

My Notes....

NATIONAL

ULFA PEACE ACCORD

- The **pro-talks faction** of the **United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA)** signed a **historic tripartite peace deal** with the **Government of India** and **the state government of Assam**.
- **ULFA** emerged from the **All Assam Students Union anti-immigrant agitation** that began in **1979** demanding a **sovereign State for the Assamese people**.
- The **ULFA** wanted to establish a **sovereign Assamese nation** through an **armed struggle** against **the Indian state**.

VIKSIT BHARAT SANKALP YATRA

- The **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra** is a government initiative being undertaken **across the country, to raise awareness** about and track the implementation of **flagship central schemes**, such as **Ayushman Bharat, Ujjwala Yojana, PM Surksha Bima, PM SVANidhi**, etc.
- it has **four aims**: “**reach out to the vulnerable who are eligible under various schemes** but have not availed benefit so far; **dissemination of information** and **generating awareness about schemes**; **interaction with beneficiaries of government schemes** through their **personal stories/ experience sharing**; and enrolment of potential beneficiaries through details ascertained during the Yatra.

KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM

- Starting last year, the **Kashi Tamil Sangamam** is aimed at celebrating the many aspects of the **historical and civilisational connection** between **India’s North and South**.
- The **overarching objective of this people-to-people connect programme** is to **revive the living bonds** between **Kashi and Tamil Nadu** — two **important centres of learning and culture in ancient India**.

INDIAN PENAL CODE TO NYAYA SANHITA

- The **BNS introduces Clause 69** that seems to ostensibly tackle the “**love jihad**” narrative by **criminalising “deceitful” promise to marry**.
- The **BNS provisions codify offences** linked to **mob lynching** and **hate-crime murders**, for cases when a **mob of five or more individuals commits murder** based on factors such as **race, caste, community, or personal belief**. The provision has punishment that extends from **life imprisonment to death**.
- For the **first time, tackling organised crime** is brought under the **realm of ordinary criminal law**.
- While **rape laws continue to operate only for women**, the BNS has tweaked some other laws, especially those **dealing with children**, to bring **gender neutrality**.

THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL, 2023

- The **Telecommunications Bill, 2023** was passed in the **parliament** by Union minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology **Ashwini Vaishnaw**.
- The new Bill seeks to replace the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, the **Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933**, and the **Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950**.
- The Bill allows the government to **take over telecom services** and intercept messages in the **interests of national security** and in case of emergencies.

MATHURA'S SHAHI IDGAH MOSQUE CASE

- The Supreme Court declined to stay an order issued by the Allahabad High Court a day earlier allowing a survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura, believed to have been built at Krishna Janmasthan, the site where Lord Krishna was born.
- The mosque was built in the 17th century during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.
- These claims are supported by the official court bulletin of February 1670.

INTERNATIONAL

MALDIVES TO NOT RENEW 2019 WATER SURVEY PACT

- The Maldives government has decided to not renew an agreement with India that allowed India to conduct hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters.
- Hydrographic surveys are carried out by ships, which use methods such as sonar to understand the various features of a water body.
- These surveys help “map out water depth, the shape of the seafloor and coastline, the location of possible obstructions, and physical features of water bodies”, to ensure the efficiency and safety of maritime transportation.

BHUTAN'S MEGA CITY PROJECT

- Bhutan plans to build a mega “international city” near the Indian border, covering an area of 1,000 square kilometre.
- Known as the ‘Gelephu Smartcity Project’, King Jigme Wangchuck touted it as an “economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India’s northeastern States”.

RED SEA ATTACKS

- The Red Sea attacks have been carried out by Yemen-based Houthi rebels, who have been in a civil war with the Yemeni government for about a decade.
- Two crucial choke points – the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal – threaten to disrupt over a third of global trade.
- A disruption in maritime transport is a crucial concern for the world economy, as over 80 per cent of the global goods trade is carried by sea.
- The share of trade via sea is much higher for developing countries such as India.

THE DONKEY FLIGHT

- Dunki, the film, is based on the “donkey route”, a popular but illegal immigration technique used to enter countries like the United States, UK and Canada.
- ‘Dunki’, a regional pronunciation of donkey, originated from a Punjabi idiom that means “hopping from one place to another”.
- It is a dangerous immigration route taken by several lakhs of Indians to reach countries like the US, the UK or Europe.

