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Monthly

Current Affairs



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Week 1

CURRENT AFFAIRS

04/02/2023 TO 11/02/2023

1.1 THE BUDGET (2023-24)

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2023-24 in Parliament.
- She emphasized that Indian economy is on the right track, and despite a time of challenges, heading towards a bright future.
- The Union Finance Minister said that the government's efforts since 2014 have ensured for all citizens a better quality of living and a life of dignity and the per capita income has more than doubled to Rs 1.97 lakh.
- Since 2014, the Indian economy has increased in size from being 10th to 5th largest in the world.



Achievements Since 2014

From 10th To 5th Largest Economy In The World Within 9 Years

- ✓ 11.7 Cr household toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission
- ✓ 9.6 Cr LPG connections under Ujjwala Yojana
- ✓ 220 Cr Covid vaccinations of 102 crore persons
- ✓ 47.8 Cr bank accounts under PM Jan Dhan Yojana
- ✓ 44.6 crore persons covered under PM Suraksha Bima and PM Jeevan Jyoti Yojana
- ✓ 2.2 Lakh Cr cash transferred to over 11.4 crore farmers under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi
- ✓ Per capita income more than doubled to Rs 1.97 lakh



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THE VISION FOR AMRIT KAAL

- The Finance Minister said that our vision for the Amrit Kaal includes technology-driven and knowledge-based economy with strong public finances.
- Following four opportunities can be transformative during Amrit Kaal –
 - **Economic empowerment of women**
 - **PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM VIKAS)**
 - For centuries, traditional artisans and craftspeople, who work with their hands using tools, have brought renown for India and they are generally referred to as **Vishwakarma**.
 - for the first time, a package of assistance for them has been conceptualized.
 - The new scheme will enable them to improve the quality, scale and reach of their products, integrating them with the MSME value chain.
 - **Tourism**
 - **Green Growth**

PRIORITY AREAS IN THE BUDGET

- The Finance Minister said that **seven priorities** of the Union Budget and said that they complement each other and act as the '**Saptarishi**' guiding us through the **Amrit Kaal**.
- These seven priorities are as follows –
 - Inclusive Development



- Reaching the Last Mile
- Infrastructure & Investment
- Unleashing the Potential
- Green Growth
- Youth Power
- Financial Sector

BUDGET ESTIMATES

- The Finance Minister said that the total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs 27.2 lakh crore and Rs 45 lakh crore respectively.
- The net tax receipts are estimated at Rs 23.3 lakh crore.
- The fiscal deficit is estimated to be 5.9 percent of GDP.
- Government plans to continue the path of fiscal consolidation, reaching a fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26.



CHANGES IN PERSONAL INCOME TAX

- People with income of up to Rs 7 lakh per annum will not have to pay any tax, under the new tax regime.
- The tax structure in the new personal tax regime has been changed by reducing number of slabs to five and increasing the tax exemption limit to Rs 3 lakh.
- The highest surcharge rate in personal income tax has been reduced from 37% to 25% in the new tax regime for income above Rs 2 crore.
 - This would result in maximum tax rate of personal income tax come down to 39% which was earlier 42.74%.

SUBSTANTIAL RELIEF IN PERSONAL INCOME TAX
 BENEFITING OUR HARD- WORKING MIDDLE CLASS

- No Income tax for persons with income up to **7 lakh** in the new tax regime
- Standard deduction of 50,000 to salaried people and deduction up to 15,000 for pensioners under new tax regime also
- Reduction of the highest surcharge rate from **37% to 25%** under new tax regime
- Tax exemption limit on leave encashment on retirement of non-govt salaried employees increased to 25 lakh

1.2 INDIRECT TAX PROPOSALS



Indirect Tax Proposals

- ④ Green Mobility:
 - To exempt excise duty on GST-paid compressed bio gas
- ④ Electronics:
 - To provide relief in customs duty on import of certain parts of mobile phones
 - To reduce basic customs duty on parts of open cells of TV panels to 2.5%
- ④ Electricals:
 - To increase basic customs duty on electric kitchen chimney from 7.5% to 15%
 - To reduce basic customs duty on chimney heat coils from 20% to 15%
- ④ Chemicals and Petrochemicals:
 - To exempt basic customs duty on chemicals and petrochemicals
 - To reduce basic customs duty on acid grade fluorspar and crude glycerine to 2.5%

1/2

Indirect Tax Proposals

- ④ Marine products:
 - To reduce duty on key inputs for domestic manufacture of shrimp feed
- ④ Lab Grown Diamonds:
 - To reduce basic customs duty on seeds used in their manufacturing
- ④ Precious Metals:
 - To increase customs duties on articles made from gold and platinum
 - To increase import duty on silver dore, bars and articles
- ④ Compounded Rubber:
 - To increase basic customs duty rate on compounded rubber from 10% to 25%
- ④ Cigarettes:
 - National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD) on specified cigarettes to be revised upwards by about 16%

2/2

● Proposals relating to MSMEs –

- Describing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as growth engines of our economy, the Budget proposes enhanced limits for micro enterprises and certain professionals for availing the benefit of presumptive taxation.
- To support MSMEs in timely receipt of payments, the Budget allows deduction for expenditure incurred on payments made to them only when payment is actually made.

● Cooperation –

- The Budget has a slew of proposals for the cooperative sector.
- **New cooperatives that commence manufacturing activities till 31st March next year shall get the benefit of a lower tax rate of 15%.**

● Startups –

- The Budget proposes to extend the date of incorporation for income tax benefits to start-ups from 31.03.2023 to 31.03.2024.
- It also provides the **benefit of carry forward of losses on change of shareholding of start-ups from 7 years of incorporation to 10 years.**

IMPLICATIONS OF TAX CHANGES

- Announcing the changes in the direct and indirect taxes, the finance minister said that **revenue of about Rs 38,000 crore will be foregone** as a result of these proposals, while revenue of about Rs 3,000 crore will be additionally mobilized.
- Thus, the **total revenue foregone is about Rs 35,000 crore annually on account of these proposals.**

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES IN THE BUDGET

During the Budget speech Union finance minister announced multiple schemes towards the protection and conservation of India's natural heritage, including mangroves and wetlands.

INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED

- **MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes)**



- It is a new programme that will facilitate **mangrove plantations** along India's coastline and on salt pan lands.
- The programme will operate through “convergence between MGNREGS, Campa Fund and other sources.”
- This new programme will aim at the intensive afforestation of coastal mangrove forests.
- **Amrit Dharohar**
 - This is a scheme that will be implemented over the **next three years to** encourage the **optimal use of wetlands** and enhance bio-diversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
 - Amrit Dharohar will emphasise the importance of wetlands and their preservation, with an outlook that is inclusive of local communities as caretakers of the ecosystem.

1.3 LAB GROWN DIAMONDS

In a recent Budget speech Union finance Minister announced that the Customs duty on the seeds used in lab-grown diamond manufacturing will be reduced.

WHAT ARE LAB GROWN DIAMONDS?

- Lab-grown diamonds are diamonds that are produced **using specific technology** which mimics the geological processes that grow natural diamonds.
- The diamond simulants such as Moissanite, Cubic Zirconia (CZ), White Sapphire, YAG, and others are used to make them look like natural diamonds.

HOW ARE LAB GROWN DIAMONDS PRODUCED?

- There are multiple ways in which LGDs can be produced.
- **High pressure, high temperature” (HPHT) method**
 - It is the most common and cheapest method.
 - In this method, extremely **heavy presses** that can produce up to 730,000 psi of pressure under **extremely high temperatures** of at least 1500 celsius are applied.
 - Usually, **graphite** is used as the “**diamond seed**” and when subjected to these extreme conditions, the relatively inexpensive form of carbon turns into one of the most expensive carbon forms.
- **Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD)** and explosive formation create what is known as detonation nanodiamonds.

APPLICATIONS

- Used for **industrial purposes**, in machines and tools and their hardness and extra strength make them ideal for use as cutters.
- Pure synthetic diamonds are used in **electronics** as a heat spreader for high-power laser diodes, laser arrays and high-power transistors.

INITIATIVES FOR FARMERS IN THE BUDGET

During the Budget speech Union finance Minister announced multiple schemes towards Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

KEY INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED:

- **PM PRANAM (Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth)**



- This programme will seek to **incentivise states and union territories** to promote alternative fertilisers and the **balanced use of chemical fertilisers**.
- **Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres**
 - Under this 10,000 Bio-Input Resource Centres will be set up, creating a national-level distributed **micro-fertiliser and pesticide** manufacturing network.
 - This will impact over 1 crore farmers over the **next three years**.
- **Agriculture Accelerator Fund**
 - The Fund will aim at bringing **innovative and affordable solutions** for challenges faced by farmers.
 - It will also bring in modern technologies to transform agricultural practices, and increase productivity and profitability."
- **Cotton crop productivity enhancement**
 - Union government will adopt a **cluster-based approach** to enhance the cotton crop.
 - To enhance the productivity of extra-long staple cotton, the government will adopt a cluster-based and value chain approach through Public Private Partnerships (PPP).
- **Centre of excellence for millets**
 - **Indian Institute of Millet Research, Hyderabad** will be made into a Centre for Excellence and it will be supported for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level.
- **Agriculture credit to be increased**
 - The agriculture credit target will **be increased to Rs 20 lakh crore** with a focus on animal husbandry, dairy, and fisheries.
- **GOBARdhan scheme**
 - Five-hundred new 'waste to wealth' plants under GOBARdhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan) scheme will be established for promoting a circular economy.

1.4 MUNICIPAL BONDS

Finance Minister recently stated that **municipal bodies will be allowed to issue bonds** for improving their infrastructure, and cities will be incentivised to improve their creditworthiness over the bonds.

WHAT IS A BOND?

- It is a **debt security**.
- Borrowers issue bonds to **raise money from investors** willing to lend them money for a certain amount of time.
- **When you buy a bond, you are lending to the issuer**, which may be a government, municipality, or corporation.
- In return, the **issuer promises to pay you a specified rate of interest** during the life of the bond **and to repay the principal**.
- **What is it?** A municipal bond or muni bond is a **debt instrument issued by municipal corporations** or associated bodies in India.
- **Purpose:** The funds raised are used to **finance socio-economic development projects**.



- **History:** It was **first issued in the 1997 by Bangalore local body** for infrastructure development projects 4 years after decentralization of powers and authorities to the Municipal bodies by the 74th constitutional amendment.
- **Tax Exemption:** Municipal bonds are **exempted from tax** provided the buyer adheres to the rules laid by the municipal corporations. **The interest is also exempted from taxes.**
- **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Guidelines :**
 - The municipal body should not have a history of defaulting at repayments of loans or debt instruments acquired from financial institutions in the past year.
 - It should possess a positive net worth in all the three years preceding the issuance of municipal bonds.
 - Such municipal entity, its Group Company or directors, and promoters shall not be mentioned in the willful defaulters' list published by the Reserve Bank of India.

1.5 MAHILA SAMMAN SAVING CERTIFICATE SCHEME

Finance Minister recently announced a new saving scheme 'Mahila Samman Saving Certificate' for women and girls in the Union Budget.

