.
- By the **age of 18**, he renounced all worldly pleasures and became a sanyasi.
- The **tribals regarded him as a mystic** who would rescue them from British authorities.

Evolution of Methods for Fighting Britishers

- Initially, Sitarama Raju, under the influence of **Gandhiji's Non-cooperation movement**, inspired the tribals to seek justice in the local panchayat courts and boycott the colonial courts.
- However, these steps did **not alleviate their suffering** and eventually, he used this movement to spread awareness about the need for change.
- In August 1922, he launched what is now known as the **Rampa Rebellion** against the British.

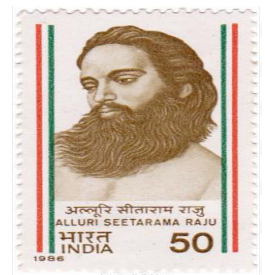
Manyam or Rampa Rebellion (1922-1924)

- Manyam, or the Rampa rebellion, was a tribal revolt led by Alluri Sitarama Raju in the Rampa regions of present-day **Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh**.
- The uprising was **against the exploitative British policies** and oppressive forest laws that threatened the lives of tribes in the region.

- The tribes followed the **'Podu' system of cultivation**, whereby every year some amounts of forest tracts were cleared for cultivation, as it was their only source of food.
- **The Madras Forest Act, 1882** was passed restricting the free movement of the tribal communities and prohibiting them from engaging in their traditional Podu agricultural system.
- **The rebellion** was started by looting police stations in Chintapalli, Krishnadevipet, and Rajavommangi by 500 tribals under Raju on August 22, 23, and 24, respectively.
- The tribal masses showed wholehearted participation throughout the rebellion under Raju, who prepared them and spread the **ideals of the non-cooperation movement and Swaraj** in the hills.
- British retaliation forced the rebels to start **guerilla warfare**, which lasted for two years. The government imposed **martial law and punitive taxes** on the villagers, exerting pressure on them to end the rebellion.
- Meanwhile, the British continued inflicting misery on the tribals. In a bid to alleviate their suffering, Sitarama **Raju surrendered**, with the expectation that he would be given a fair trial in return.
- However, on **07 May 1924**, he was treacherously trapped, tied to a tree, and **shot dead**. He was cremated on 08 May, thus marking the **end of his glorious fight** against the British Government.

Significance

- **Unity and Integrity:** The life character of Alluri Sitarama Raju is an example of uniting society without any discrimination based on caste and class.
- **Empathy and Compassion:** Alluri Sitarama Raju was adopted by the tribal society completely and he also made the happiness and sorrow of the tribal society his own happiness and sorrow.
- **Nishkama Karma:** Working selflessly and fearlessly for the well-being of the deprived sections of society is the message of the life of Alluri Sitarama Raju.
- **Armed Guerrilla Warfare:** His military strategies and tactics posed a significant challenge to the colonial administration.
- **Popular Folk Hero:** He became a popular folk hero in the folklore and ballads of the region, with his story being passed down through generations. His legacy continues to inspire people in the fight against injustice and oppression.



Way Forward

- The **125th birth anniversary** of Alluri Sitarama Raju Garu and the **100th anniversary of Rampa Kranti** was celebrated throughout the year.

- **Restoration of his birth place** at Pandrangi, renovation of Chintapalli police station, construction of Alluri Dhyana Mandir at Mogallu, etc. are symbols of the **spirit of Amrit Mahotsav**.
- Raju represents the **spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'** that has been uniting the country in one thread of unity.
- He was honoured for his valour and fiery spirit with the title, **"Manyam Veerudu" (Hero of the Jungle)**. Every year, the Government of Andhra Pradesh commemorates his birth date, the 4th of July, as a state festival.
- **Sociologists and historians** should make efforts to create awareness about the contribution of freedom fighters like Alluri Sitarama Raju among all citizens, especially the younger generation.

Sree Narayana Guru Jayanti

News Excerpt

Recently, the Prime Minister has paid tributes to Sree Narayana Guru on his Jayanti.

About

- Shree Narayana Guru was born on August 20, 1856, in the village of Chempazhanthi near Thiruvananthapuram as the son of Madan Asan, a farmer, and Kutti Amma.
- He was born into a family of the Ezhava caste in an era when people from such communities, which were regarded as Avarna, faced much injustice in the caste-ridden society of Kerala.
- He was a catalyst and leader who reformed the oppressive caste system that prevailed in society at the time.
- The caste system was rampant in Kerala at that time.
- One of his famous sayings in Malayalam was „One caste, one religion, one god for all.
- He demonstrated a path to social emancipation without invoking the dualism of the oppressed and the oppressor.
- His philosophy always advocated social equality, education for all, and spiritual enlightenment.
- He loved solitude and always indulged himself in deep contemplation. He was intensely drawn to worship at the local temples and composed hymns and several devotional songs.
- He is revered for his Vedic knowledge, poetic proficiency, openness to the views of others, non-violent philosophy, and unrelenting resolve to set aright social wrongs.
- He was instrumental in setting the spiritual foundations for social reform in Kerala and was one of the most successful social reformers to revolt against caste system in India.

- Narayana Guru consecrated the first temple of Lord Shiva in 1888 where an idol was ordained by a non-brahmin in Aruvippuram village of Kerala. His step sparked off the anti-caste revolution against the upper-caste Brahmin communities.
- Later, in 1903, he established the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) as the founder and president. The organisation continues to mark its strong presence to this day.
- He had set up more than 40 temples across the state as an act of protest to permit lower caste people to enter temples.
- The famous Vaikom Satyagraha' protest movement against caste discrimination and untouchability abolished untouchability and inequality. Hence, this day is quite important in Kerala and is observed as a public holiday.
- The Sivagiri pilgrimage was established in 1924 to promote the virtues of cleanliness, education, devotion, agriculture, handicrafts, and trade.
- His philosophy and teachings are a way of life for the people of Kerala.
- He passed away on September 20, 1928.

Martand Sun temple

About

- This Kashmiri Hindu temple is one of the most elegant structures ever built in India.
- Temple was built during 725 – 756 AD under the dynasty of Karkota by king Lalitaditya.
- The eighth-century temple was said to have been destroyed during the rule of Sikandar Shah Miri between 1389 and 1413.
- It is contentious that the foundation of this temple was laid during the period of 370 to 500 AD by Ranaditya, one of the legendary King.
- In Sanskrit, Martand is another name for the Sun God within Hinduism.
- Structure was constructed of limestone and the entire complex had been built on the top of a plateau near Anantnag in Kashmir.

The architecture of Martand Sun temple

- Temple is situated on a large landscaped area, spread over the area of 220 feet in length and around 142 feet wide.
- The architecture of the Martand Sun temple is comprised of the Gandharan, Gupta, Roman, Chinese, Syrian – Byzantine and Greek designs.
- This mesmerizing complex area expands over around 32,000 square feet and has its entrance towards the western side of the complex area.

- Entrance was adorned by elaborate and intricate carvings of the Hindu Deities.
- Main shrine had smaller antechamber which was decorated with the beautiful intricate carvings of Lord Vishnu, goddess Ganga and Yamuna and the ultimate Sun God, Surya.
- In order to magnetize the aura of the place, Martand Sun temple was surrounded by some 84 small shrines as well during that time.
- Ruins over the site mark weathered Sanskrit inscriptions and eroded sculpture and carvings depicting traditional dance postures and musical events.
- Because of its majestic architecture and diversified structural designs, it is a center of attraction in Kashmir region.

Megalithic dolmen site

Unique terracotta figurines in different states of preservation have been found in recent archaeological explorations conducted in the megalithic dolmen site at Mudu Konaje, near Moodbidri, in Dakshina Kannada.

About Megalithic dolmen site:

- Megalithic culture is known for its different types of burials and use of iron in India. Dolmen is one among them.
- **Features**
 - Under a dolmen, huge **stone slabs known as orthostats** were **erected in clockwise order**, which created a square room.
 - This square chamber was closed by another huge stone slab as a capstone.
 - Generally, on the Eastern slab, a round or U-shaped entrance known as the port hole was created.



- It was **known by different names** in South India, like Kalmene, Pandavara Mane, Moriyara Mane and Moriyara Betta etc., which reveals its popularity among the common people.

Key findings in Mudu Konaje site:

- The figurines were datable to 800-700 BC.
- It was **the biggest megalithic dolmen** site, which consisted of nine dolmens on the slope of a stone hill.
- Of the eight figurines found, there are two cow bovines, one mother goddess, two peacocks, a horse, the hand of a mother goddess, and an unknown object.
- The **cow bovines** found in the dolmens help to **determine the chronology of the dolmens**.
- **Terracottas** found in the megalithic burial provide a solid ground for the **study of the Bhoota cult** or Daiva Aradhane of coastal Karnataka.
- **Cow bovine** or Cow goddess had its parallels in Malampuzha megalithic terracotta figurines of Kerala and Egypt.

Konark Wheel

The G20 Summit in India conducted recently in the Bharat Mandapam in Delhi, had '*Konark Wheel*' as the model representing Indian Art and Architecture.

About Konark Sun Temple:

- The word '**Konark**' represents two worldly inclusions – '*Kona*' for '*the corner*' and '*Arka*' means '*the Sun*' (according to *Brahma Purana*).
- The Konark Sun Temple, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984**, is a popular destination for pilgrims.
- **Location:** It is situated in **Odisha**, some 35 km from *Puri* and 6.5 km from *Bhubaneswar*.
- **Constructed by:** **King Narasimha Deva I (Eastern Ganga Dynasty)** in the **12th century** paying tribute to the Sun God. It has a huge framework, symmetry, precision, and detailed artwork that never ceases to astound visitors.
- History behind the '**The Black Pagoda**':
 - According to some researchers, the Sun Temple was constructed in the sea to give the appearance of the Sun God rising from the water at dawn.
 - Due to the perception of the **temple's roof being dark**, the European sailors called the temple "**Black Pagoda**."
 - It acted as a crucial signpost for sailors back then who were sailing the Bay of Bengal.

"Here the language of stone surpasses the language of man"-
Rabindranath Tagore on Sun Temple at Konark.