ECONOMY

UPI SCALES NEW HIGH IN DECEMBER

- **Unified Payment Interface (UPI)** transactions scaled a **fresh peak in December** by clocking **Rs 18.23 trillion in value** and **12.02 billion in volume**, rising **5 per cent** and **7 per cent** in those terms from November.
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is a system that **powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application** (of any participating bank), **merging several banking features**, seamless fund routing & merchant payments into one hood.
- It also caters to the **"Peer to Peer" collect request** which can be **scheduled and paid** as per **requirement and convenience**.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

INS IMPHAL COMMISSIONED

- **INS Imphal (Pennant D68)**, the **third of four warships of Project 15B** that together form the **Visakhapatnam class stealth-guided missile destroyers** was commissioned into the Indian Navy.
- The **lead ship of Project 15B, INS Visakhapatnam (Pennant No D66)**, was commissioned into the **Indian Navy in November 2021** and the **second ship INS Mormugao (D67)** in **December 2022**.
- The **fourth ship, D69**, which when commissioned will be christened **INS Surat**, was launched in May last year.

'UNABATED' FOSSIL FUEL

- At the **COP28 climate summit**, **one phrase** that has taken the **centrestage** is **"unabated" fossil fuels**.
- It comes to **fossil fuels**, **"unabated"** means **doing nothing to reduce the carbon dioxide (CO2)** and **other greenhouse gases** that are released from the **burning of coal, oil, and natural gas**.
- Conversely, **"abated"** refers to the **attempts to decrease the release of polluting substances to an acceptable level**.

COW-DUNG METHANE ROCKET ENGINE TESTED

- A **Japanese space startup** has taken a big step toward developing its **first orbital rocket** — which will be **powered by gas from cow dung**.
- **Interstellar Technologies Inc.** performed a **combustion chamber static fire test** at **Japan's Hokkaido Spaceport** as part of the development of the **Cosmos engine** for its **Zero rocket**.

AI TOOL CAN MAKE WEATHER FORECASTS

- At the **recent COP28**, **NASA and IBM** announced that an **Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool** called **watsonx.ai** would be available on the **open-source AI platform Hugging Space**.
- **Watsonx.ai** will help **users monitor the Earth from space**, **measuring environmental changes** that have already happened while also making predictions about the future.
- **Utilising NASA's trove of data** and **IBM's AI technology**, the model can help **scientists estimate the past and future extent of wildfires, floods, and urban heat maps**.

MISCELLANEOUS

WHAT IS KETAMINE?

- “Friends” actor **Matthew Perry** suddenly **passed away**, an **autopsy report**, saying Perry died from the “**acute effects**” of **ketamine**.
- **Ketamine** is an **anaesthetic** that has been **listed as a hallucinogen** by the **US Drug Enforcement Administration**.
- It’s referred to as a “**dissociative anaesthetic hallucinogen**” because it creates a **feeling of detachment from pain and the environment**.

ENGLAND, WALES CAUTION JUDGES OVER AI

- **Judges in England and Wales** can now use **generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems** like **ChatGPT** for basic tasks, a **guidance issued** by the **UK judiciary**.
- **Generative AI is a form of AI** that can **generate new content**, including **text, images, sounds, and computer codes**, the guideline said.
- Similarly, the Supreme Court of India developed the **Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software (SUVAS)**, a **machine-assisted translation tool** trained by AI to promote regional languages in judicial procedure that can translate English judicial documents into **eleven vernacular languages**.

RUSSIA’S PENAL COLONIES

- Jailed Russian opposition leader **Alexei Navalny** has been located in a **penal colony north of the Arctic Circle**.
- **Penal colonies of Russia** are known for **their harsh living conditions**.
- They are **descendants of gulags** — the **Stalin-era forced labour camps** that existed throughout the **Soviet Union** and where **more than a million died**.

BANNED MUSLIM LEAGUE

- The **Union Home Ministry** banned the **Masarat Alam-led Muslim League**, a **separatist organisation**, for a **period of five years** under the **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)** for “**anti-national and secessionist**” activities in **Jammu and Kashmir**.
- The **Muslim League is the fifth separatist organisation** banned by the Centre **since 2019**.

AI AND COPYRIGHT

- The **New York Times (NYT)** has become the **first major news publisher** to **sue OpenAI and Microsoft**, the **creators of ChatGPT** and other popular artificial intelligence (AI) platforms, citing “**unlawful**” **use of copyrighted content**.
- **Generative AI platforms** such as **ChatGPT** and **Google’s Bard** have ignited a debate on **IP rights over original content on the internet**.