THE SCHEME:

- The scheme **offers deposit facility up to Rs 2 lakh in the name of women or girls for a tenor of 2 years.**
- It **offers fixed interest rate of 7.5 per cent.**
- There are **no tax benefits**, but **partial withdrawal is allowed** in this scheme.
- This is a **one-time scheme** announced in Budget 2023 and will **remain available** for a two-year period i.e. **up to March 2025.**
- **Benefit:** It will encourage more women to **adopt formal financial saving instruments.**

A BUDGET OF GROWTH & STABILITY: AN ANALYSIS

- **The Union Budget 2023-24** comes at a time when the world is facing a sequence of shocks - Covid-19, the Russia-Ukraine war, the recession in major economies, the rise in inflation fueling interest rates hike, exodus of capital and pressure on the exchange rate.
- The article highlights how the **Union Finance Ministry's balancing act** (like increasing infrastructure spending while continuing with fiscal consolidation) amid global and domestic challenges, has given India a well-crafted Budget.

THE DILEMMA

- According to the Economic Survey 2022-23 (released a day before the Budget), **the Indian economy is on a broad-based recovery path.**
- Even though it has staged a recovery and surpassed the pre-pandemic income level, the economy is **still 7% below the pre-pandemic GDP trend.**
- At the same time, **inflation** is still beyond the upper tolerance limit and aggregate **fiscal deficit** (Centre and States) is still in the range of 9% to 10% of GDP
- Growth has to be fuelled by **increasing public investment** and ensuring macroeconomic stability requires continued **fiscal consolidation.**
- Thus, the government is faced with the dilemma of accelerating growth by **increasing public investment while containing the fiscal deficit.**
- With **interest payments** accounting for 40% of the net revenues of the Centre, there is hardly any room for complacency.



1.6 THE BALANCING ACT

Greater Allocation for Infra:

- The capital expenditure is budgeted to increase from 2.7% of GDP to 3.3%.
- In absolute terms, the increase is from ₹7.3 lakh crore to ₹10 lakh crore, which is almost 37%, and considering that capital expenditure has a significant 'crowding in' effect, **it should help to increase private capital expenditures as well.**
- This comes after the 25% increase in capital expenditures in the last Budget.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has estimated **the multiplier effect of capital expenditure at 1.2** and that should help revive the sagging investment climate.
- **Commercial lending by banks is already on the rise** and with deleveraged balance sheets, the increased capital spending should help revive the investment climate further.
 - This will also arrest the declining trend in the overall investment-GDP ratio in the country.
- Further, the continuation of the **interest-free loan to States to augment their capital expenditures** should help in increasing States' capital expenditures as well.

Compression in subsidies:

- The fiscal adjustment is proposed to be achieved **by mainly containing revenue expenditure**, which will **improve the quality of public spending**.
- The budgeted increase in revenue expenditures for 2023-24 is just 1.2% higher than the revised estimate for the current year.
- There is a significant compression in subsidies. **For example,**
 - **The food subsidy** is expected to be reduced by ₹90,000 crore from ₹2.87 lakh crore to ₹1.97 lakh crore.
 - **The fertiliser subsidy** is budgeted to be reduced from ₹2.25 lakh crore in 2022-23 (RE) to ₹1.75 lakh crore in 2023-24 (BE) - budgeted lower by ₹50,000 crore, mainly as fertiliser prices have come down.
- The policy to this effect has already been made recently by discontinuing the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY)** under which 5 kg of food grains were given in addition to the National Food Securities Act.

Other steps: In addition, **allocation to centrally sponsored schemes** is expected to come down marginally by about ₹20,000 crore and the overall current transfer to States is kept constant at 3.3%-3.4% of GDP.

WHY THIS BALANCING ACT?

- In the 2020–21 Budget, the Finance Minister promised to reduce the **fiscal deficit to 4.5% by 2025–26.**
- Thus, **9 percentage points** of the deficit must be cut during the following three years. Accordingly, the fiscal deficit is expected to decrease to 5.9% in 2023–2024.
- It will, however, make the adjustment in the upcoming years much more difficult as the nine States will conduct elections this year and **the nation has general elections next year.**
- As a result, the Finance Ministry may have thought that by **boosting growth this year through larger capital investment**, the budgetary adjustment would be simpler over the following two years.



1.7 ANGEL TAX

In Budget 2023-24, the government has proposed to extend the so-called 'angel tax' provisions to transactions involving foreign investors.

According to the proposal, the excess premium received on sale of shares by an Indian unlisted company to a foreign investor will be construed as “income from other sources” and subject to tax.

WHAT IS ANGEL TAX?

- Angel Tax is a term basically used to refer to the **income tax** payable on the capital raised by **unlisted companies** via the issue of shares through off-market transactions.
- This tax is levied on the capital raised via the issue of shares by unlisted companies from an Indian investor if the share price of issued shares is seen in excess of the fair market value of the company.
- The excess realization is considered as income and therefore, taxed accordingly.
 - Eg., If the fair market value of a start-up share is Rs 10 a piece, and in a subsequent funding round they offer it to an investor for Rs 20, then the difference of Rs 10 would be taxed as income.
- Angel tax gets its name from the wealthy individuals (“angels”) who invest heavily in risky, unproven business ventures and start-ups, in the initial stages when they are yet to be recognised widely.

WHY ANGEL INVESTMENT HAS ATTRACTED TAX?

- Rule related to Angel Tax is described in Section 56(2)(viib) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- This clause was inserted into the act in 2012 to **prevent laundering of black money, roundtripping via investments with a large premium into unlisted companies.**

WHICH INVESTMENTS FALL UNDER THE AMBIT OF ANGEL TAX?

- Before budget 2023-24, angel tax was imposed only on investments made by a resident investor.
 - i.e., it was **not applicable in case the investments are made by any non-resident or venture capital funds.**
- Allaying the concerns of the startup community, the govt had exempted investments made by the domestic investors in companies approved by an inter-ministerial panel from Angel Tax.
 - i.e., Government recognised startups, upon meeting certain criteria, were exempted from this tax.

THE PROPOSED CHANGE

- The Finance Bill, 2023 has proposed to amend Section 56(2) VII B of the Income Tax Act.
- With this, the government has proposed to include **foreign investors** in the ambit, meaning that when a start-up raises funding from a foreign investor, that too will now be counted as income and be taxable.
- However, these foreign investors will **not need to pay any angel tax while investing in a government-recognised (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) registered) startup in India** — similar to the provision for domestic investors.

FISCAL DEFICIT TARGETS

In the **Union Budget for 2023-24**, Government chose the **path of relative fiscal prudence**. It projected a **decline in fiscal deficit to 5.9%** of **gross domestic product (GDP)** in FY24, compared with **6.4% in FY23**.



The fiscal deficit, in mathematical terms, is **[total revenue generated — total expenditure]**. It is an indication of the total borrowings needed by the government.

It aims to reach a fiscal deficit below 4.5% by 2025-26.

1.8 FISCAL DEFICIT: PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

- In Union Budget 2023-24, the fiscal deficit to GDP ratio is pegged at 5.9% in FY24.
 - This ratio has declined from 6.4% in 2022-23 (revised estimate) and 6.7% in 2021-22 (actual).
- In Union Budget 2023-24, revenue deficit is 2.9% of GDP.
 - The revenue deficit was 4.1% of GDP in 2022-23 (revised estimate).
- The primary deficit, which reflects the current fiscal stance devoid of past interest payment liabilities, is pegged at 2.3% of GDP in Union Budget 2023-24.
 - Primary deficit stood at 3% of GDP in 2022-23 (RE).
 - If interest payments are deducted from fiscal deficit, we get primary deficit.

The fiscal deficit road map (as a % of GDP)

Years	Budget estimates	Actual
2017-18	3.2	3.5
2018-19	3.3	3.4
2019-20	3.3	4.6
2020-21	3.5	9.2
2021-22	6.8	6.7
2022-23	6.4	-
2023-24	5.9	-

ALLOCATIONS FOR IMPORTANT SECTORS

Type of Subsidy	2022-23 (RE)	2023-24
Food	₹2,87,194 crore	₹1,97,350 crore
Fertilizer	₹2,25,220 crore	₹1,75,100 crore
Petroleum	₹9,171 crore	₹2,257 crore

- It is a laudable decision to extend food security to the poor for one more year amid rising inflation.
- However, rationalisation of subsidies is important so that the government can move towards reaching a fiscal deficit target of 4.5% by 2025-26.

GENDER BUDGETING IN INDIA

India's Gender Budget, which aims to reduce the gender gap, was allocated ₹2.23 lakh crore in the Union Budget 2023-24, which is just 2.12% higher than the Revised Estimates (RE) of ₹2.18 lakh crore for 2022-23.

However, it was at least 30% higher compared to last year's Budget Estimates (BE) of 1.71 lakh crore.

WHAT IS GENDER BUDGETING?

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) defines gender budgeting as **a tool to achieve gender mainstreaming** so as to ensure that the benefits of development reach women as much as men.
- The government publishes a **Gender Budget Statement (GBS)** every year along with the **Union Budget**.



- GBS is a reporting mechanism for ministries/departments **to review their programmes from a gender perspective** and present information on allocations for women.
- As such, it is **not a separate accounting exercise** but an ongoing process of keeping a gender perspective in policy/programme formulation, its implementation and review.
- So, it **entails the dissection of the government budgets** -
 - To establish its gender differential impacts and
 - To ensure that gender commitments are translated into budgetary commitments.

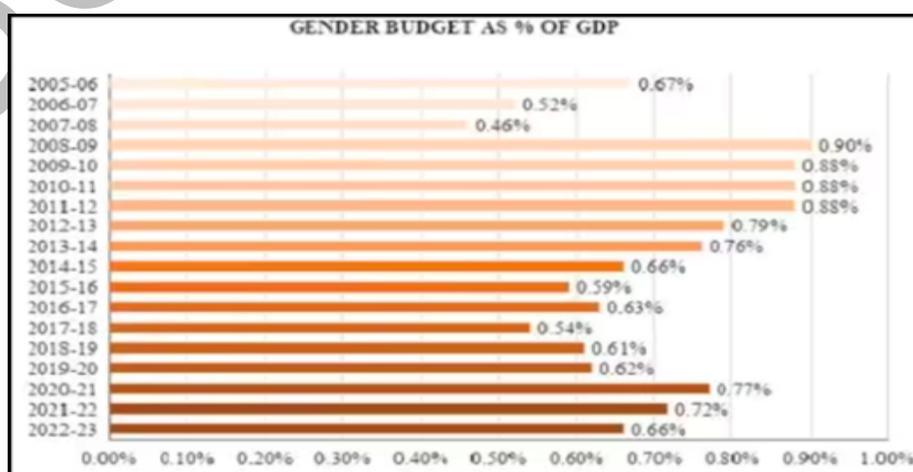
EVOLUTION OF GENDER BUDGETING IN INDIA

- **2001:** Then Finance Minister of India, in his Budget speech, makes a special reference. National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) **analyses the Union Budget 2001-02 from a gender perspective for the first time.**
- **In 2005-06,** The Gender Budget was first introduced, when the Expenditure Division of the Ministry of Finance issued a note on gender budgeting as a part of the Budget Circular.
 - **Part A of the note** reflects Women Specific Schemes, which have 100% allocation for women.
 - **Part B of the note** reflects Pro-Women's Schemes, where at least 30% of the allocation is for women.
- **In 2007,** the Department of Expenditure issued a charter outlining the composition of **Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs)** and their functions.
- **In 2010,** the Planning Commission clarified that in place of the Women Component Plan, the Ministry of Finance and MoWCD should adopt Gender Responsive Budgeting or Gender Budgeting only.
- **Gender budgeting in states:** In 2021, the MoWCD stated that 27 states/UTs had adopted Gender Budgeting.