Artistic features of Konark Temple:

- One of the highest temples ever constructed in the nation - about 227 feet tall.

- The spectacular Jagamohana (Entrance Hall) with the sanctum sanctorum, however, is the only structure still standing today, though completely collapsed.
- The Natya Mandap, which is still standing despite being in ruins, is the other building.
- The temple was fashioned like the Sun God's chariot, which was drawn by 7 horses and had 24 exquisitely carved wheels (Konark Wheels).

About Konark Wheel/Chakra:

- Apart from its captivating beauty, historians also talk about its 'scientific precision'.
- The wheels are designed in such a way that one can gauge the time of the day by looking at the shadow cast on the spoke of the wheels by the sun.
- Not only that the carvings of the spoke and axes denote the activities that one normally does at that time of the day.
- Representing 'Kalachakra': The wheel's circular motion represents time, as well as development and ongoing change in the cosmos.
- National Significance: It represents timeless knowledge, cutting-edge civilization, and architectural brilliance, and has also been incorporated into the Indian national flag.
 - The wheel of democracy is a representation of the democratic values' tenacity and dedication to social advancement.



Protection of Heritage by the Indian Government:

- The Konark Sun Temple is a World Heritage Site.
- It is protected under the National Framework of India by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act (1958) and its Rules (1959).
- Other state government Legislations include the Konark Development Act and the notified Council Area Act.

Nataraja Sculpture

The 27-foot-tall Nataraja statue has been installed at the G20 summit venue to showcase India's rich history and culture.

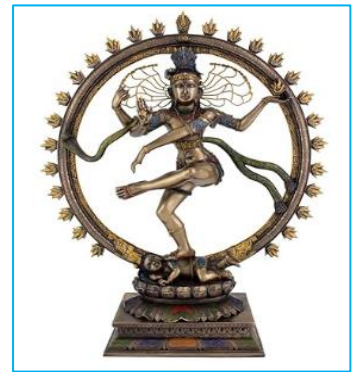
Features of the Statue:

- It is also considered the tallest statue of **Lord Shiva's dancing form** in the world.
- The statue is an *ashtadhatu* (eight-metal alloy) piece of art, weighing about 18 tonnes.
- The **design draws inspiration from three revered Nataraja idols**:
 - Thillai Nataraja Temple (Chidambaram)
 - Uma Maheswarar Temple (Konerirajapuram)
 - Brihadeeswara Temple (**UNESCO World Heritage Site**).

- All these three temples from which the **Bharat Mandapam Nataraja** statue is inspired were originally constructed by the Cholas.

Art and Architecture during Cholas:

- Cholas who at their peak around the **9th-11th centuries AD**, ruled over much of peninsular India.
- Chola art and architecture in South India was a product of a *prosperous, highly efficient empire* during the period of its greatest territorial expansion.
- **Architecture Contribution**: Among the important parts of Chola sculpture, Shaiva figures are predominant. A very fine Vaishnava and Jain images are also being observed.
 - **Rajaraja Chola (985–1014 AD)**: Under his patronage the massive **Brihadisvara temple** at Tanjavur was built.
 - **Rajendra Chola I (1012–1044 AD)**: He constructed the **monumental Brihadisvara temple** at Gangaikondacholisvaram.
 - **Rajendra Chola II (1143–1173 AD)**: The splendid temple of **Airavatesvara** at Darusaram was built.
- All three temples, dedicated to **Lord Shiva**, whose impressive remains dominate the modern landscape, designated as the Great Living Chola Temples by **UNESCO**, were inscribed on the **World Heritage List in 1987**.
- **Art Contribution**:
 - **Paintings**: Scenes from Periyapuram are beautifully depicted in Temple Paintings.
 - **Music**: **Nambiandar Nambi and Nathamuni** made major contributions in Music. During Cholas, almost in every temple, **Aiwar and Nayanmar hymns** were sung.
 - **Dance**: The two classical types of dances **Bharatanatyam and Kathakali** were performed.
 - **Drama**: Dramas like **Koothu, Rajarajeswara natakam and Rajarajavijayam** were performed.



Ramon Magsaysay Award

This year, marked the **65th edition** and **four Asians** were given the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

About the Award:

- The **Ramon Magsaysay Award**, often called the '**Nobel Prize of Asia**', is a notable accolade that represents exceptional spirit and influential leadership.
- The award carries a certificate, a medallion bearing the likeness of the late President, and a cash prize of **USD 50,000**.

- **Criteria:** The Asian people who have shown selfless service to others and excellent contributions in their chosen fields without seeking public acknowledgement are eligible for the Award. The areas of field recognizable are:



- **Government Service:** To recognize outstanding service in the public interest in any branch of government, including the executive, judicial, legislative, or military;
- **Public Service:** To recognize outstanding service for the public good by a private citizen;
- **Community Leadership:** To recognize the leadership of a community toward helping the disadvantaged have fuller opportunities and a better life;
- **Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts:** To recognize effective writing, publishing, or photography or the use of radio, television, cinema, or the performing arts as a power for the public good;
- **Peace and International Understanding:** To recognize contributions to the advancement of friendship, tolerance, peace, and solidarity as the foundations for sustainable development within and across countries; and
- **Emergent Leadership:** To recognize an individual, forty years of age or younger, for outstanding work on issues of social change in his or her community, but whose leadership may not yet be broadly recognized outside of this community.

Winners of Ramon Magsaysay Award 2023:

Awardees	Contribution	Country
Dr. Ravi Kannan R.	Medical and healthcare: Strong devotion to his medical profession, focusing on what medicine is truly for pro-health and people-centred treatment.	India
Korvi Rakshand	Education: Developing inclusive education for the underprivileged children in Bangladesh.	Bangladesh
Eugenio Lemos	Community: Notable contributions to how young Timorese views nature and their surroundings.	Timor-Leste
Miriam Coronel-Ferrer	Peace building and International Understanding: Unwavering belief in the transformative power of non-violent strategies in peace building.	Philippines

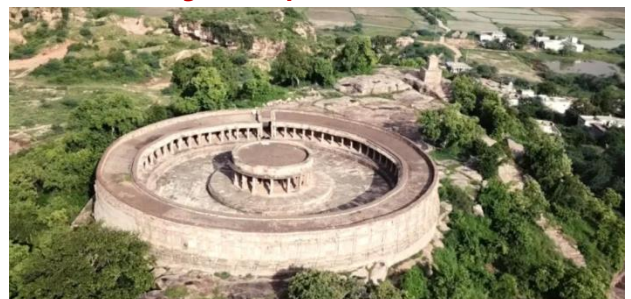
Temples that inspired the Design of the Old Indian Parliament building

The uniqueness of the Chausath Yogini temple and its circular shape is said to have inspired the design of the Indian Parliament, though there is no historical proof for this.

About Old Parliament Building - "temple of the Indian democracy":

- The current British-era structure was designed by **Sir Edwin Lutyens** and **Herbert Baker**, the architects who planned and built much of New Delhi
- Most notable in the design of the Parliament are the **144 columns**.
- Indian touches in the architecture include the use of **fountains, balconies and marble lattice** screens. The building is surrounded by **large gardens**, and the **perimeter is fenced off** by sandstone railings.

About Chausath Yogini Temple:



- The Chausath Yogini Temple in Morena district's Mitawali village, near Gwalior, is believed to have been built by **Kachchhapaghata King Devapala (1055 – 1075 AD)**, i.e., it predates India's Parliament building. It stands atop an isolated hill around 100ft high.
- The central shrine of the temple is dedicated to **Lord Shiva**. There are **slab coverings** here that have perforations to drain rainwater.
- The **64 small chambers** in its interior are said to be dedicated to **64 yoginis**.

Know About Kachchhapaghata:

The Kachchhapaghatas were a Rajput dynasty that ruled between the **10th and 12th centuries**. Their territory included *north-western* parts of Central India. The dynasty patronized **Shaivism** and **Vaishnavism** but was also **tolerant towards Buddhism and Jainism**. Several temples were constructed during their reign in **Kadwaha**. **Ajayapala (1192–1194 AD)** had the **Gangola tank** of Gwalior de-silted, as attested by an **1194 inscription**.

Similarities between both structures:

- They are both circular in design structure with **pillars lining their outer walls** and a **central chamber**.
- However, due to the lack of evidence, historians, and archaeologists remain skeptical.

Although there is no evidence of designs being inspired by Ancient Indian Architecture, **Vedic mantras engraved on the walls of the Indian Parliament** is a vindication that the

British architects did take into account Indian art while constructing buildings.

The Latest House Panel Report on The Archeological Survey of India (ASI)

News Excerpt:

Claiming that many of the 3,691 centrally protected monuments (CPM) in India are "minor" monuments, a parliamentary committee has recommended that the list should be rationalized.

ASI launched the "Adopt a Heritage 2.0" program to rejuvenate India's rich cultural heritage, in line with the vision of 'Virasat Bhi, Vikas Bhi.'

It is a revamped version of the earlier Adopt a Heritage Scheme launched in 2017 and clearly defines the amenities sought for different monuments as per the AMASR, 1958.

The stakeholders can apply to adopt a monument or specific amenities at a monument through a dedicated web portal.

It seeks to foster collaboration with corporate stakeholders to preserve these monuments for the next generations.

Indian Heritage App: The app will feature state-wise details of heritage monuments of India along with photographs, a list of public amenities available, geo-tagged locations, and a feedback mechanism for citizens.

e-Permission Portal: For obtaining permission for photography, filming, and developmental projects on monuments. The portal will fast-track the process of obtaining various permissions and solve operational and logistical bottlenecks.

Major Highlights and Recommendations from the 359th House Panel Report:

- The panel recommended "rationalizing and categorizing" this list based on national significance and unique architectural and heritage value.
 - The list includes 75 graves of colonial-era soldiers or officials of no notable importance. E.g. - graves of public works department engineer John Albert Cope (died in 1880) and Henry Gassen (died 1877), working for a cotton ginning company.
 - Deletion of some of the *kosminars* (milestones built by Mughals) because they come in the way of road-widening exercises.
- It recommended the central agency develop preservation plans for all its work, especially before excavations.
 - This includes establishing clear strategies for documenting findings, conserving artefacts, and restoring structures.
- It also advocated using advanced technologies such as LiDAR, ground-penetrating radar, and 3D scanning. E.g.- used in Gyanvapi complex in Varanasi by the ASI for its non-invasive survey.