1.9 GENDER BUDGET AS PART OF GDP

ISSUES WITH GENDER BUDGETING

- **Quantum of gender budgeting and fiscal marksmanship:** India's gender Budget remains in the range of 4 - 6% of the total expenditure and less than 1% of its GDP. It also **lacks fiscal marksmanship**, which is the accuracy of budgetary forecasting.
- **Concentrated in 5 key ministries:** Around 90% of gender budgeting is concentrated in five ministries. When it comes to livelihood, **MGNREGA is the biggest scheme in gender budgeting.**
 - Areas like transportation, water collection and water security remain ignored.





- **Post-Covid-19 approach:** The last Budget failed to address critical areas highlighted by pandemic in 2021-22 and 2022-23, despite the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on women.

INITIATIVES IN BUDGET 2023-24

- **Safe City Project**, an initiative under the **Nirbhaya Fund scheme** for ensuring safety of women and children, saw an eight-fold increase in allocation - from ₹165 crore in RE 2022-23 to ₹1,300 crore in BE 2023-24.
- **SAMBAL**, a sub-scheme comprising old schemes like **One Stop Centre, Women Helpline and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, saw no change in allocation in the 2023 Budget - ₹562 crore.
- Another sub-scheme **SAMARTHYA**, which includes women empowerment programmes like **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana and Swadhar Greh**, was earmarked ₹2,496 crore this year, 33% more compared to RE 2022-23.
- SAMBAL and SAMARTHYA are part of the larger umbrella scheme '**Mission Shakti**', an integrated women empowerment programme that came into effect in 2022.

PM PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTG)

Union Finance Minister recently announced a mission for the welfare of **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** in the 2023-24 Union Budget.

- The mission will be **launched as part of 'Reaching The Last Mile'**, one of the seven **Saptarishi priorities** enlisted in this year's Budget.
- The mission will **saturate the particularly vulnerable tribal groups** with **safe housing, clean drinking water, education, nutrition, road and telecom** connection and livelihood.
- A **Budget of Rs 15,000 crore** will be dedicated to this mission in the **next three years**.
- The scheme will **benefit 3.5 lakh tribals**.

WHO ARE PVTGs?

- PVTGs are **more vulnerable among the tribal groups** who are in need of greater support and development.
- Out of the 705 Scheduled Tribes in India, **75 have been identified as PVTGs** and are spread **across 17 states and one Union Territory**.
- Government of India follows the following **criteria for identification of PVTGs**
 - Pre-agricultural level of technology
 - Low level of literacy
 - Economic backwardness
 - A declining or stagnant population.
- In **1975, the Government of India initiated** to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups.
- An additional 23 groups were added to the category in 1993.
- **Some Examples:** Cholanaikayan (Kerala), Kathodi (Gujarat), Jarawas (Andaman & Nicobar Islands), Koraga (Karnataka)



1.10 URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND

Finance Minister recently announced that government will set up an Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF) of **Rs 10,000 crore per year** for creating infrastructure in **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities**.

WHAT ARE TIER 2 & TIER 3 CITIES?

Cities with a population in the range of **50,000 to 100,000** are classified as **tier 2 cities**, while those with a population of **20,000 to 50,000** are classified as **tier 3 cities**.

ABOUT UIDF

- UIDF will be established **through the use of priority sector lending shortfall**.
- **Purpose:** The fund will be **used by public agencies** to create **urban infrastructure in tier-2 and tier-3 cities**.
- It will be **managed by the National Housing Bank**.
- It will be established on **the lines of the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF)**.
- **States will be encouraged to leverage** resources from the **grants of the 15th Finance Commission**, as well as existing schemes, to **adopt appropriate user charges** while accessing the UIDF.

ABOUT RIDF

- The RIDF was **set up by the Government in 1995-96** for **financing ongoing rural infrastructure projects**.
- The Fund is **maintained by** the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (**NABARD**).
- **Contribution:** Domestic commercial **banks contribute to the Fund** to the extent of their **shortfall in stipulated priority sector lending to agriculture**.
- **Main Objective:** To provide **loans to State Governments and State-owned corporations** to enable them to complete **ongoing rural infrastructure projects**.
- **Repayment period:** Loan to be repaid in **equal annual instalments within seven years** from the date of withdrawal, including a **grace period of two years**.

1.11 EXPORT IMPORT (EXIM) BANK OF INDIA

Union Finance Minister recently announced the setting up of a subsidiary of EXIM Bank and data embassies at GIFT City in Gujarat.

WHAT IS EXIM BANK?

- It is the **premier export finance institution** of the country.
- It was **established by the Government of India**, under the **Export-Import Bank of India Act, 1981**.
- EXIM Bank **wholly owned by the Government of India**.

SERVICES OFFERED BY EXIM BANK

- EXIM Bank **provides financial assistance to exporters and importers**.
- **It extends Lines of Credit (LOCs)** to overseas financial institutions, regional development banks, sovereign governments and other entities overseas, to enable buyers in those countries to import developmental and infrastructure projects, equipment, goods and services from India, on deferred credit terms.



- It functions as the **principal financial institution for coordinating the work of institutions engaged in financing export and import** of goods and services with a view to promoting the country's international trade.

STRUCTURE:

- The operations of the Bank are governed by a **Board of Directors**.
- The Board of Directors consists of a **chairman, a managing director, two deputy managing directors**; one director each nominated by the Reserve Bank of India; IDBI Bank Ltd. and ECGC Ltd.; and not more than **12 directors nominated by the Central Government**.

ABOUT GIFT CITY

- **Location:** It is located in the state of **Gujarat**, between Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, on the **bank of river Sabarmati**.
- The GIFT city is built on 886 acres and **has a multi-service Special Economic Zone (SEZ)**.
- It is **home to India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** and also has **Domestic Tariff Area (DTA)**
- It aims to be a 'smart city' for India's growing finance and technology sectors.
- It is being developed as a **well-planned and technology-enabled smart city** having world-class commercial, residential and social facilities of global standards.

1.12 SENIOR CITIZEN SAVING SCHEME

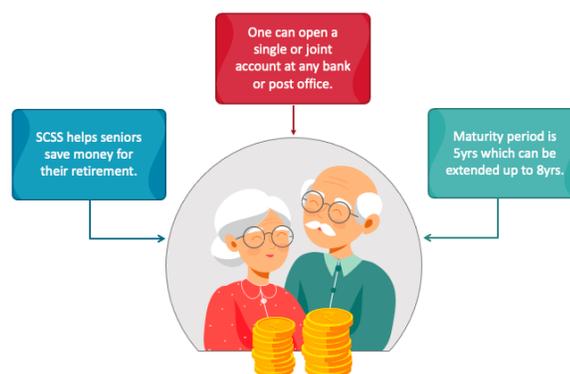
The maximum investment limit for the **Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS)** has been increased from **Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh in Budget 2023**.

ABOUT

- SCSS was launched with the main **aim of providing senior citizens in India a regular income after they attain the age of 60 years old**.
- **Who is eligible?**
 - **Indian citizens above the age of 60 years.**
 - **Retirees** in the age bracket of **55-60 years** who have **opted for Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS)** or Superannuation.
 - **Retired defence personnel above 50 years and below 60 years of age.**

SENIOR CITIZEN SAVINGS SCHEME IN INDIA

What is Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme ?



- **Maturity:** It has a maturity period of **five years**. But, a depositor can extend one's maturity period for another three years.
- **Number of accounts:** Individuals are allowed to operate **more than one account by themselves or open a joint account with their spouse**.
- **Deposit Limits:** Eligible investors can make a **lump sum deposit**
- **Minimum Deposit– Rs. 1,000** (and in multiples thereof)
- **Maximum Deposit– Rs. 15 Lakh** or the amount received on retirement, whichever is lower (**Increased to Rs 30 lakh in Budget 2023**).
- **Interest Payment:** Under SCSS, the interest amount is paid to the account holders **quarterly**.



- **Premature withdrawal:** After one year of opening the account, premature withdrawal is allowed.
- Deposits in SCSS qualify for deduction u/s 80-C of Income Tax Act.

WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK BY IMF

In its January update of the **World Economic Outlook (WEO)** report, the **IMF has marginally improved the forecast for global growth in 2023** — a relief, given the fears of a global recession in 2023.

ABOUT THE REPORT:

- The World Economic Outlook (WEO) is a comprehensive report published twice a year by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
 - The WEO is usually published in April and October, followed by the less comprehensive WEO updates in July and January.
- The report provides output, inflation, employment, fiscal balances, and debt statistics for member countries.
- The report, best known for its global growth forecasts, summarizes the state of the global economy and highlights the most important recent developments

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Global growth will bottom out in 2023**
 - In the October 2022 WEO, the IMF forecast that the global growth rate will decelerate from 3.4% in 2022 to 2.7% in 2023.
 - At that time the IMF painted a grim picture:
 - More than a third of the global economy will contract this year or next, while the three largest economies—United States, European Union, and China—will continue to stall.
 - In short, the worst is yet to come, and for many people 2023 will feel like a recession.
 - However, in the January update, the IMF effectively rules out a global recession.
 - It said that the negative growth in global GDP—which often happens when there is a global recession—is not expected.
 - Instead, it expects global growth to bottom out in 2023 before starting to gather speed in 2024.
 - The global growth, which was estimated at 3.4 percent in 2022, is now projected to fall to 2.9 percent in 2023 before rising to 3.1 percent in 2024.
- **Global inflation has peaked but relief will be slow**
 - Inflation, which destabilised the global economy, is expected to have peaked in 2022.
 - However, the disinflation (the fall in inflation rate) will be slow and take all of 2023 and 2024.
 - Global inflation is set to fall from 8.8 percent in 2022 (annual average) to 6.6 percent in 2023 and 4.3 percent in 2024.
 - Pre-pandemic (2017–19) inflation levels was about 3.5 percent.
- **Price rise is slowing for two main reasons:**
 - Monetary tightening all across the world — higher interest rates drag down overall demand for goods and services and that, in turn, slows down inflation.



- In the wake of a faltering demand, prices of different commodities — both fuel and non-fuel — have come down from their recent highs.
- **India will stay the world's fastest growing major economy in 2023 and 2024**
 - Growth in India is set to decline from 6.8 percent in 2022 to 6.1 percent in 2023 before picking up to 6.8 percent in 2024.
 - Growth will pick due to resilient domestic demand despite external headwinds.
 - India's GDP growth rate is expected to be significantly higher than all its comparable economies, especially China (which is set to grow at 5.4% in 2023 and 4.5% in 2024).

1.13 MISSION LIFE

The past year has seen the onset of the world's first truly global energy crisis, with turbulent markets and sudden price increases posing challenges for people, companies, and governments. India's new **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)** initiative is an important platform that could help lower energy costs, carbon dioxide emissions, air pollution and inequalities in energy consumption.

ABOUT THE MISSION:

Mission LIFE is an **India-led global mass movement** which aims to **nudge individual and collective action to protect and preserve the environment**.

Its concept was **introduced by the PM** at the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP-26** (Conference of the Parties) in **Glasgow**.

Implementation: NITI Aayog will curate and incubate Mission LIFE in the first year. Subsequently, it will be implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in a non-linear and non-sequential manner.

OBJECTIVE

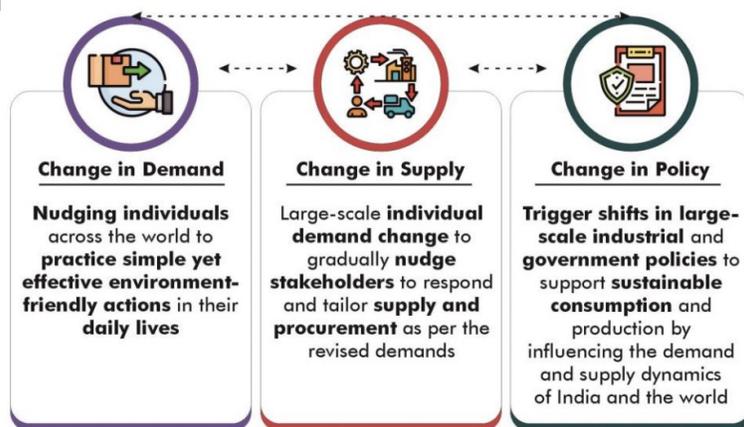
Mobilise at least 1 billion Indians and other global citizens to take **individual and collective action** for protecting and preserving the environment in the period **2022 to 2027**.

Within India, at least **80% of all villages and urban local bodies** are aimed to become **environment-friendly by 2028**.

Mission Duration: It will run as a **5-year programme**, visualizing **three core shifts** in our collective approach towards sustainability.

In **2022-23**, the mission will focus on **Phase I**.

Three phases of Mission LiFE Approach*



*'-Each preceding phase will **organically feed into the next phase**. At the same time, **all phases are equally simultaneous** in nature.

WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN?

- Launched in the 75th year of India's independence, the Mission unveiled a list of **75 lifestyle practices** that can promote climate-friendly behavior. Listed under **7 categories** these actions are:



LIST OF ACTIONS

01
ENERGY SAVED

19 Actions such as:
Use of LED bulbs,
Use of Public Transport etc.

02
WATER SAVED

15 Actions such as:
Using drip irrigation systems, Creating Rainwater Harvesting Infrastructure etc.

03
SINGLE USE OF PLASTIC REDUCED

11 Actions such as:
Using cloth bag for shopping, Opt for bamboo toothbrushes etc.

04
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM ADOPTED

6 Actions such as:
Compost food waste at home, Prefer locally available and seasonal foods etc.

05
WASTE REDUCED (SWACHHATA ACTIONS)

11 Actions such as:
Donate old clothes and books, Repair, reuse and recycle old furniture etc.

06
HEALTHY LIFESTYLE ADOPTED

9 Actions such as:
Plant trees to reduce pollution impact, Practice natural or organic farming etc.

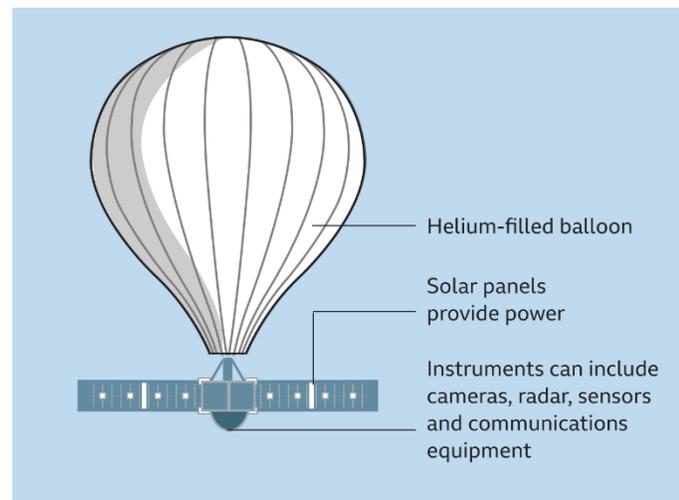
07
E-WASTE REDUCED

4 Actions such as:
Using rechargeable lithium cells, Repair and use electronic devices etc.

**CHINESE SPY BALLOON
WHAT ARE SPY BALLOONS?**

- A contemporary spy balloon is a piece of **spying equipment**, for example a camera, suspended beneath a balloon that floats above a given area, carried by wind currents.
- Balloons are one of the **oldest forms of surveillance technology**. **The Japanese military used them** to launch incendiary bombs in the US during **second World War**.
- They were also widely used by the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.
- Modern balloons typically hover between 24-37 km above the earth's surface (80,000 ft-120,000ft).

High altitude surveillance balloons



WHY WAS USA WORRIED?

- Earlier, the USA said it has detected a surveillance balloon over Montana. It was found to be traveling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic. (Montana is home to some of America's most lethal nuclear Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICMBs).)
- USA claimed that the balloon was being used by the People Republic of China to surveil strategic sites in the continental United States.
- By shooting down the balloon, USA addressed the **surveillance threat posed to military installations** and further neutralise any intelligence value it could have produced, preventing it from returning to China.

How high do they fly?



Source: Reuters





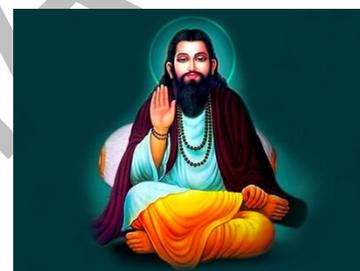
- Chinese infiltration of US on the ground and now in the air has stirred disquiet in both strategic and political circles.
 - Proposed land purchases by China in neighboring North Dakota is being opposed by US lawmakers and military analysts.
 - They say that it could be cover for spying on a nearby military facility where drone test flights are conducted.

CHINA'S RESPONSE

- China has said the balloon, spotted over the state of Montana, is merely a "civilian airship" which deviated from its planned route.
- After USA shot down the balloon, China expressed strong dissatisfaction and opposition towards the US use of force to attack China's civilian unmanned airship.
- It contended that the use of force by USA was an obvious overreaction and a serious violation of international practice.

GURU RAVIDAS JAYANTI

- Guru Ravidas Jayanti is commemorated **on Magh Purnima**, the day of the full moon in the month of Magh, according to the Hindu Lunar calendar.
- Guru Ravidas was a 14th-century famous **Bhakti Movement saint**.
- He abandoned saguna (with attributes, image) forms of supreme beings, and **focussed on the nirguna** (without attributes, abstract) form of supreme beings.
- Ravidas was a disciple of Sant Kabir and the founder of the Ravidassia religion.
- The Sikh scripture, **Guru Granth Sahib**, contains forty-one of his devotional songs and poems.
- The famous saint poetess, **Mirabai** was a disciple of Guru Ravidas.





Week 2

CURRENT AFFAIRS

12/02/2023 TO 18/02/2023

2.1 PERFORM ACHIEVE & TRADE SCHEME

The Director of **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** recently said that the Government of India has made impressive progress in recent years in accelerating energy efficiency in industrial sectors through its flagship program **Perform, Achieve & Trade (PAT)** Scheme.

WHAT IS PAT SCHEME?

- PAT Scheme is a **flagship program** under the **National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE)**.
- **Implementing Agency:** It is implemented by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** under the **aegis of the Ministry of Power**.
- **Objective:** PAT scheme aims at **reducing Specific Energy Consumption (SEC)**, e., energy use per unit of production for Designated Consumers (DCs) **in energy-intensive sectors**, with an **associated market mechanism** to enhance the cost-effectiveness through **certification of excess energy saving, which can be traded**.
- **Energy Saving Certificates (ESCerts):**
- The **excess energy savings** are converted into **tradable instruments** called **Energy Saving Certificates (ESCerts)** that are traded at the Power Exchanges.
- **Trading Platform:** The two Power Exchanges, **India Energy Exchange (IEX)** and **Power Exchange India Limited (PXIL)** provide the trading platform for ESCerts.
- **Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)** is the **market regulator** for the trading of ESCerts.
- PAT Scheme is **implemented in cycles of 3 years** each, where the Designated Consumers (DCs) **are assigned SEC reduction targets**.
- Designated Consumers (DCs) who fall **short of their targets bid for the purchase of ESCerts**.

ABOUT BUREAU OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- BEE is a **statutory body** under the **Union Ministry of Power**.
- The Government of India set up BEE on 1st March 2002 under the provisions of the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- **Mission:** Develop **policy and strategies** with a thrust on self-regulation and market principles within the **overall framework of the Energy Conservation Act (EC Act), 2001**.
- **Primary Objective:** To reduce energy intensity in the Indian economy.

ABOUT NATIONAL MISSION FOR ENHANCED ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- It is **one of the eight national missions** under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
- **Objective:** NMEEE aims to **strengthen the market for energy efficiency** by creating a conducive regulatory and policy regime.
- BEE fosters innovative and sustainable business models in the energy efficiency sector.
- The mission is **implemented since 2011**.



- **Implementing Agencies:** Bureau of Energy Efficiency (**BEE**), Energy Efficiency Services Limited (**EESL**).

ABOUT NAPCC

2.2 NASA ISRO SYNTHETIC APERTURE RADAR (NISAR)

NISAR recently got a send-off ceremony at the American space agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Southern California to be shipped to India in a special cargo container flight.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF NISAR?

- It will measure **Earth's changing ecosystems**, dynamic surfaces, and **ice masses**, providing **information about biomass, natural hazards, sea level rise, and groundwater**.
- **NISAR will observe Earth's land and ice-covered surfaces globally with 12-day regularity** on ascending and descending passes.

National Action Plan on Climate Change

8 missions to address climate change concerns & promote sustainable development



ABOUT NISAR

- **NISAR is a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) observatory** jointly developed by **NASA and ISRO**.
- It is an **SUV-size satellite weighing 2,800 kilograms**.
- It consists of both **L-band and S-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR) instruments**, which makes it a **dual-frequency imaging radar satellite**.
- **NISAR will be the first satellite mission to use two different radar frequencies (L-band and S-band)** to measure changes in our planet's surface.
- **SAR is capable of penetrating clouds and can collect data day and night** regardless of the weather conditions.
- **NASA has provided the L-band radar**, GPS, a high-capacity solid-state recorder to store data, and a payload data subsystem. **ISRO has provided the S-band radar**, the GSLV launch system, and spacecraft.
- It also consists of a large **39-foot stationary antenna reflector** made of a gold-plated wire mesh which will be **used to focus "the radar signals emitted and received"** by the upward-facing feed on the instrument structure.