- **Missing Monuments:** CAG declared 92 CPMs as "missing". The ASI has located only 42 of these monuments, while the remaining 50 monuments are either affected by rapid urbanization, submerged under reservoirs/dams or are untraceable.
 - ASI should maintain digital logbooks that include textual and photographic/ video records of the monument's physical State and location coordinates.
- It mentioned that the 100-metre prohibited area and 300-metre regulated area around all ASI-protected monuments lead to public inconvenience and have pitted the local community against these structures as it is difficult to carry out repair work.
- **Encroachments:** The committee recommends that ASI **should conduct a comprehensive survey of encroachments** around all monuments under its jurisdiction.
 - This will help ASI in creating a database and documenting the nature, extent and impact of encroachments on each site.
- The panel advised making the functioning of ASI more effective by dividing it into two wings:
 - **The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** looks after the core mandate, i.e., exploration, excavation and conservation aspects and
 - **The India Heritage Development Corporation (IHDC)** deals with the ASI's entire revenue.

Recent Works undertaken by ASI:

- Hoysala Temples in Karnataka, Shantiniketan in West Bengal.
- Conservation measures in foreign countries – such as Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan; Ta Prohm and Preah Vihear temples in Cambodia, My Son Group of Temples in Vietnam; and Friday Mosque in Maldives.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee plans to reintroduce the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) (Amendment) Bill, 2023:

About Previous AMASR Act 1958

- It provides for the -
 - Preservation (of ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites and remains of national importance which are over 100 years old)
 - Regulation (of archaeological excavations)
 - Protection (of sculptures, carvings and other like objects).
- 3,691 Centrally Protected Monuments or Sites are located in India and are guarded by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) - a Ministry of Culture agency that functions under the provisions of this act.

About current AMASR (Amendment) Act 2010

- To strengthen the penal provisions to prevent encroachments and illegal construction close to the monuments, the 1958 Act was amended in 2010.

- The amendments provide for the creation of:
 - A prohibited area of 100 metres around every national monument where no construction, public or private, is permitted.
 - Regulated area 200 metres beyond the prohibited area, where any construction will require the permission of a newly constituted National Monuments Authority (NMA).
- The amendment also suggested that heritage by-laws for each monument be created by an expert body, given the uniqueness of each monument.

About the proposed New AMASR (Amendment) Bill, 2023:

- The Bill seeks **to redefine monuments and rationalize** the use of areas around the protected monuments.
 - The Act, in its present form, restricts many areas that could be put to good use, specifically in the case of developmental and infrastructure-related work.
 - For example, prohibiting residents from constructing their houses within 100 metres of small and insignificant structures causes a lot of inconveniences and revenue loss to them.
- Through this Bill, the Government aims to effect a change in the current benchmark of a structure having **to be at least 100 years old to be listed as a monument.**
- The relook on the monuments also aligns with the **Government’s aim to rid India of its ‘colonial past.’**
 - The Government believes that most of the current monuments are from the British era despite India having a vast wealth of more ancient structures.

Doctrine of Oneness is a philosophical and spiritual idea that suggests a fundamental unity or interconnectedness underlying all of existence.

Adi Shankaracharya Statue at Omkareshwar

News Excerpt:

Madhya Pradesh CM unveiled the 108-foot-tall ‘Statue of Oneness’ or ‘Ekatmata ki Murti’ of **Adi Shankaracharya** at Omkareshwar on Mandhata Island.

About the statue:

- The multi-metal statue is installed atop Mandhata Parvat hill, facing southwards towards the Narmada River.
- It stands atop a 54-foot pedestal, supported by a 27-foot lotus petal base made of red stone.
- At the base of the statue is the Shankar Stambh, which features wooden domes and stone pillars with “carvings depicting 32 stories related to Acharya Shankar.

About Adi Shankaracharya:

- Adi Shankara, who is believed to have lived between **788 and 820 AD**, was **born in Kerala’s Kaladi**, situated on the bank of the **Periyar River**.
- He was one of the most influential philosophers of India.
- He advocated Advaita, or the doctrine of the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme God, which is the Ultimate Reality.
- He studied under his guru Govinda Bhagavatpada in Omkareshwar, and challenged prevailing philosophical traditions – including **Buddhism and Jainism**.
- He became a proponent of **Advaita Vedanta**. It is a school of Hindu Philosophy that teaches non-duality, or the absence of separation between the subject and object.
- He believed that the Brahman is real, the world is unreal, and the individual self is non-different from Brahman.
- His Hinduism does not see God as external to the universe, and both are indivisible.
- **Literature:** He authored as many as 116 books in just 32 years of lifespan.
 - The most notable are the **commentaries** or **bhashyas** on the 10 Upanishads, the Brahma Sutra, and the Bhagavad Gita and include some of the **introductory texts**.
- Shankara is said to have **founded four monasteries (mathas) at Shringeri (south), Puri (east), Dwarka (west), and Jyotirmath (north)**, probably following the Buddhist monastery (*vihara*) system.



About Mandhata Island:

- The Mandhata Island rests on the **Narmada River**.
- It is home to **two jyotirlingas** of a total of twelve- Omkareshwara (south side of the island) and

Amreshwara. The name 'Omkareshwar' is derived from the island's shape, resembling the sacred syllable 'Om', and its name means 'the Lord of Omkara'.

- The area is close to Mahakaleshwara Jyotirlinga, located in Ujjain.
- This island consists of **Shaivite, Vaishnavite and Jain temples** dating back to the **14th and 16th centuries**.

About Vedanta:

- This was described by **Badrayan** in Brahma Sutra but popularized by Adi Shankaracharya.
- It referred to the end of the Vedas with an emphasis on the Upanishads. Therefore, it is also known as '**Uttara Mimansa**' or '**Jnana Mimansa**' (Study of knowledge).
- It tells that every action must be guided by the intellect, whether right or wrong.
- According to Vedanta, all religions lead to the same goal.
- This school believes in Karma and rebirth. It states that Brahma is real and everything else is unreal (maya).

Way Forward:

It is testimony to his vision and foresight that even after thousands of years past his lifetime, his philosophy is still in vogue, and the institutions he helped to set up are still alive and thriving.

Creative Cities of Literature and Music by UNESCO

News Excerpt:

Kozhikode in Kerala has been designated as the UNESCO '**City of Literature**' and Gwalior as the '**City of Music**' in the latest UNESCO list of Creative Cities Network.

About:

- The **UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)** (Established in 2004) is a global initiative that recognizes cities for their **commitment to using culture and creativity as catalysts for sustainable development** and displaying innovative practices in human-centred urban planning.
- The Network now counts 350 cities in more than one hundred countries and represents **seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music**.
- Apart from Kozhikode and Gwalior, **Varanasi (music), Srinagar (crafts and folk arts) and Chennai (music)** are part of the network.
- The newly designated Creative Cities will participate in the 2024 UCCN Annual Conference, in Braga, Portugal, from July 1 to July 5, 2024, under the theme '**Bringing Youth to the Table for the Next Decade.**'

Gwalior and Kozhikode find their place in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network



Gwalior for Music



Kozhikode for Literature

Kozhikode (Kerala) as a 'City of Literature':

- In 2022 a proposal for Kozhikode was initiated by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration.
- Upon receiving enthusiastic support, the Kozhikode Corporation formed a collaborative partnership with Charles University in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic.
 - Notably, **Prague** was the **first city to be honoured with the title of 'City of Literature' by UNESCO in 2014**.
- Kozhikode, known for its **literary vibrancy**, is a permanent venue for the **annual Kerala Literature Festival** and hosts numerous other book festivals. This recognition solidifies its status as a hub for literary enthusiasts.
- The first Malayalam novel Kundalatha was born in Kozhikode in 1887.

Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh) as the 'City of Music':

- Gwalior, the city that gave the world the legendary musician **Tansen**, has been bestowed with the prestigious title of "**City of Music**" by UNESCO as a tribute to the city's rich musical heritage.
- **About Tansen:**
 - Previously, Tansen was a court musician during the reign of Raja Ramachandra of Bandhavgarh (Rewa).
 - When **Akbar** heard of his prodigious talent, he sent a 'Farman' to the king asking for Tansen and made him one of the **Navaratnas** in his court.
 - He gave him the title of '**Mian**' and also the '**Sangit Samrat**'.
- **Gwalior Gharana**, one of the oldest Hindustani musical Gharanas, is believed to have originated in this very place, solidifying its status as the birthplace of this iconic musical style.
 - In **Hindustani music**, a gharana is a system of social organization linking musicians or dancers by lineage or apprenticeship, and by adherence to a particular musical style.
- **The Scindias**, the erstwhile royal family of Gwalior, have diligently preserved and propagated music for centuries, adding to the city's musical legacy.

Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas

News Excerpt:

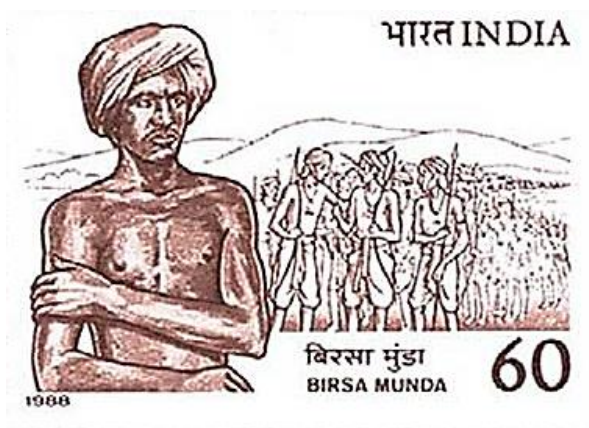
Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas was celebrated all over India on 15th November 2023.

About Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas:

- The Government of India has decided to celebrate **November 15** as '**Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas**' to mark the birth anniversary of Tribal Freedom Fighter "**Birsa Munda**" from the year **2021**.
- Every year, the Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas is held **to honour tribal efforts in the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of Indian ideals such as national pride, valour, and hospitality**.
- Birsa's birth anniversary is marked as the **Statehood Day in Jharkhand**.

About Birsa Munda:

- He was born on **November 15, 1875**.
- He was not only a **freedom fighter but also a social reformer** and led the tribal movement, namely **Ulgulan (Revolt) against the exploitative systems of the British Colonial Government**.
- He is also known as **Dharti Abba** as he encouraged tribals to understand their cultural roots & observe unity.
- He belonged to the Munda tribe in the Chhotanagpur Plateau area. Under the guidance of his teacher Jaipal Nag, Birsa converted to Christianity to join the German Mission school.
- However, having gained awareness of the British colonial ruler and the efforts of the missionaries to convert tribals to Christianity, Birsa started the faith of '**Birsait**'. Soon members of the Munda and Oraon community started joining the Birsait sect.
- Birsa Munda is known **to have mobilised the tribal community against the British** and had also **forced the colonial officials to introduce laws protecting the land rights of the tribals**.
- He **died on June 9, 1900**, at a young age of 25.



Other related initiatives launched by the Prime Minister on Janjatiya Gaurav Divas:

PM-PVTG Development Mission:

- It aimed at the overall development of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) communities living in remote areas.
- It has been **established to provide basic infrastructure** such as power, water, road connectivity, housing, education, and healthcare.
- Through the **coordinated efforts of nine Ministries, approximately 11 interventions** such as the PM-Gram Sadak Yojana, PM-Gram Awaas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, and others **would be delivered to these target villages**.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra:

- It was launched from **Khunti (Jharkhand)** — in an attempt to achieve saturation of flagship government schemes across the country.
- The Yatra starts in **tribal-dominated districts of the country and will eventually reach all districts by January 2024**.
- The Yatra's main goal will be to **reach out to people and raise awareness about various welfare programs**.
- Top issues tackled in tribal regions- Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission; Enrollment in Eklavya Model Residential Schools; Scholarship Schemes; Forest Right Titles: Individual and Community Land; Van Dhan Vikas Kendra: Organizing Self-Help Groups.
- It is one of the country's largest-ever outreach initiatives and intends to cover over **2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats and over 3,600 urban local bodies by January 25th, 2024, touching every district**.

PM JANMAN (PM- Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan):

- It is aimed at the comprehensive development of 75 PVTG communities residing in 18 states and 1 UT who continue to lag behind in socio-economic indicators of educational, health and livelihood.
- The population of these communities is about 28 lakh and are living in about 22000 habitations in more than 800 blocks located in 200 districts.
- Even after 75 years of independence, various development schemes of the Central and State Governments have not been able to adequately address the critical infrastructure needs of the villages and habitations of these communities.
- The PM also launched the portal on the **PM Gatishatki Platform** which will be used for reaching out and monitoring the progress and outcomes of the PM-JANMAN.

Saint Mirabai

News Excerpt:

'Sant Mirabai Janmotsav' 2023 marks the **525th birth anniversary of Sant Mirabai**, which was celebrated with great pomp in Uttar Pradesh.

- During this event, the Indian PM also unveiled a **commemorative stamp and coin** as a tribute to Mirabai.

About Mirabai:

- Mirabai was born in **1498** in the Kudki region of Marwar state, now known as the Pali district of Rajasthan, in the Rajput royal family.
- She was **married to the Prince of Mewar**, Bhoj Raj. After his death, she left the luxurious life and embarked on her spiritual journey.
- Mirabai became a **disciple of Ravidas**, a saint from a caste considered "untouchable".
- Mirabai is well known for her fond love towards **Lord Krishna**.
- She composed innumerable bhajans expressing her intense devotion. Her songs openly challenged the norms of the "upper" castes and became popular with the masses in Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- She advocated for social issues like **inequality prevailing due to birth, poverty, age, and sex**.
- Her most famous **song is 'Payoji Maine Naam Ratan Dhan Payo'** and she is also mentioned in **Bhaktamal, written by Nabha Dass**.

Bhakti Movement in India:

- The Bhakti movement is also divided into two different ideological streams:
 - **'Saguna'** (those poet-saints who composed verses extolling a god with attributes or form)- The Saguna Bhaktas, like Tulsidas, upheld the caste system and the supremacy of the Brahmans and preached a religion of surrender and simple faith in a personal God, having a strong commitment towards idol worship.
 - **'Nirguna'** (those extolling a god without and beyond all attributes or form)- The Nirguna Bhaktas, like Kabir, rejected the varnashrama and all conventions based on caste distinctions.
- **In Southern India:**
 - The Bhakti Movement originated in the Tamil region during the 6th-7th centuries A.D. The seventh to ninth centuries saw the emergence of new religious movements led by the **Nayanars** (saints devoted to Shiva) and **Alvars** (saints devoted to Vishnu) who came from all castes, including those considered "untouchable" like the Pulaiyar and the Panars.
 - However, it gained prominence during the 12th century, when **Basavanna**, a minister in the **Kalachuri Dynasty**, initiated a significant phase of the Bhakti movement in the Kannada region.

• In Western India: 13th to 17th century

- In Maharashtra, the Bhakti movement gained momentum in the late 13th century, led by the Varkaris like **Saint Dyanadev, Namdev, Tukaram, Janeshwar, Eknath**, and women like **Sakkubai**.
- They rebelled against societal norms and defied Brahminical dominations through their writings and poems.

• In Northern India: Tulsidas, Kabirdas, Ravidas and Surdas

- The Bhakti movement eventually reached North India until the 15th century.
- For example, **Saint Ramanuja** introduced the **doctrine of Vishistadvaita**, which stood in contrast



BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN INDIA

to the complete **mono-ism**.

Significance of the Bhakti Movement:

- **Awareness:** Awakened Hindus and Muslims (through Sufism) to the futility of ritualism and superstitions.
- **Resistance to the Orthodox system:** One of the most significant social impacts was the rejection of caste distinctions by followers of the Bhakti movement. The practice of 'Sati' faced resistance, and the Bhakti saints emerged as social reformers condemning various social evils.
- **Life lessons:** The movement instilled a powerful message that promoted hard work, honest means of earning wealth, and social service to the poor. It emphasized humanitarian values, contentment, and self-control.

Parthenon Sculptures or Elgin Marbles

News Excerpt:

British PM Rishi Sunak cancelled a meeting with his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis over the status of the Parthenon Sculptures housed at the British Museum.

What are the Parthenon Sculptures?

- The Parthenon Sculptures at the British Museum are more than 30 ancient stone sculptures from Greece that are more than 2,000 years old.
- Most of them originally adorned the walls and grounds of the Parthenon temple on the rocky Acropolis hill in Athens.
- Completed in 432 BC, the temple is dedicated to the goddess Athena and is seen as the crowning glory of Athens' Golden Age.
- While one notable sculpture, which is 75 meters long, depicts a procession for the birthday of Athena, others show gods, heroes or mythical creatures.



Current Controversy and Colonial Legacy related to Parthenon sculptures:

- **British views on reaching of Parthenon sculptures to Britain:**
 - They were removed from the Parthenon in the early 19th century by Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin and then-British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.
 - The marble was taken to Britain and purchased by the British Museum.
- **Greek views on Parthenon sculptures reaching to Britain:**
 - **Lord Elgin (British Ambassador)** was granted a permit (firman), and between 1801 and 1805, removed about half of the remaining sculptures from the ruins of the Parthenon.
 - While Athens accused Lord Elgin of theft, he insisted he had permission to remove the marble from the Ottoman Empire, which used to control Athens at the time.
 - All of Elgin's collection of antiquities was then transported to Britain.
 - Athens has been demanding the return of the sculptures since it became independent.
 - The campaign gained momentum in the 1980s after Greek Oscar-nominated actress Melina Mercouri launched a movement for their return when she was the Culture Minister between 1981 and 1989.

About the History and Culture of Parthenon Sculptures:

- The Parthenon Sculptures are from **Athens, Greece** (then the city-state of Athens).
- The Parthenon was constructed **between 447 and 432 B.C.E.** under the direction of sculptor and **architect Phidias**.
- When Athens was selected as the new country's capital in 1834, most of the post-Roman period structures on the Acropolis were removed to accommodate further archaeological exploration and to return the site to a state that reflected Greece's idealized '**Classical**' past.
 - It became a **symbol for the modern nation-state of Greece** following independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1832.
- It was known as a period of **artistic and military triumph** and was considered the golden age of ancient Greece.

Maharishi Valmiki Airport

News Excerpt:

Recently, Prime Minister **inaugurated** the newly built **Maharishi Valmiki Airport** in **Ayodhya, U.P**

About Maharishi Valmiki:

- He is referred to as **Adi Kavi**, or the "**first/original poet**" in **Sanskrit**.
 - This is because he is **credited** to having **composed** the **Ramayana**, believed to be the **first epic poem** in the Sanskrit literary tradition.
 - Valmiki's Ramayana is divided into **7 cantos or kandas**, each telling a different part of Lord Ram's story.
 - Valmiki himself makes an appearance in the **Bala and Uttara Kandas**, the first and last chapters of the epic.
- Prior to becoming a sage, Valmiki was known as **Ratnakar**, and was a feared **dacoit and hunter**.
 - While some versions of the story claim that he was actually born to a Brahmin before getting lost in the forest and **adopted by a hunter couple**, more subaltern versions of the story claim that he was born to a Bhil king.
- **Valmiki Jayanti** celebrated **every year** is also known as **Pargat Diwas**.
 - According to the **Hindu** calendar, it falls on the **full moon day** of the month of **Ashwin**, which corresponds to **September-October** in the **Gregorian** calendar.

About Maharishi Valmiki International Airport:

- The airport recently got a licence for the operation of flights from the **Director General Civil Aviation (DGCA)**.
- **Structure of Airport:**
 - The state-of-the-art airport, built at a cost of ₹1462.97 crore, **depicts the journey of Lord Ram's life** and has unique architecture that follows the '**Nagara Style**', outlined with scriptures, presenting a culturally rich welcome to passengers.