2.3 OPERATION DOST

India has recently launched '**Operation Dost**' to extend assistance to **Turkey and Syria**, the nations hit by an intense **7.9-magnitude earthquake**.

India has sent rescue and medical teams, including an **Army medical team and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** personnel, along with medical supplies to quake-hit Turkey.

More than 7000 people have been killed and thousands injured by a huge earthquake which struck south-eastern Turkey, near the Syrian border.

India also sent relief materials, including lifesaving medicines and medical items, in a transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) to Syria.

ABOUT THE OPERATION



- It is an **ongoing search and rescue mission initiated by the Government of India to help Syria and Turkey**, after they witnessed a massive earthquake that left thousands dead, injured and trapped under the rubble.
- Under operation dost, **India has sent search and rescue teams**, mainly **teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)**, materials, **medicines**, medical equipment and consumables to Turkey and Syria.
- The **NDRF teams comprise dog squad, medicines**, blankets, four wheelers.
- The **Indian Army's team of medical specialists** is **providing relief** to the injured at a **field hospital set up in Turkey's Hatay**. The hospital is running with medical, surgical and emergency wards.

ABOUT INDIA TURKEY RELATIONS

BACKGROUND:

- Diplomatic relations were established and Ambassadors exchanged in 1948.
- Since the establishment of diplomatic relation, political and bilateral relations have been warm and cordial.
- However, some sporadic tensions remain in the relationship due to Turkey's support for Pakistan. Its stand on Kashmir has also been a problem area between the two countries.

POLITICAL RELATIONS:

- After the diplomatic relations were established, the visit by the first **PM Nehru in 1960** was the first prime ministerial visit to Turkey
- Most recent political level contacts include a bilateral meeting between **PM Modi and Turkish President Recep Erdogan in September 2022** on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Samarkand (Uzbekistan).

2.4 ECONOMIC TIES WITH TURKEY

- **Bilateral Trade Agreement** between India and Türkiye was signed in **1973**.
- It was followed by an Agreement on setting up an **India–Türkiye Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation (JCETC)** in **1983**.
- Bilateral trade crossed **USD 10.70 billion in 2021-22** with:
 - India's export to Turkey: \$ 8.7 billion.
 - India's import: \$ 1.9 billion.
- The **major Indian exports to Turkey** include:
 - Petroleum products, auto components/parts, man-made yarn, fabrics, aircraft & spacecraft parts, etc.
- **Imports from Turkey** include:
 - Industrial machinery, broken/unbroken poppy seeds; machinery and mechanical appliances, iron and steel articles, inorganic chemicals, granite and marble, etc.
- Indian companies have invested about **USD 126 million** in Turkey and Turkish investment in India is about **USD 210.47 million**.

CHALLENGES

- **Tukey's stand on Kashmir**



- In 2022, Turkish PM Erdogan, in his UN General Assembly speech, criticized India for failing to resolve ties with Pakistan and establish a fair, permanent peace and prosperity in Kashmir.
- **Abrogation of Article 370 by India**
 - After the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, which abolished the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, India-Turkey ties have deteriorated.
- **Turkey has fast emerged as a hub of anti-India activities**
 - Turkey follows a three-pronged approach to in this regard:
 - employment of Kashmiri journalists,
 - providing scholarships to Indian Muslims, and
 - funding NGOs in India to influence Indian Muslims.
 - Turkey also encourages radical Kashmiri youth to shift base to Istanbul and Ankara.
 - Moreover, Turkey-made pistols were recovered from Pakistani terrorists earlier in 2022

THE ISSUE OF CYPRUS, GREECE, ARMENIA & AZERBAIJAN

- In response to the stand taken by Turkey on Kashmir, **PM Modi** responded by holding meetings with the leaders of **Armenia, Cyprus, and Greece**, three countries with which Turkey has disputes.
- In 2021, Indian EAM Jaishankar met the foreign minister of Cyprus and called for adhering to the UNSC resolution on Cyprus.
 - Turkey has been routinely criticized for its illegal occupation of Northern Cyprus.



2.5 EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS IN INDIA

After the Turkey earthquake, there is the need to review earthquake preparedness in vulnerable regions in India like Delhi, though a major earthquake may not have affected the city in over 200 years.

According to the seismologists, it is a long time considering that the Indian (tectonic) plate is colliding with the Eurasian plate and we have plate boundary and Himalayas.

SEISMIC ZONES IN INDIA

- The country is classified into four seismic zones, zone-V being the most active seismically and zone-II being the least active.

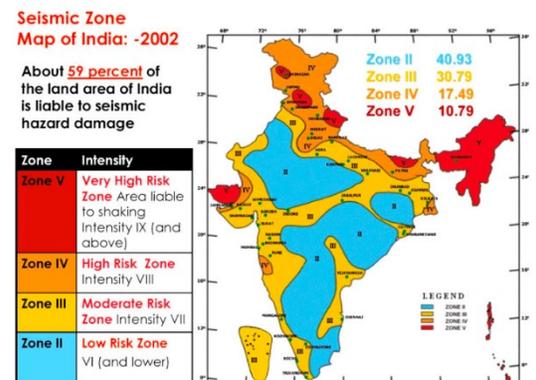


Fig. 1 Seismic zonation and intensity map of India



- **Delhi lies in seismic zone-IV going by seismic zonation map of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).**

STEPS TAKEN

- **The Unified Building Bye-Laws for Delhi** mention the BIS standards for structural safety and earthquake protection.
- **The seismic microzonation of Delhi was done** by the National Centre for Seismology, Ministry of Earth Sciences, and released in 2016 .
- **The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** said a national mitigation programme on earthquakes is being drafted.
- **Seismic Vulnerability Assessment of Buildings Types in India:** The work for preparation of catalogue of different building types in various parts of India and development of vulnerability functions has been awarded to IIT Bombay.
- **Preparation of Upgraded earthquake Hazards Maps:** NDMA has undertaken a project through Building Materials Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC) for upgradation of Earthquake Hazards Maps for the country.

NATIONAL EARTHQUAKE RISK MITIGATION PROJECT

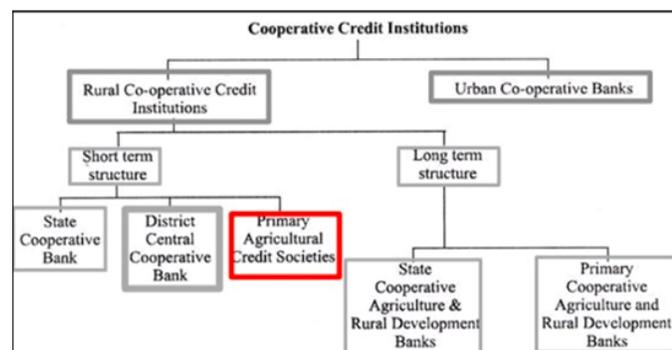
- NERMP has been approved as a **Centrally Sponsored Plan Scheme** with an outlay of Rs.24.87 crore, to be implemented **within a period of two years (2013-15)**.
- The project is to be implemented by **NDMA** in coordination with the State Governments/UT that lie in seismic **zones IV and V** in the country.
- **The major components of NERMP:**
 - Adoption, enforcement and updation of Techno-legal Regime
 - Institutional Strengthening which involves Capacity Building through education and research in colleges and institutes
 - Public Awareness and Sensitization at National level and all vulnerable States, etc.

PRIMARY AGRICULTURE CREDIT SOCIETIES (PACS)

The Union Budget has recently announced Rs 2,516 crore for the computerisation of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) over the next five years

ABOUT PACS

- These are village-level **cooperative credit societies** that serve as the last link in a three-tier cooperative credit structure.
- These are headed by the **State Cooperative Banks (SCB)** at the state level.
- Credit from the SCBs is transferred to the **district central cooperative banks**, or DCCBs, that operate at the district level.
- These district central cooperative banks work with PACS, which deals directly with farmers.
- Individual farmers are members of the PACS, and office-bearers are elected from within them. A village **can have multiple PACS**.
- PACS are involved in **short-term lending** — or what is known as crop loans.
- At the start of the cropping cycle, farmers avail credit to finance their requirement of seeds, fertilisers etc.





- Banks extend this credit at 7 percent interest, of which 3 per cent is subsidised by the Centre, and 2 per cent by the state government. Effectively, farmers avail the crop loans at 2 percent interest only.

2.6 CORE INFLATION & HEADLINE INFLATION

S&P Global Ratings recently said core inflation in India has been declining sequentially, and an elevated 6.25 percent policy rate limits the need for further rate hikes.

Headline Inflation: It represents the change in value of all goods in the basket. It is released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) with 2012 as Base.

Core Inflation: Change in prices of goods and services, **excluding food and fuel items** from headline inflation. E.g., the Core inflation was at 7.24% in April 2022.

Core inflation counts items where inflation is likely to persist for a long period. It excludes food and fuel items due to frequent and wider price volatility. E.g., Due to seasonality and irregular shocks (rain, delay in crop etc.), price variations (especially of perishable commodities like tomato) are common.

IMPORTANCE OF CORE INFLATION

- Core inflation is **used to determine the impact of rising prices on consumer income.**
- **If the increase in the price index is due to temporary shocks** that could soon reverse themselves, it **may not require any monetary policy action.**
- To deal with such situations, **many central banks use measures of core inflation** that are designed **to filter the transitory price movements.**
- Core inflation by eliminating the volatile components from the headline **helps in identifying the underlying trend in headline inflation** and is believed to **predict future inflation better.**
- Core inflation is a convenient guide to **help the central bank achieve its objective of controlling total inflation.**

ARTICLE 105 OF THE CONSTITUTION

Portions of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's speech delivered in Lok Sabha have been expunged — or removed — from the records of Parliament by the orders of the Speaker.

The expunging of certain words, sentences, or portions of a speech from the records is **fairly routine procedure**, and is carried out in accordance with laid down rules.

DO THE PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK ANYTHING?

Under **Article 105(2)** of the Constitution, “no Member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said...in Parliament or any committee thereof”.

However, **MPs don't enjoy the freedom to say whatever they want inside the House.**

WHAT ARE THE RESTRICTIONS?

- The speech of MPs is subject to the discipline of the **Rules of Parliament**, “**good sense**” of **its Members**, and the **control of proceedings by the Speaker.**
- These checks ensure that MPs cannot use “defamatory or indecent or undignified or unparliamentary words” inside the House.
- **Rule 380** (“**Expunction**”) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha says –
 - “If the Speaker is of opinion that words have been used in debate which are defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary or undignified, the Speaker may, while exercising discretion order that such words be expunged from the proceedings of the House.”
- **Rule 381** says –



- “The portion of the proceedings of the House so expunged shall be marked by asterisks and an explanatory footnote shall be inserted in the proceedings as follows: ‘Expunged as ordered by the Chair’.”

WHICH EXPRESSIONS ARE CONSIDERED AS UNPARLIAMENTARY EXPRESSIONS?

- Over the years, a huge number of words, both in English and other Indian languages, have been found to be “unparliamentary” by the Presiding Officers.
 - These unparliamentary expressions are **kept out of Parliament’s records**.
- The Lok Sabha Secretariat has brought out a bulky volume of ‘Unparliamentary Expressions’.
- This book contains words or expressions that would likely be considered rude or offensive in most cultures. But it also contains content that would appear to be fairly harmless and innocuous.
 - **State legislatures too are guided mainly by the same book of unparliamentary expressions.**

HOW IS THE DECISION TAKEN? WHO DECIDES?

- When a member uses a word that could be unparliamentary, the head of the reporting section sends it to the Presiding Officer citing relevant rules and precedence with a recommendation to expunge them.
- The **Presiding Officer has the discretion under Rule 380 to expunge the word or usage.**
- Once the Presiding Officer expunges the word or usage, it comes back to the reporting section which removes the word from the records and mentions in the proceedings as “expunged as ordered by the chair”.

2.7 5TH REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON AFGHANISTAN

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval participated in the **fifth** multilateral **Security Dialogue on Afghanistan**, held in **Moscow**.

NSA Doval also called on the President Putin and had wide-ranging discussions on bilateral and regional issues.

It should be noted that the ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

5TH REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON AFGHANISTAN

- The 5th Multilateral Meeting of Secretaries of Security Councils/National Security Advisers on Afghanistan was held in Moscow, Russia.
 - The 4th Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan was held in Dushanbe.
- **Participants**
 - Russia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were represented at the meeting. The meeting was held **at the level of National Security Advisors (NSAs)**.
- **Objective**
 - To discuss various issues related to Afghanistan. This includes the security situation and humanitarian challenges facing Afghanistan.
 - This meeting is among the heads of the security establishments.



- It mostly discusses practical cooperation — from intelligence sharing to information gathering to counter-terrorism capacity-building.
- The meeting looks at evolving a regional security architecture to deal with these challenges, arising out of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

HISTORY OF THE DIALOGUE

- The idea of such as dialogue was first mooted in 2018, when the US decided to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.
- First two meetings (in 2018 and 2019) were hosted by Iran. 2020 meeting was cancelled due to pandemic.
- In November 2021, **India hosted** the 'Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan'.
 - So far, Pakistan has not attended any of these meetings.
 - China did not participate in the meeting hosted by India in 2021.
 - Chinese absence sends out a signal that it doesn't want to associate with any process led by India.

2.8 NORD STREAM PIPELINE

According to a new report by veteran investigative journalist, bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines was ordered by the United States.

In September 2022, four leaks were reported at different points in the Nord Stream pipelines, linking Russia and Europe.

Two of the leaks were in Swedish waters while the other two were reported from Danish waters. Subsequent investigations revealed that the undersea explosions were responsible for these leakages.

NORD STREAM PROJECT

Amid tensions between Russia and Ukraine, pressure is mounting on Germany to stop **the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project**.

The original **Nord Stream pipeline**, with an annual capacity of 55 billion cubic metres (bcm), was finished in late 2012.

The pipeline system's total capacity is set to double to 110 bcm following **Nord Stream 2's completion**.

Current status of project-: The pipeline falls in **German and Danish Territory**, and all but 150 km pipes for the project have already been laid.

NORD STREAM 2

- Nord Stream 2 is an underwater twin pipeline that would transport natural gas from Russia directly to Germany.
- At a length of 1,230 kilometres, it is to follow the route of the existing Nord Stream twin pipeline underneath the Baltic Sea.
- It will carry 55 billion cubic meter of gas per year.
- The pipeline crosses into the exclusive economic zones of five countries: **Russia, Germany, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden**.
- It would transport natural gas from Russia directly to Germany.



- Nord Stream 2 is being built by **Nord Stream 2 AG**, a consortium incorporated in Switzerland.

Moscow-based, state-owned Gazprom is the project's sole shareholder.

2.9 SSLV D2

In its second development flight, the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) smallest vehicle - Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV-D2), was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

It will place the ISRO's earth observation satellite EOS-07 and two co-passenger satellites - Janus-1 and AzaadiSat2 - developed by start-ups, in a 450-km circular orbit around the Earth.

ISRO'S MAIDEN SSLV FLIGHT

ISRO will undertake the maiden flight of its newly developed **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) on August 7.**

WHAT IS SSLV?

SSLV is a rocket that is designed to **orbit satellites** weighing **less than 500 kg in Low Earth Orbit** and **300 kg to Sun Synchronous Orbit (SSO).**

It is a 3 stage Launch Vehicle configured with **three Solid Propulsion Stages** and **liquid propulsion-based Velocity Trimming Module (VTM)** as a terminal stage.

KEY FEATURES OF SSLV

- SSLV is the **smallest vehicle** at **110-ton mass** at ISRO.
- It will take only **72 hours to integrate**, unlike the **70 days taken now for a launch vehicle.**
- Only **six people will be required** to do the job, **instead of 60 people.**
- The other features include: flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites, Launch on demand feasibility, minimal launch infrastructure requirements, etc.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SSLV

- **Seamless launch** of small satellites.
- The launch of small satellites has **until now been dependent on 'piggy-back'** rides with big satellite launches on **ISRO's PSLV.**
- The SSLV is intended to cater to a market for the launch of small satellites into **low earth orbits** with a quick turnaround time.
- Suited for launching **multiple microsattellites** & supports **multiple orbital drop-offs.**
- **Shift the burden** of commercial launches from PSLV
- The **SSLV is likely to cost a fourth** of the current PSLV.

2.10 BRU TRIBES

Over 14,000 Brus displaced from Mizoram have been registered to vote in Tripura since their rehabilitation process began in April 2021.

ABOUT THE TRIBES

- Their language is known as "**Kaubru**" which has a tonal effect on the Kuki language though broadly it is the Kok-Borok dialect.
- **Occupation:** They are still a **nomadic tribe** and a large number among them maintain their livelihood involving Hilltop **Jhum Cultivation** and other food gathering activities.
- They believe in **spirits and the existence of a soul.**





- By religion they are Hindus and most of their deities are akin to gods and goddesses of the Hindu faith. Among Reangs followers of Vaishnavism are found in good numbers.
- This tribal community traditionally are **endogamous** and does not marry outside their community.
- The village council chief known as “RAI” permits Divorce and Widow marriage.

LITHIUM RESERVES IN J&K

The Geological Survey of India (GSI), for the first time, has established availability of lithium-inferred resources of 5.9 million tonnes in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir.

WHAT IS LITHIUM?

Lithium is a chemical element with the symbol **Li** and **atomic number 3**. It is a soft, silvery-white alkali metal.

Lithium is a special metal in many ways. It's light and soft — it can be cut with a kitchen knife and so low in density that it floats on water.

WHAT ARE APPLICATIONS OF LITHIUM?

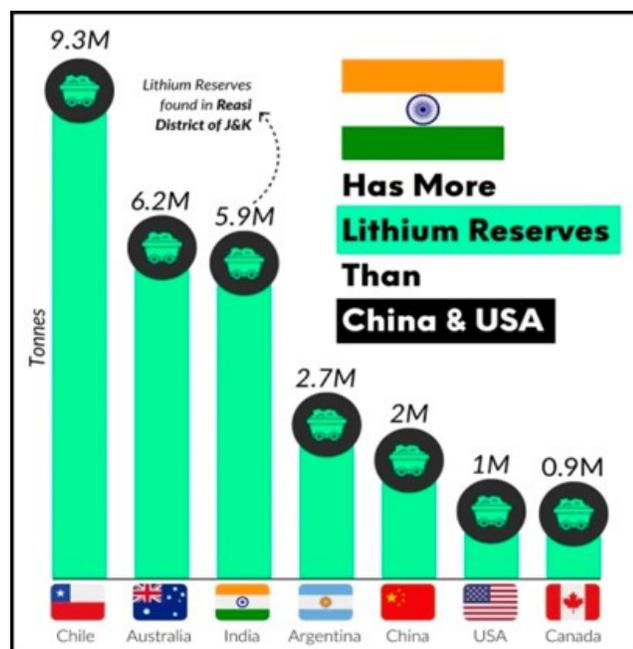
- The most important use of lithium is in **rechargeable batteries for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and electric vehicles (EVs)**.
 - Lithium is often dubbed as “**white gold**” for electric vehicles.
- Lithium metal is made into alloys with aluminium and magnesium, improving their strength and making them lighter. Aluminium-lithium alloys are **used in aircraft, bicycle frames and high-speed trains**.
- Lithium has no known biological role. **It is toxic**, except in very small doses.

2.11 GLOBAL LITHIUM RESERVES

(NOW)

WHERE IN INDIA ARE THESE RESERVES FOUND? STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the first significant discovery of lithium in India, as previously only a small reserve had been discovered in Karnataka.
- Lithium deposits are critical for India as the country puts its focus on electric mobility for both public and private transport.
 - The country's imports of lithium and lithium-ion in FY21 stood at Rs 8,900 crore in FY21 and increased to Rs 13,800 crore in FY22.
- The ongoing **Russia-Ukraine war has disrupted the supply**, resulting in high cost of the minerals.
- The discovery of lithium in J&K is expected to give a major fillip to the country's self-sufficiency in EV Batteries.
- Experts say the discovery could lead to not only a reduction in India's dependence on foreign countries but also bring down the cost of such batteries in the future.
 - The cost of a battery is around 45-50 per cent in an EV.





- As part of efforts to decarbonise the transport sector – Government of India aims to grow EV sales in India to capture the markets of **30 per cent of private passenger cars, 70 per cent of commercial vehicles, and 80 per cent of two and three-wheelers by 2030.**
- This will put India on track to reaching its **goal of net zero emissions by 2070.**
- This will also **help reduce India's dependence on China** — “a major concern for many in the current political climate”.

2.12 BAIGA TRIBE

ABOUT BAIGA TRIBE

- The Baiga Tribe is one of the **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).**
- They reside in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Occupation:** Traditionally, the Baiga lived a semi-nomadic life and practised slash-and-burn cultivation. Now, they are mainly dependent on minor forest produce for their livelihood.
- They practice a form of **shifting cultivation called, "Bewar."**
- Mahua is an important aspect of Baiga's food and drink. It is an intoxicant prepared from the fermentation and distillation of the flowers of the **Mahua tree.**
- **Tattooing** is an integral part of Baiga culture, every age and body part has a specific tattoo reserved for the occasion.



MIIRA

- With food security and nutrition a top priority in agriculture during its G20 Presidency, India is planning to propose the launch of **a global initiative - MIIRA**, to encourage the consumption and production of millets.
- A draft charter of the initiative is ready and will be placed for approval at the **first meeting of the Agricultural Deputies** (under G20) from February 13-15 at Indore, MP.

BACKGROUND OF MIIRA's ANNOUNCEMENT

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared **2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYM)**, a proposal sponsored by the Government of India to promote these "nutri-cereals."
- The declaration will be helpful to the Government of India in articulating its goal of making IYM 2023 a **"People's Movement"** as well as presenting India as the **"Global Hub for Millets,"** as India produces one-fifth of the world's millets.
- The year 2023 is also significant because of India's G20 Presidency, which will also have five meetings on agriculture.
- In her Budget speech (2023-24), while describing various types of millets as **'Shree Anna'**, the Union Finance Minister said that the **Indian Institute of Millet Research, Hyderabad** will be supported as the Centre of Excellence.