- Outside the airport, a **mural featuring a bow and arrow** has been installed, serving as a symbolic representation of the enduring efforts of Lord Ram.
 - The **landscaping** of the airport is inspired by the use of **colours** representing the **five elements (Panch Tatva)**.
- The airport also features two distinct types of mural plaques, namely '**Daivik and Khandika**'.
 - In addition to this, a **wall mural dedicated to Lord Hanuman** has also been installed depicting his entire journey.

Untapped potential

News Excerpt:

India's two-decade journey with Geographical Indication tags has shown limited outcomes, and there is an urgent need to simplify the registration processes to ensure that the protection mechanism helps producer communities.

Background

About Geographical Indication (GI):

- Geographical Indication (GI) is a **form of certification that recognizes unique products based on their origin**, which is often attributed to agro-climatic variations and traditional cultivation practices.
- This certification is also extended to **non-agricultural products, such as handicrafts, based on human skills, materials, and resources** available in certain areas that make the product unique.
- **The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules was enacted in 1999** in India.

India vis a vis world:

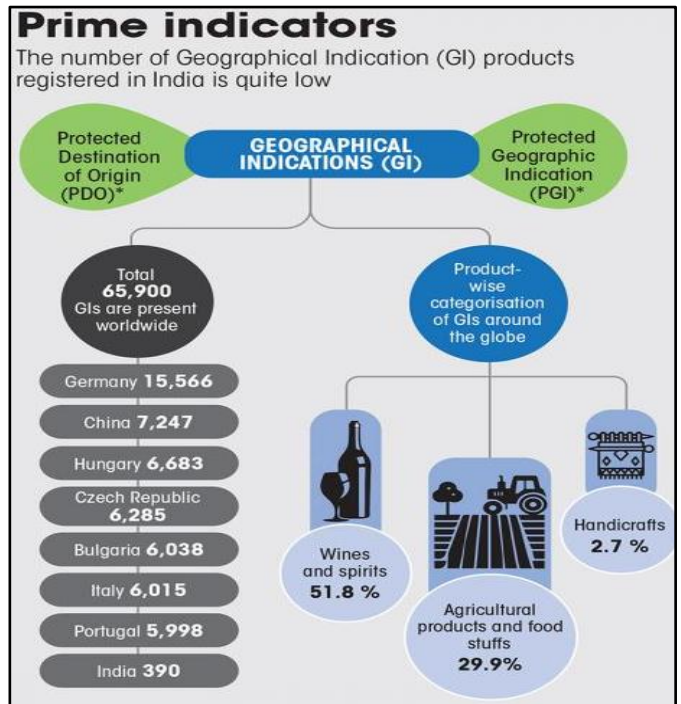
- Compared to other nations, **India lags in GI registration**. Till December 2023, Intellectual Property India received just **1,167 applications**, of which **only 547 products have been registered, which translates into the acceptance rate of only 46 %** as per the GI Registry.
 - In India, **handicrafts (about 45 per cent) and agriculture (about 30 per cent)** comprise the majority of GI products.

GI-related Authority:

- At the level of the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, GI is governed under the Agreement on **Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**.
- **In many EU nations**, GI is classified into two basic categories—**Protected GI (PGI)** and **Protected Destination of Origin (PDO)**.
 - India only has the **PGI category**.

A sector ignored:

- Since its inception, there has been significant controversy among the WTO member countries about **accepting GI as intellectual property**.



- There have been disputes on various GI products, such as **Darjeeling tea and Basmati rice**, which were claimed by one country as their property and legally challenged by another.
- The reason is that though the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) promotes and develops intellectual property rights, GIs receive limited attention compared to patents, trademarks, and copyrights.
- **An analysis of WTO's annual reports** shows that its focus has been majorly on maintaining a national register for GIs, with little attention on promoting GIs or bilateral agreements.

Academic attention:

- **Though academic attention on GI** has not been enough across nations, a recent push is evident.
- **Bibliographic assessment through a literature review of academic research**, with results analyzed through software, shows that a total of 138 articles could fall under GI research since 2017.
- **An analysis of publication trends** over the past two decades reveals that the number of publications was below 15 from 2002 to 2016.
- **Analysis of country-wise publication trends** shows clear dominance by European countries like Italy (48), Spain (28) and France (20).
 - **India has had very limited publications, numbering about seven.**

How to popularize GI?

- **GI has had limited outcomes and requires more popularization to achieve its full economic potential:**
 - **Trade reforms, legal protection, and consumer acceptance are necessary to**

commercialize local products and gain premium prices in domestic and international markets.

- The government should **incentivize GIs at the initial juncture**—at the **producers’** level—to boost the numbers and to ensure direct benefits to producers.
 - It is also important to use technology and focus on skill-building and digital literacy among GI producers, manufacturers, and laborers to ensure they can keep pace with modern trends and consumers’ requirements.
- **The government’s One District One Product scheme (ODOP)** should be integrated with GIs through the involvement of food producer organizations.
 - The promotion of GI-based products requires a special emphasis on marketing and branding, which can be resolved to a certain extent by developing market outlet schemes.
- The establishment of **testing laboratories** in such markets will ensure that consumers have faith in the quality of these products.
 - The **National Agriculture Market—eNAM**—an online trading platform for agricultural commodities in India, must carry a separate tab for GI-based products.
- **The rising number of startups in recent years, should be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**
 - Connecting GIs with such startups and linking their performance with that of SDGs will ensure that they contribute to social development while also providing attention to GI products.
- **GI is a powerful tool for protecting traditional knowledge and culture and can boost socio-economic development.**
 - More commodities should be brought under the GI umbrella.
 - Subsidies for growers and promotion at national and international fairs are necessary.
 - State-level attention from stakeholders will protect producers’ and consumers’ interests.

Way Forward:

- **Since India’s GI Act was framed more than two decades ago**, it is time to amend it. This should be accompanied by suitable institutional development, such as relooking at the application processing time and the establishment of Help Centers for those who are often clueless about how to proceed.
- **The definition of “producers” also lacks clarity**, which results in the involvement of intermediaries who share the benefits that should go only to the producers.
- **Government agencies, trade, and producer associations should integrate to organize more**

exhibitions for the popularization of GI-based products with the use of various types of media.

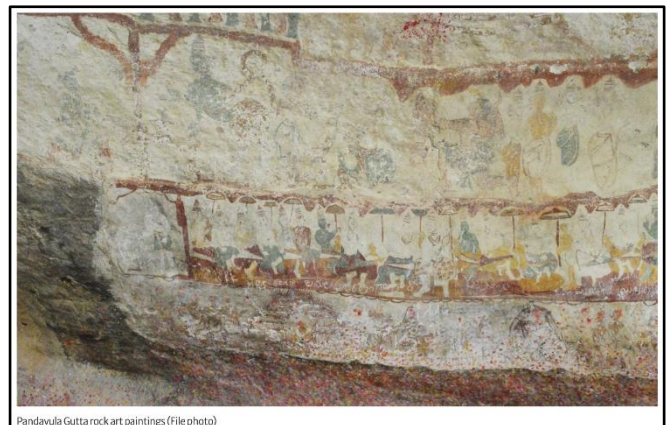
Pandavula Gutta & Geo-heritage Site

News Excerpt:

Pandavula Gutta has been **officially recognized** as the **sole Geo-heritage site in Telangana**.

About Pandavula Gutta:

- The **Pandavula Konda** (Pandavula Gutta) site was first **discovered in 1990**.
- It is **located** in the **Bhupalpally district** of **Telangana**, home to many prehistoric habitation sites.



Pandavula Gutta rock art paintings (file photo)

- Pandavula Gutta is rich in terms of the number of **paintings, rock shelters, and habitation**, right from the **Mesolithic to Medieval times**.
- **Palaeolithic cave paintings** have been found at Pandavula Gutta (Regonda Mandal).
 - These cave paintings offer a rare glimpse into **prehistoric man’s rock art** identified on walls and ceilings of caves, rock shelters, and isolated boulders.
 - The rock art paintings **depict wildlife** like Bison, Antelope, Tiger, Leopard, etc.
 - These paintings also include other **shapes**, such as the **Swastika symbol**, circles and squares, and weapons, such as bows, arrows, swords, and lancers in green, red, yellow, and white pigment **colours**.

Geo-heritage site:

“Geoheritage” is a **generic** but descriptive term applied to sites or areas of geologic features with significant **scientific, educational, cultural, or aesthetic value**.

- **Scientifically and educationally significant geoheritage sites** include those with textbook geologic features and landscapes, distinctive rock or mineral types, unique or unusual fossils, or other geologic characteristics that are significant to education and research.
- **Culturally significant geoheritage sites** are places where geologic features or landscapes play a role in cultural or historical events.

- **Aesthetically significant geoheritage sites** include visually appealing landscapes because of their geologic features or processes.

Geological Survey of India (GSI):

- It was established in **1851**.
- The **main functions** of GSI relate to creating and updating **national geoscientific information** and **mineral resource assessment**.
- GSI is **headquartered in Kolkata**, with **six regional offices** in Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong, and Kolkata, as well as **state unit offices** in almost all states of the country.
- Presently, the Geological Survey of India is an **attached office** to the **Ministry of Mines**.

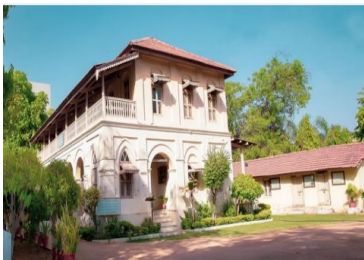
Kochrab Ashram

News Excerpt:

The Prime Minister inaugurated the renovated **Kochrab Ashram** in **Ahmedabad**, commemorating the 94th anniversary of the **Dandi March**.