- This will help in sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level.

WHAT IS MIIRA?

- The global initiative will be aimed at **coordinating millet research programmes at the international level** and will be launched keeping in mind the nutritional value and the **climate resilient nature of millets**.
- Besides setting up a web platform to connect researchers and holding international research conferences, **the plan is also to promote millet consumption by raising awareness**.
- India would provide the "**seed money**" for MIIRA to take off, and each G20 member will subsequently be required to pay to its budget in the form of a membership fee.
- According to the sources, the MIIRA secretariat will be in **Delhi**, and India being a major producer of millets, **will ensure a flow of investment** from the country's industry and research bodies.

IMPORTANCE OF MILLETS

- **Millets are small-grained cereals** such as sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra), foxtail millet (kangni/ Italian millet), little millet (kutki), kodo millet, finger millet (ragi/ mandua), proso millet (cheena/ common millet), etc.
- These crops **require less water** than rice and wheat, and are mainly grown in **rainfed areas**.
- Now grown in more than 130 countries, millets are the **traditional food** for more than half a billion people in Asia and Africa.
- Globally, **jowar** is the most widely grown millet crop and its major producers are the US, China, Australia, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Sudan.
- **Bajra**, another major millet crop, is mainly grown in some African countries and India, **where millets are mainly a kharif crop**.
- In India, bajra (3.67%), jowar (2.13%), and ragi (0.48%) accounted for about **7% of the gross cropped area in the country** (during 2018-19).
 - In 2018, the Agriculture Ministry declared millets such as jowar, bajra, ragi/ mandua, some minor millets such as kangani/ kakun, cheena, etc, and the two pseudo millets [buckwheat (kuttu) and amaranth (chaulai)] - as '**Nutri Cereals**' for their "high nutritive value".
- Millets are important by virtue of its **mammoth potential to generate livelihoods**, increase farmers' income and **ensure food and nutritional security** all over the world.

2.13 BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE

Recently, at an unscheduled briefing during Parliament session, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar released details of the government's projects on border infrastructure and connectivity. It focused on initiatives in the north and east along India's 3,488 km border with China.

WHY BORDER MANAGEMENT IS NEEDED?

- India's internal security challenges are invariably linked with the security of the country's borders due to the hostile attitude of some of India's neighbours and their tendency to exploit India's persistent national challenges.



- The challenge of long-standing boundary and territorial disputes, coupled with steep terrain, extreme climatic conditions and porosity of borders, has rendered India's Borders vulnerable.
- This has made efficient and effective border management a foremost priority for the Indian Government.

STRATEGIES FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT

- Approach and practices of border management vary from one border to another, based on the security perceptions and relationship with the neighbouring country.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is responsible for border management.**
- The strategy to deal with border security challenges involves:
 - The management of international land & coastal borders
 - Strengthening of border policing & guarding
 - Creation of border infrastructure such as roads, fencing & floodlighting of the borders as well as the strengthening of coastal security infrastructure
 - Development of Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) on the land borders of the country
 - Implementation of the Border Area Development Programme (BADP)

SCHEMES AND INITIATIVES FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT

- **Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) Scheme:**
 - It is a Central Sector Scheme comprising of projects aimed at infrastructure development & to enhance the security of India's international borders.
 - It is being implemented by Border Management-I Division under MHA.
 - Eg., Border Fence, Border Roads, Border Floodlights, Border Out Posts (BOPs), Helipads and foot tracks along the international borders of the country.
 - It also involves deployment of technological solutions in such patches of the borders, which are not feasible for physical fence.
- **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS):**
 - CIBMS has been conceptualized to **integrate** manpower, sensors, networks, intelligence and command control solutions.
 - It aims to improve situational awareness at different levels of hierarchy to facilitate prompt and quick response to emerging situations along the India-Pakistan Border (IPB) and India-Bangladesh Border (IBB).

2.14 BHASHINI MISSION

Union minister for electronics and information technology recently said that **Mission Bhashini's** capabilities have been integrated with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) to make digital payments through the **UPI 123 Pay** available in more than **20 local Indian languages.**

ABOUT BHASHINI MISSION

- It is a **local language translation mission** that aims to break the barrier between various Indian tongues by using available technology.
- BHASHINI aims to **build a National Public Digital Platform for languages.**
- This government platform **aims to make Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing (NLP) resources available in the public domain** to be used by -- Indian MSMEs, startups and individual innovators.



- This will **help developers to offer all Indians easy access to the internet** and digital services **in their native languages**.
- This online platform also has a **separate 'Bhasadaan' section which allows individuals to contribute to multiple crowdsourcing initiatives** and it is also **accessible via respective Android and iOS apps**.

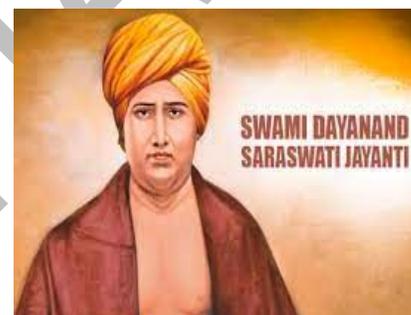
UPI 123

- It is an **instant payment system** which will allow users to **make UPI transactions without an internet connection**.
- It was **launched by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**
- Transactions through UPI 123Pay can be **done through IVR (interactive voice response) based payment solution, missed call, sound-based technology, and payment app**.

2.15 SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI

ABOUT HIS CONTRIBUTIONS

- He was the first to give the call **for Swaraj as "India for Indian" in 1876**.
- He preached 'Universalism', and not any specific caste.
- He introduced a complete overhaul of the education system and is often considered one of the visionaries of modern India.
- The **Dayanand Anglo Vedic schools** came into existence in 1886 to realize the vision of Swami Dayanand Saraswati.
- The first DAV School was established in **Lahore with Mahatma Hansarj** as the headmaster.
- One of his most influential works is the **book Satyarth Prakash**, which contributed to the Indian independence movement.
- His followers included Sri Aurobindo and S. Radhakrishnan.





Week 3

CURRENT AFFAIRS

19/02/2023 TO 25/02/2023

3.1 ANUBHUTI INCLUSIVE PARK

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways recently laid the foundation stone for the world's largest and unique **Divyang Park - Anubhuti Inclusive Park**.

ABOUT ANUBHUTI PARK

- It is the **world's first inclusive disabled park**.
- **Location: Nagpur, Maharashtra.**
- The park will be **developed by Nagpur Improvement Trust** in an area of **90 thousand square feet**.
- The park will have **adapted facilities for all 21 types of disabilities**, including a **touch and smell garden, hydrotherapy unit, water therapy, and independent room for differently abled children, mothers, etc.**

ASTROSAT

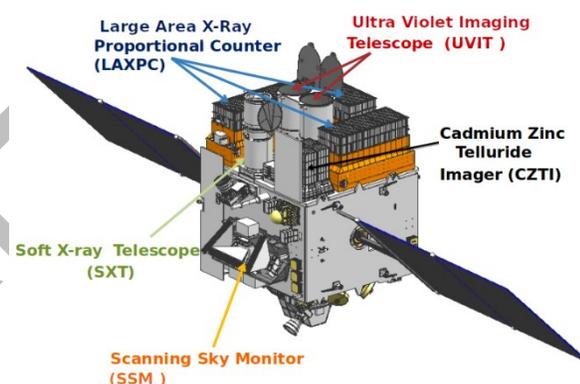
The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has recently made an Announcement of Opportunity (AO) to allow scientists and researchers to analyze data from the first dedicated Indian astronomy mission, AstroSat.

ABOUT THE MISSION

- It is **India's first dedicated multi-wavelength space observatory**.
- It is the **first dedicated Indian astronomy mission** aimed at **studying celestial sources in X-ray, optical, and UV spectral bands simultaneously**.
- AstroSat, with a **lift-off mass of 1515 kg**, was **launched by** the Indian launch vehicle **PSLV** from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota**, on **September 28, 2015**, into a **650 km orbit** inclined at an angle of 6 degrees to the equator.
- The **spacecraft control center** at Mission Operations Complex (MOX) of **ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC), Bengaluru**, manages the satellite during its entire mission life.
- The **minimum useful life** of the AstroSat mission is around **5 years**.

SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIVES

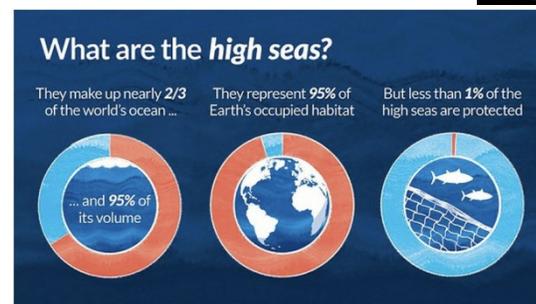
- To **understand high energy processes in binary star systems** containing neutron stars and black holes.
- **Estimate magnetic fields of neutron stars.**
- **Study star birth regions and high energy processes** in star systems lying beyond our galaxy.
- **Detect** new briefly bright **X-ray sources in the sky**.
- Perform a limited **deep-field survey of the Universe in the Ultraviolet region**.





3.2 UN HIGH SEAS TREATY

Recently, a new round of negotiations on the United Nations High Seas Treaty began in New York. Negotiations involving 168 countries, including the European Union, to agree on a UN treaty for protecting oceans **failed** on August 27.



WHAT IS THE PROPOSED TREATY?

Also referred to as the '**Paris Agreement for the Ocean**', the treaty to deal with **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction** has been under discussion for several years.

The proposed treaty concerns the **ocean existing beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones** that lie from the coast of a country to about 200 nautical miles or 370 km into the sea, till where it has special rights for exploration. **Waters beyond that (200 NM) are known as open seas or high seas.**

The treaty was to be negotiated under the **United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982** which governs the rights of countries regarding marine resources.

As there is no treaty for conserving the health of vast swathes of the earth's oceans, a UN resolution in 2017 had decided to rectify this while setting 2022 as the deadline.

ROADBLOCKS IN THE TREATY

- The pandemic resulted in many delays and the negotiations were not held on many issues.
- The negotiating parties have not agreed on the legal nature of this treaty.
 - Many institutions, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature, are demanding this treaty to be legally binding in order to become more effective.
- Some countries in the Caribbean alleged that richer countries of the Global North did not actively participate until the last few days of the talks.
- Also, the treaty is facing resistance from countries that engage in deep sea mining of minerals or are heavily invested in fishing.

3.3 HD-3385 WHEAT

Scientist from **Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI)** has recently developed a New wheat variety **HD-3385**.

ABOUT HD 3385:

- It is the **third HD variant wheat variety** which looks most promising.
- With the same yields as HD-3410, plant height of just 95 cm and strong stems.
- It is the least lodging-prone and most **amenable for early sowing**.
- This variety, sown this time at IARI's trial fields on October 22, has reached the pollination stage.
- IARI has registered HD-3385 with the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA).

WHEAT FACTSHEET

- Wheat is the second most important cereal crop in India after rice.
- It is the main food crop, in the northern and north-western parts of the country.
- It is a Rabi crop that requires a **cool growing season** and **bright sunshine at the time of ripening**.
- **Temperature:** Between 10-15°C (Sowing time) and 21-26°C (Ripening & Harvesting) with bright sunlight.
- **Rainfall:** Around 75-100 cm.