About Kocharab Ashram:

- Kocharab Ashram was the **first Ashram** founded by Mahatma Gandhi in **1915** after coming to **India from South Africa**.
- This campus was called **Satyagraha Ashram** and was based on Gandhi's ideas of achieving India's independence from British rule through peaceful methods.
- Gandhi's friend and fellow barrister **Jivanlal Desai** gifted him the land at Kocharab to build the **Satyagraha Ashram**.
 - Mahatma Gandhi based himself here for about **one-and-a-half** years before moving to the **Sabarmati Ashram**.
 - In June **1917**, when the **plague** hit the city, Gandhi shifted the Ashram to Sabarmati.
 - In Sabarmati, he founded the **Harijan Ashram**, also known as the **Gandhi Ashram**.
- Mahatma Gandhi also started an '**Antyaj Ratri Shala**' (a **night study class**) for **Dalits** at the Ashram.
- Kocharab Ashram is a **European-style bungalow** with a **white-washed facade**.
 - It is located in Kochrab village on the outskirts of **Ahmedabad** on the banks of the **Sabarmati River**.
 - Mahatma Gandhi started planning his '**war against the British**' in Kochrab Ashram.



Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and Awards

News Excerpt:

The **President** of India presented Sangeet Natak Akademi **Fellowships and Awards** for the **years 2022 and 2023** in New Delhi.

About the Awards & Fellowships:

- More than 90 artists from the fields of Indian classical **music, dance, drama, folk & tribal arts, puppetry, and allied theatre** art forms were felicitated.
- The honour of **Akademi Fellow** carries a purse money of **Rs. 3,00,000/-** (Rupees three lakhs) while the **Akademi Award** carries a purse money of **Rs. 1,00,000/-** (Rupees one lakh), besides a **Tamrapatra** and **Angavastram**.
- Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship (**Akademi Ratna**) is the **highest honour** given to an eminent artist in the field of **performing arts** for his/her exceptional contribution to his/her performing art form.
 - It is **restricted to 40** at any given time.

About Sangeet Natak Akademi:

- It was established by the **Indian education ministry** in **1952** and became functional the following year, when Dr. P. V. Rajamannar, its **first chairman**, was appointed.
- **Dr Rajendra Prasad**, the first President of India, **inaugurated** it on January 28, 1953, in a special function held in the Parliament House.
- It is the **apex body** in the field of **performing arts** in the country and was set up for the preservation and promotion of the vast intangible heritage of India's diverse culture expressed in forms of music, dance, and drama.
- The **Chairman** of the Akademi is **appointed by the President** of India for a term of **five years**.
- It is an **autonomous body** of the **Ministry of Culture**, Government of India.

The science behind Surya Tilak

News Excerpt:

On the occasion of Ram Navami, a beam of sunlight lit up the forehead of Lord Ram's idol in Ayodhya's newly built temple.

Key Points:

- A three-minute-long **Surya Tilak ceremony** — where a beam of sunlight was projected onto the forehead of Lord Ram's idol — was performed at noon on April 17.
- This was achieved using a **special mirror-lens arrangement** designed by astronomers at the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)**, Bengaluru, which a team from the **Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee, installed in the building**.

The science behind Surya Tilak

- **Step 1: Predict the Sun's position (each year)**

- Following the Gregorian calendar, the date of Ram Navami (the Hindu festival celebrating Lord Ram's birth) **varies yearly**.
- This is because the **Gregorian calendar is solar** (based on Earth's revolution around the Sun), while the **Hindu calendar is lunar** (based on the Moon's revolution around Earth).
- Thus, the IIA team would have **to calculate the position of the Sun in the sky on that day in any given year**.
- **Step 2: To channel the Sun's rays**
 - After astronomers estimate where the Sun would be in the sky, their **second task would be to channel the sunbeam in a manner that it will fall on the idol's forehead** for a certain amount of time.

About the instruments:

- The IIA team **used a four-mirror-and-four-lens array for this purpose**.
 - The **first mirror**, responsible for receiving the sunlight, has to be positioned at an angle along the path of the Sun's rays.
 - The light will then be reflected in **three other mirrors** and will pass through **four lenses until it is of the desired intensity**. It will then be directed to the idol's forehead.
 - **The mirrors directed the beams while the lenses made them converge to the required intensity**.

The principle behind it:

- This **opto-mechanical system** operates on a principle similar to that of a **periscope**.
 - Given that the Sun's position vis-à-vis the first mirror will vary each year, a specially **designed 19-gear system** was built to make requisite adjustments.
 - Once a year, **one tooth of the gear must be manually turned** so that the angle of the pickup mirror (first mirror) is adjusted and ready to capture the Sun's rays.
- The number 19 was chosen to correspond to the **Metonic cycle — a period of 19 years in which there are 235 lunar months, after which the Moon's phases recur on the same days of the solar year**.
- This means that every 19 years, the system will effectively reset, and the cycle will then begin again.

Sannati: The Buddhist site of Karnataka

News Excerpt:

In July 2022, the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) started a **major restoration project** on the ancient **Buddhist site of Sannati**.

The discovery of Sannati:

- The site was **accidentally discovered in 1986** when some villagers found a stone slab with a **Prakrit inscription in Brahmi script**.

- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** began **excavating the area in 1994**.
- Sannati, apart from its Buddhist association, is also known for **Sri Chandrala Parameshwari**, a **deity** in a **9th-century CE temple**.
- It is located on the bank of the **Bhima River** in the **Kalaburagi district of Karnataka**.

Major findings from the site:

- **Abandoned Well:** It firmly establishes that this was indeed the site of **Adholoka Maha Chaitya [the Great Stupa of the Netherworlds]** as it was described in many inscriptions in the Ashokan era.
- **Maha Stupa:**
 - The **Maha Stupa** is believed to have been developed in three constructional phases – **Maurya, Early Satavahana and Later Satavahana**.
 - It is built with **locally available limestone**.
 - The Sannati stupa also has symbolic and **anthropomorphic forms** of the Buddha.
 - The Sannati stupa has the **maximum number of inscriptions among all stupas** (more than 700 inscriptions).
- **Sculpture of the emperor:**
 - The excavation also recovered a **stone sculpture** portraying **Mauryan Emperor Ashoka**.
 - The emperor is seen **surrounded by his queens and female attendants** in this **rare sculpture**.
 - The sculpture had the words "**Raya Asoko**" etched on it in **Brahmi script**, leaving little scope for mistaking the man's identity.
- While the Stupa is believed to be one of the largest Stupas built at the time, the **stone portrait** is considered to be the **only surviving and available image** of the **Mauryan Emperor Ashoka**.
- **Bodhi Tree sculpture:**
 - Ashoka is shown as paying obeisance to the tree.
- **Jataka story sculptures:**
 - The birth narratives of the Buddha are among the most interesting sculptures.
 - They commence with **his mother's dream, Mayadevi**, and finally culminate with his great departure, **Maha Parinirvana**.
 - The Jataka tales narrate the incidents of the Buddha's previous life as Bodhisattva.
 - The recoveries included around **60 dome slabs** with **sculptural renderings** of selected **Jataka stories**.

Ikshvaku-era coins unearthed in Telangana

News Excerpt:

Telangana's Department of Heritage has unearthed a **coin hoard at Phanigiri**, a renowned **Buddhist heritage site** located 110 km away from the state capital of Hyderabad.

The Ikshvaku dynasty:

- The **Ikshvaku dynasty (225-340 A.D)** was feudatory under the patronage of the **Satavahana Empire**.
- They ruled over the delta of the **Krishna and Godavari** rivers on the east coast of the **Andhra region**.
- Their capital was situated at **Dharanikota (present-day Amravati)**.
- The **Ikshvakus inscriptions** obtained from **Nagarjunakonda, Jaggayapetta, Amravati, and Bhattiprolu** record their activities, such as **donations, construction, etc.**
- The **Puranas** also record the existence of Ikshvakus as **Andhrabhrtyas (servants of the Andhras)** and as **Sriparvatiyas**.

More about the discovery:

- The **lead coins** were found in an earthen pot during the ongoing excavations in Telangana's **Suryapet district**.
- The coins numbering 3,730 bore an **elephant symbol on the obverse** and a **Ujjain symbol on the reverse**.
- Studies concluded that the **coins belonged to the Ikshvaku period**.
- Many other valuable cultural antiquities and structural remains, including **beads of stone and glass, shell bangle fragments, stucco motifs, broken limestone sculptures, toy cartwheels, iron nails, and pottery**, were also unearthed during the excavation.

About Phanigiri:

- **Phanigiri (meaning hillock of snake hood)** is a small village in **Suryapet** district, about 150 km from Hyderabad. The word **Phani in Sanskrit means snake**, and **Giri means hillock**.
- Phanigiri is believed to be one of the important Buddhist **monasteries strategically** located on a **hilltop**, on the **ancient trade route (Dakshinapatha)** connecting the west and east coasts of the Deccan.

Earlier excavations at Phanigiri:

- Various stages of earlier excavations here discovered **Mahastupa, apsidal Chaityagrihas, Votive stupas, pillared congregation halls, Viharas, platforms with staircases at various levels, octagonal stupa chaitya, 24-pillared mandapam, circular chaitya, and cultural materials** that included terracotta beads, semi-precious beads, iron objects, Brahmi label inscriptions and holy relic casket.
- The **Phanigiri Gutta**, where most of the discoveries of the early Buddhist era were made, is considered a narrative-changing find.
- The **thoranas** discovered at Phanigiri are very important as they are among the **first ones found south of Sanchi**.
- The same thorana has a panel that shows both **Mahayana** and **Hinayana** schools of thought, which shows that despite philosophical differences, both sects co-existed in **Phanigiri**.

- There is evidence from Phanigiri that shows the **deification of Buddha**.

Mohiniyattam open to boys

News Excerpt:

The Kerala Kalamandalam, a **deemed university for arts and culture**, has lifted gender restrictions for learning Mohiniyattam.

Mohiniyattam:

- Mohiniyattam is the **classical solo dance form of Kerala** and has deep roots in **Hindu mythology** and **temple traditions**.
- The dance form is characterized by **delicate body movements** and **subtle facial expressions**, which are inherently feminine and thus ideally suited for performance by women.
- **Historical References:**
 - Ancient texts like Mazhamagalam Narayanan Namputiri's Vyavaharamala (1709) and Kunjan Nambiar's Ghoshayatra mention Mohiniyattam.
 - The **Travancore Kings, particularly Maharaja Kartika Tirunal and Maharaja Swati Tirunal, structured the dance form into its present classical format in the 18th and 19th centuries**.
- **Temple Origins:**
 - Mohiniyattam's roots trace back to the temples of Kerala, where female temple dancers, known by various names like **Nangai, Dasi, and Koothachi**, performed **expressive gestures** to accompany **temple rituals**.

The salient features of the Mohiniyattam dance include:

- **Graceful and swaying body movements:** Mohiniyattam is known for its fluid and graceful movements, devoid of abrupt jerks or sudden leaps. It belongs to the **lasya style**, characterized by femininity, tenderness, and grace.
- **Importance of hand gestures and facial expressions:** Mohiniyattam places significant emphasis on **Hastha Mudras (hand gestures)** and **Mukhabhinaya (facial expressions)**, which convey emotions and narratives with subtlety and precision.
- **Influences from Nangiar Koothu and folk dances:** Mohiniyattam has borrowed movements from **Nangiar Koothu, a temple art form**, as well as from **folk dances like Kaikottikali and Tiruvatirakali**.

Ganga Jatara

News Excerpt:

The centuries-old annual folk festival of Tirupati, Ganga Jatara, was celebrated.

About the festival:

- It is an annual folk festival observed in **southern India, including Karnataka, Rayalaseema, and Andhra Pradesh.**
 - The festival is **dedicated to Sri Thathaya Gunta Gangamma**, the Gramadevata (village goddess) of Tirupati, who is regarded as the younger sister of Lord Venkateswara.
 - It commences with **Chatimpu**, the official announcement, occurring at midnight on the second Tuesday of May, accompanied by the playing of musical instruments called **Dappu**.



- Origin:** The festival originated in ancient times. It was established to commemorate the heroic feat of Gangamma, who vanquished a local chieftain known for his atrocities against women's **dignity**.

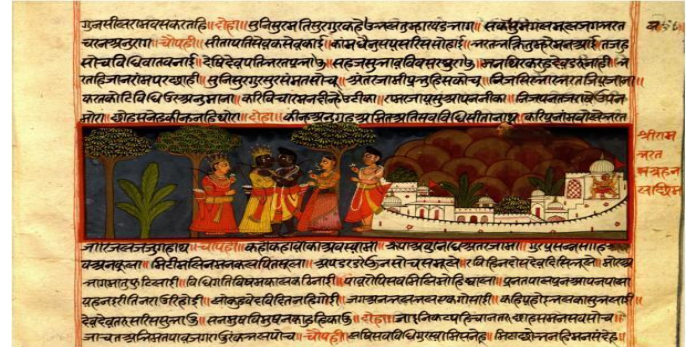
Rituals of the festival:

- During the festivities of Ganga Jatara, participants engage in unique rituals:
 - People wear **Vichitra Vesha Dharana** attire and symbolically **curse Goddess Gangamma** for seven consecutive days.
 - The culminating day, known as Ganga Jatara, witnesses a massive influx of devotees to Gangamma temples in Tirupati.
 - Devotees traditionally **offer Pongallu** (a dish made of rice and lentils) and sarees to Gangamma.
 - Ragi Ambali**, a traditional porridge-like dish made from finger millet, is served to devotees visiting temples throughout the city.
 - After midnight, a **clay idol of Gangamma (Viswaroopam)** is **installed** outside the temple, followed by the ceremonial smashing of the portico.
 - Devotees eagerly collect the clay fragments, believed to possess **healing properties**, for preservation in their Puja rooms or consumption by mixing them with water.
 - Fishermen in the Andhra region also celebrate Gangamma Jatara before commencing their fishing activities.

Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sahrdayaloka-Locana

News Excerpt:

India's **Ramayana, Panchtantra and Sahrdayaloka Locana** have found their place in **UNESCO's Memory of the World Regional Register** for the 2024 cycle.



More about the News:

The **inclusion** underscores the global importance of preserving diverse narratives and artistic expressions that shape humanity's shared history.

- The **10th General Meeting of the Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP)**, held in **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**, saw the inclusion of **20 items** from the Asia-Pacific region.
- Notable among these are the **illustrated manuscripts of Ramacharitmanas by Tulsidas** and the **15th-century manuscript of the Panchatantra fables**.
- Hosted by Mongolia's Ministry of Culture, the Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO, and the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok**, this year's meeting celebrated "**human research, innovation, and imagination.**"
- In addition to literary treasures, the 2024 cycle recognized **the region's genealogical records, scientific discoveries, and technological innovations.**
 - For instance, it acknowledged the sci-fi feminist author **Rokeya S Hossain from Bangladesh for her visionary narrative, "Sultana's Dream."** It highlighted joint research efforts by Australia and Tuvalu on coral reef formation.
- The meeting also emphasized the **importance of preserving regional literary traditions**, such as recognizing **Indigenous chants from the Philippines and the Panchatantra Fables from India**, which have had a global influence.
- The **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** played a **pivotal role** in securing this historic recognition during the MOWCAP's 10th meeting.

Additional Information: Ramcharitmanas:

- Authored by **Goswami Tulsidas**, Ramcharitmanas is an epic poem that retells the story of the Hindu deity Rama, focusing primarily on his life, deeds, and teachings.

- Written in the **Awadhi dialect of Hindi**, it is considered one of the greatest works of Hindi literature and a cornerstone of the Bhakti movement.
- The text is revered for its **spiritual insights, moral lessons, and poetic beauty.**
Panchatantra:
- Compiled by **Pandit Vishnu Sharma**, the Panchatantra is a collection of ancient Indian fables and moral stories.
- **Originally written in Sanskrit**, it consists of interrelated animal tales that impart practical wisdom and ethical principles.
- The Panchatantra has been translated into numerous languages and has profoundly influenced world literature, particularly in the genre of animal fables.
Sahṛdayāloka-Locana:
- Authored by **Acharya Anandvardhan**, Sahṛdayāloka-Locana is a **Sanskrit commentary on the Dhvanyaloka**, a foundational text in Indian literary theory written by Anandavardhana.
- It elucidates **the principles of aesthetic experience and literary interpretation**, particularly focusing on the concept of suggestion (dhvani) in poetry.

UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register:

- The UNESCO Memory of the World Register is part of an international initiative **launched by UNESCO in 1992 to safeguard the documentary heritage of humanity.**
- It is a part of UNESCO's broader **Memory of the World Programme**, which aims to preserve and promote documentary heritage worldwide.
- The Asia-Pacific Regional Register focuses explicitly on recognizing and safeguarding documentary heritage from countries within the Asia-Pacific region.
- This regional register is a prestigious platform for identifying and honouring significant documentary collections, archives, and manuscripts with exceptional cultural, historical, or literary value.
- Inclusion in the register **signifies the outstanding universal significance of the nominated items** and their contribution to humanity's collective heritage.

Sahitya Akademi Fellowship

News Excerpt:

Eminent **English author Ruskin Bond** was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Fellowship. He was also named a **Sahitya Akademi Fellow in 2021.**

About Ruskin Bond:

- Born in 1934 in **Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh**, Bond has been actively writing for over 50 years and has written in various genres of literature, including **short stories, children's books, novels, autobiographical works, and non-fiction.**

- His **notable works** include - Vagrants in the Valley, Once Upon a Monsoon Time, Angry River, Strangers in the Night, All Roads Lead to Ganga, Tales of Fosterganj, Leopard on the Mountain, Too Much Trouble, A Flight of Pigeons.
- **Adaptations** of his stories were aired on Doordarshan as the TV serial '**Ek Tha Rusty**' and several of his stories - The Night Train at Deoli, Time Stops at Shamli and Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra - were included in the **school curriculum** in India.
- Bond received the **Sahitya Akademi Award in 1992, Sahitya Akademi's Bal Sahitya Puraskar in 2012, Padma Shri in 1999, and Padma Bhushan in 2019**, among other prestigious awards.



Types of fellowship	Types of awards
<p>Sahitya Akademi Fellows: The highest honour the Akademi confers on a writer is by electing him as its Fellow. This honour is reserved for 'the immortals of literature' and is limited to 21 only at any given time.</p>	<p>Bhasha Samman: The Akademi instituted Bhasha Samman in 1996 to be given to writers, scholars, editors, collectors, performers or translators who have contributed considerably to the propagation, modernization or enrichment of the languages concerned.</p>
<p>Honorary Fellows: This is the highest honour conferred by the Akademi on literary persons of outstanding merit who are not nationals of India, and the number of such Fellows is limited to ten at any given time.</p>	<p>Sahitya Akademi Prize for Translation: The Sahitya Akademi has instituted an annual prize for translation from 1989 to be given to outstanding translations in the 24 languages recognized by it.</p>
<p>Premchand Fellowship: This fellowship would be given to scholars researching Indian literature or to creative writers from the countries of the SAARC region other than India.</p>	<p>Bal Sahitya Puraskar: This Award is given to an author based on his/her total contribution to children's literature and relates to books first published during the five years immediately preceding the year of the Award.</p>
<p>Dr Anandacoomaraswamy Fellowship: This fellowship will be offered to scholars from Asian countries who wish to pursue literary projects of their choice.</p>	<p>Yuva Puraskar: It relates to books published by an author aged 35 and below.</p>

About Sahitya Akademi:

- The Government of India formally inaugurated the Sahitya Akademi on **12 March 1954**. It functions as an

autonomous organization. It was registered as a society on 7 January 1956 under the **Societies Registration Act 1860.**

- Sahitya Akademi, India's **National Academy of Letters**, is the country's central institution for **literary dialogue, publication and promotion.**
- **Languages recognized:** In addition to the **22 scheduled languages** enumerated in the Constitution of India, **English** and **Rajasthani** are also recognized languages.
- The Sahitya Akademi's head office is in **New Delhi.** Regional Offices are in **Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, and Agartala.**

Joshimath renamed as Jyotirmath, Kosiyakutoli becomes Kainchi Dham

News Excerpt:

In a significant move reflecting Uttarakhand's historical and spiritual heritage, the Centre has approved the renaming of Joshimath tehsil in Chamoli district to Jyotirmath and Kosiyakutoli tehsil in Nainital district to Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham.

About Jyotirmath:

- The town of Joshimath is also popular as a hill station as it is seated at an elevation of **1,890 meters above sea level.**
- The **Alaknanda and Dhauliganga meet at the confluence of Vishnuprayag overlooking the town of Joshimath.** The view of Hathi Parvat and other Himalayan Peaks make it a popular destination.
- It is also the **gateway to many Himalayan expeditions, trekking trails, camping, and pilgrimage centres.**

Historical Significance of Jyotirmath:

- Joshimath, now Jyotirmath, holds profound historical and spiritual significance.
- It is believed that the area **was originally known as Jyotirmath after Adi Guru Shankaracharya visited the region in the 8th century.**
 - According to local lore, Shankaracharya performed penance under the sacred Amar Kalpa tree and



attained enlightenment, a divine revelation called **Divya Gyan Jyoti.**

- Over centuries, the name evolved to Joshimath, but the recent renaming restores its original, spiritually significant nomenclature.

The Revival of Kainchi Dham:

- The renaming of **Kosiyakutoli tehsil to Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham pays homage to Baba Neem Karoli Maharaj and his ashram, a revered spiritual site.**
- The proposal reflects the deep reverence residents and devotees hold for Baba Neem Karoli Maharaj, whose teachings and spiritual presence continue to inspire many.

About Kaichi Dham:

- Situated on the Nainital—Almora Road, 9 km from Bhowali and 17 km from Nainital, **it has emerged as a modern pilgrim center.**



- **Kaichi is a term used for two sharp hairpin bends of the motor road in the local dialect; hence, the name.** It has **no relation to scissors.**

Rock carvings in Goa's Mauxi Village

News Excerpt:

Mauxi (Mhaus) village in Goa has emerged as a hotbed of **neolithic discoveries.** Some two decades ago, ancient rock carvings etched into the metabasalt rock along the dry riverbed of the **Zarme River** belonged to the **Neolithic.**



Key points about the rock carvings:

- The rock carvings were initially discovered by **residents around 20 years ago.**
- The carvings depict animals such as **zebus (a type of cattle), bulls, and antelopes, as well as footprints and cupules (circular cavities on the rock surface).**
 - The circular cavities or cupules on the rock surface signify community involvement in discovering **historical artefacts.**

- Around **20 rock etchings** showcasing the use of the **bruising technique** have been identified in the region; tools from the same period as **the rock carvings** have been found on the riverbed, validating the **site's historical significance**.
 - Officials from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have confirmed the site's **Neolithic origins**, a period when humans started **domesticating cattle**.
- A carving depicting a **trident, a symbol associated with the Iron Age**, suggests the site's enduring significance through various historical epochs.
- The presence of the **Dhawad community, early settlers, and ironsmiths** adds another layer to the historical narrative, although they were **eventually displaced by new settlers**.
- One notable feature is a **rock with cupules found outside the Puravati Temple**. Initially interpreted as representing a star constellation with **27 cupules**, it was later found to have **31 cupules**, raising curiosity about its significance. The **exact purpose of the cupules remains unknown**.

Neolithic Period:

- Scholars coined the term in the late **19th century CE** and it covers three periods: **the Palaeolithic, the Mesolithic, and the Neolithic**.
- The term **Neolithic Period** refers to the last stage of the Stone Age.
- The **Neolithic period** is significant for its megalithic architecture, the spread of agricultural practices, and the use of **polished stone tools**.
- **Copper metallurgy** was introduced toward the end of the Neolithic era, marking a transition period to the Bronze Age.

Dividing Assets: India-Pakistan Partition

News Excerpt:

The 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan involved the complex division of assets, including military forces, finances, and even an elephant.

Background:

- In 1947, the end of the British Raj marked the beginning of a significant upheaval as India was partitioned into **two independent nations: India and Pakistan**.
- **Sir Cyril Radcliffe**, a British lawyer, was commissioned to draw the borders that would divide British India into two countries – Pakistan and India.
- With this, the geographical split was completed, but there also remained the matter of how assets — **military, monetary and cultural** — would be divided between the two.

Formation of the Partition Council:

- On June 16, 1947, a committee known as **The Punjab Partition Committee** was established by **Governor-**

General Jenkins, with close consultation from Lord Mountbatten.

- This committee, later renamed the **Partition Council**, was tasked with **dividing the financial assets, military forces, and administrative services** between the two newly formed countries.
- The Partition Council included notable figures such as **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** and **Rajendra Prasad** from the Congress, as well as **Liaquat Ali Khan** and **Abdur Rab Nishtar** from the All-India Muslim League. **Nishtar was later replaced by Muhammad Ali Jinnah**.
- The Council had only **70 days** to execute the partition, a challenging time frame given the complexities involved.

Dividing the Military Forces:

- One of the biggest issues before the Partition Council was the division of the defence forces. Under this exercise, **two-thirds** of the force remained in India, while **one-third** were sent to Pakistan.
- Around **2,60,000 men went to India**; they were mostly **Hindus and Sikhs**. On the other hand, around **140,000 men went to Pakistan**, most of them being **Muslims**.
- Several British officers stayed on during the transition, including **General Sir Robert Lockhart** and General **Sir Frank Messervy**, who became the first Chiefs of Army Staff of India and Pakistan, respectively.

Splitting Financial Assets:

- Another big challenge for India was the division of the money between the two countries. According to the Partition agreement, Pakistan received **17.5 per cent** of the **assets and liabilities of British India**.
- The Partition Council also decided that the same central bank would serve both India and Pakistan for over a year. However, the divide was hastened when ties between the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and the Pakistan government deteriorated.
- The two countries agreed to **use existing currency until March 31, 1948**, after which **new coins and notes were introduced**. However, even in the **first five years after partition, Indian and Pakistani currency continued** to circulate in each other's territories.
- History records show that while **India paid Pakistan Rs 20 crore on August 15, 1947 as promised, the amount of Rs 75 crore got stuck over a controversy** — Pakistan's invasion of Kashmir with the help of mercenaries. Interestingly, both countries claim that the other owes them money to date. **The Economic Survey of India 2022-2023 reveals that Pakistan owes the country Rs 300 crore as pre-partition debt**. On the other hand, Pakistan's State Bank in 2014 said that India owed it Rs 560 crore.

Dividing Other Assets:

- In addition to the financial and military assets, India and Pakistan also reached a consensus on the division of

other movable assets. All moveable assets were divided in the ratio of 80-20.

- **Moreover, after the partition, antiquities and relics were also sought to be equally divided** between the two countries under the Partition Council's official agreement in the 1950s.
 - One notable example of asset division was the gold-plated, horse-drawn buggy of the Viceroy of India, which was decided by a coin toss in favour of India.
- The process of division was even extended to **animals**.

Conclusion:

The 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan involved a complex division of assets, including military forces, finances, and even an elephant named Joymoni. Despite the challenges, these issues were resolved through negotiations, highlighting the intricate process of partitioning nations.

Chakravyuh and the story of Abhimanyu

News Excerpt:

Criticizing the Budget in Parliament, the Leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha had said that a "lotus-shaped chakravyuh" controlled by six men had trapped India's people in the same way that Abhimanyu, Arjuna's young son, had been trapped and killed by the Kauravas in a chakravyuh or padmavyuh on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

What is chakravyuh?



- A Chakravyuh is a **complex military formation described in ancient Indian texts**, most famously in the epic **Mahabharata**.
- It is a **circular, multi-layered battlefield formation**. "**Chakra**" means **wheel** or **disc**, and "**vyuh**" means **formation**.
- A Chakravyuh consists of concentric circles of soldiers, with each circle tighter and more difficult to penetrate than the outer ones. The formation rotates like a disc, making it even harder to break through.
- It is designed to **trap and defeat enemy forces**, and it is extremely difficult to penetrate or escape once a person is inside it.
- **Strategic importance:**

- It is considered one of the most formidable military tactics in ancient Indian warfare.
- It required extensive knowledge and skill to implement and counter a Chakravyuh.
- **Symbolic meaning:**
 - Often used metaphorically to describe **complex, seemingly inescapable situations**.
 - In modern usage, it can represent **intricate systems or strategies** that are difficult to understand or overcome.

Drona's Chakravyuh in Mahabharata:

- Following Bhishma's fall, **Dronacharya took command of the Kaurava** army and faced criticism from Duryodhana after an uninspiring performance in the next two days.
- Dronacharya decided to use the complex and formidable chakravyuh formation to fulfil his vow to defeat the Pandavas.
- Military formations like vyuh were designed to **optimize the positions of key warriors and required specific counters to be effectively broken**.
- The chakravyuh was particularly challenging to overcome, with only **Krishna, Arjuna, and Abhimanyu** on the **Pandava side** knowing how to penetrate it, and Drona ensured **Arjuna and Krishna were kept away during its deployment**.

The story of Abhimanyu:

- **Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna**, was the only Pandava who could penetrate the Chakravyuh.
- He knew how to enter but not exit the formation due to incomplete knowledge learned while he was in his mother's womb.
 - **Arjuna was telling his wife about the Chakravyuh**, but because Subhadra **fell asleep halfway through the narration**, Abhimanyu could hear only how to get in, not how to get out.
- Abhimanyu, known for his bravery and prowess, managed to enter the center of the chakravyuh.
 - Abhimanyu was as accomplished as a warrior as he was brave — he is often referred to as '**Janmavira**', **one who is brave from birth**, in the Mahabharata.
- Due to resistance from the Kauravas, especially **Jayadratha**, and strategic planning by **Drona**, other Pandava warriors could not follow, leaving Abhimanyu trapped and alone inside the formation.
- He fought like a lion, killing many Kauravas, including Duryodhana's son Lakshmana, and gravely injuring Duryodhana and Dushasana.
- Finally, six Kaurava warriors attacked Abhimanyu all at once, breaking the rules of ethical war. Outnumbered and exhausted, Abhimanyu succumbed.