- **Soil required:** Well-drained fertile loamy and clayey loamy (Ganga-Satluj plains and black soil region of the Deccan).

ABOUT PPVFRA

- The Govt. of India enacted “The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001”.
- To implement the provisions of the Act the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** established the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority in 2005.
- The Chairperson is the Chief Executive of the Authority. Besides the Chairperson, the Authority has 15 members.

3.4 NEW START TREATY

Recently, the Russian President announced that **Moscow was suspending its participation** in the New START treaty with the United States.

ABOUT THE TREATY:

- It is known as **The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty** (New START).
- It is the last remaining nuclear arms deal between Russia and the United States of America, and it was extended for five years in 2021.
- **Objective:** The New START caps the number of nuclear warheads well below Cold War limits.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- New START continues the bipartisan process of **verifiably reducing U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals** begun by former Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.
- The treaty was signed by US President Barack Obama and Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in **Prague in 2010**.
- New START replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired in December 2009, and superseded the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which terminated when New START entered into force.
- Both Russia and the United States announced that they met New START limitations by Feb. 5, 2018.
- **Importance:** New START is the first verifiable U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty to take effect since START I in 1994.

HAVE BOTH THE COUNTRIES COMPLIED IT?

- Both countries met the limits spelled out in the treaty by February 2018 and appear to have remained at or below them since then.
- However, regular inspections mandated by the agreement have not been held for the past three years — initially because of the coronavirus pandemic, and later because relations soured after Russia invaded Ukraine.

CAUSE OF WORRY?

- **Deterioration of nuclear disarmament efforts**
 - This announcement has raised alarm about the deterioration of nuclear disarmament efforts.



- This is at a time when tensions between the United States and Russia have reached a recent peak after Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.
- **Signals that nuclear weapons are an effective form of diplomatic leverage**
 - The current announcement might signal to other countries that nuclear weapons are an effective form of diplomatic leverage.
 - This largely depends on the posture taken by the USA after this announcement.
 - If the United States makes concessions, other countries might get the signal that nuclear weapons hold keys in such cases.

3.5 JAADUI PITAARA

Union Education Minister recently launched an innovative **learning material for foundational years** of children called "**Jaadui Pitara**".

The new framework includes the '**panchakosha**' concept for education of children aged 3 to 8, with five components -

- Physical development (sharirik vikas),
- Development of life energy (pranik vikas),
- Emotional and mental development (manasik vikas),
- Intellectual development (bauddhik vikas), and
- Spiritual development (chaitisik vikas).

ABOUT JAADUI PITAARA

- The 'Jaadui Pitara' or 'Magic Collection' is a **play-based learning material for children in the age group of three to eight years.**
- It is launched by the **Union Ministry of Education.**
- It has been **designed on the motto of "learning through play"**, as envisaged in the new **National Education Policy (NEP).**
- It **comprises of playbooks, toys, puzzles, posters, flashcards, storybooks, and worksheets, as well as reflecting the local culture, social context, and languages.**
- It is **designed to pique curiosity and accommodate the diverse needs** of learners at the foundational stage.
- It is **developed under the curricular goals of National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS)** as recommended by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**
- The resources on 'Jaadui Pitara' will be **digitally available on DIKSHA platform – portal and mobile app.**
- The **pitara is available in 13 Indian languages.**

ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK

- NCF, under NCFE CCE, for foundational stage is the **first ever integrated Curriculum Framework** for children between ages 3-8 in India.
 - This is the **first Stage** in the **5+3+3+4** Curricular and Pedagogical restructuring of School Education and will be an integral part of the overall NCFE CCE, covering education for children up to the age of 18.



- Objective is to help in **positively transforming the school education system** as envisioned in NEP 2020, through corresponding positive changes in the curriculum including pedagogy.
- It will be the basis for all pedagogy adopted by schools, pre-schools and anganwadis for children studying between nursery and Class 2.
- It covers a raft of topics, ranging from curriculum goals, approach to language education and literacy, home-based learning, teaching styles, and methods of assessment.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FRAMEWORK

- **Importance to mother tongue:** Students should be taught exclusively in their mother tongue until the age of eight because introducing a new language at an early age reverses the entire learning process.
- **Less burden on children:** For ages three to six, there should not be any prescribed textbooks for the children, and instead NCF recommended simple worksheets for curricular goals and pedagogical needs.
- **Ethics component:** Introducing an ethics component into the curriculum early on to build character, lead productive and happy lives, and contribute positively to society.
- **Learning through play:** It includes all activities that are fun and engaging to the child and can take the form of physical play, interaction, conversation, storytelling, riddles, rhymes, toys, visual art, music etc.
- **Gender balance:** Balanced gender and community representation through use of stories, characters, and pictures, must be ensured, books need to be attractive and should grab the attention of young children.
- **Avoid stereotypes:** Avoid promotion of stereotypes in textbooks such as owls and snakes as evil, or dark-skinned people as scary, or the mother always handling the kitchen.
- **Better learning environment:** It needs to be well lit and well ventilated, inclusive, balance of both familiar and novel experiences for the child, include displays of children's work etc.
- **Panchakosha system for education:** The framework has listed the 'panchakosha' concept for children's education.
 - It comprising physical development (sharirik vikas), development of life energy (pranik vikas), emotional and mental development (manasik vikas), intellectual development (baudhik vikas) and spiritual development (chaitisik vikas).
 - The Panchakosha description is in the Taittiriya Upanishad.

3.6 EL NINO PREDICTIONS

India experienced a colder than normal winter thanks to the north-south winter flow set up by the weather phenomenon known as **La Niña**, which is going on for a record-breaking third consecutive year.

Now, forecasts for 2023 are predicting that its companion phenomenon - the **El Niño** - will occur with more than a 50% probability.

WHAT IS LA NINA & EL NINO?

WHAT IS LA NINA?

The ongoing **La Niña** phase of the **equatorial Pacific Ocean** has just been **predicted to persist for at least another six months**, making it one of the **longest ever La Niña episodes in recorded history**. It is also only the third episode since 1950 to stretch into a third consecutive year.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on August 31 had stated for the first time this century, **La Nina would span three consecutive northern hemisphere winters** to become a 'triple dip' La Nina.



This is likely to have wide-ranging implications for weather events across the world in the coming months, and can potentially aggravate both **floods and droughts** in different regions.

EL NINO

A warming of the ocean surface, or **above-average sea surface temperatures (SST)**, in the **central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean**.

This accumulation of warm water causes the **thermocline to drop** in the eastern part of Pacific Ocean which **cuts off the upwelling of cold deep ocean water** along the coast of Peru. Fishing industry is affected.

It is associated with **lower than normal monsoon rainfall in India**.

LA NINA

- A cooling of the ocean surface, or **below-average SSTs**, in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- It is associated with a comparatively **better monsoon rainfall in India**.

ORIGIN DURATION & DIFFERENCES

Origin and duration: El Niño and La Niña episodes usually develop in the **March-June period and last for about nine months to a year**.

They are the **strongest during winter (November-January in the northern hemisphere)**, before weakening or **dissipating by March or April of next year**.

Difference: However, El Niño and La Niña events are **not mirror images** of each other. **They differ in length and strength**.

El Niño episodes occur more frequently and are usually associated with more impactful weather events. An El Niño is more likely to be a **single-year La Niña, on the other hand, has a longer run**. That is why **multi-year La Niña events**, those that continue for more than 12 months, are more common.

TRIPLE DIP LA NINA

‘Triple Dip’ La Niña is a period where the La Niña period **extends for up to three consecutive winters** and results in multiyear cooling of the surface temperature of the equatorial Pacific Ocean. For example, the **current La Niña episode was started in September 2020, prevailed for the last 24 months**, and looks set to continue for another six months, and has thus been classified as a ‘triple dip’ La Niña.

THE PREDICTIONS

- The first thing to note is that El Niño forecasts before spring tend to be notoriously unreliable due to a so-called ‘**spring predictability barrier**’. This is because the climate system is quite noisy in spring **as the Sun transitions across the equator**, from one hemisphere to the other.
- More importantly, **in a La Niña year**, the tropical Pacific Ocean soaks up heat like a sponge and builds up its volume of warm water.
- During the El Niño, this warm water spills from the western part of the Pacific Ocean to the eastern part.
- But the earth has had three straight La Niña years, which means the Pacific’s warm-water volume is **fully loaded and is likely to birth an El Niño soon**.
- But the question is ‘Will this be a strong El Niño, like the one in 2015-2016?’.
- **An El Niño year creates a global-warming crisis in miniature**, since the warm water spreading across the tropical Pacific releases a large amount of heat into the atmosphere.
- According to reports, an El Niño this year could increase the planet’s average surface temperature by **more than 1.5° C from pre-industrial levels**.



3.7 PRIVATE PLACEMENT OF BONDS

State-owned hydropower giant National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Ltd (NHPC) recently raised Rs 996 crore through the issuance of non-convertible bonds on private placement basis.

WHAT ARE THESE BONDS?

- A private placement is a **sale of bonds to select investors and institutions instead of the open market.**
- Typically, a private placement is defined as **an issuance of securities to less than 50 persons.**
- **Investors** in privately placed bonds **usually include wealthy individuals** and entities, **mutual fund providers, insurance companies,** and banking and **financial institutions.**
- Unlike a public offering, **private placements are exempt from having to file an offer document with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** for comments.
- A private placement may **not involve any form of general announcement, solicitation, advertising, seminar, or meeting to publicize such an offering.**

ADVANTAGES

- It is a **cost and time-effective** method of raising funds.
- It can be **structured to meet the needs of entrepreneurs and investors.**
- It has **easier compliance formalities.**
- In India, the **majority of corporate fund raises have been through private placement.**
- Issue of securities through **private placement** route is **governed by SEBI (Issue and Listing of Debt Securities) Regulations, 2008.**

WHAT ARE NON CONVERTIBLE BONDS?

- It is a **financial instrument issued by Corporates** for specified tenure to **raise resources/funds** through public issue or private placement.
- They **cannot be converted into equity shares or stocks, hence called non-convertible.**
- It is a **fixed-income instrument** same as a bank fixed deposit, and can be **traded on stock exchanges.**
- **Interest** can be **earned monthly/quarterly / annually / cumulative,** and **on maturity principal amount is paid to the bondholder.**
- They are a **popular form of investment tool** among investors because of their **higher returns, liquidity, low risks, and higher interest rates** than convertible debentures.

3.8 THE ADANI HINDENBERG CLASH

Adani Group has issued a detailed rebuttal to the allegations of stock manipulation and accounting malpractices levelled by **Hindenburg Research.** It has dismissed all allegations and called the **Hindenburg report as an attack on India** and its independent institutions.

ABOUT HINDENBERG RESEARCH:

Hindenburg Research is a company that **specializes in forensic financial research.** It especially looks for accounting irregularities; undisclosed related-party transactions; illegal/unethical business or financial reporting practices; and undisclosed regulatory, product, or financial issues in companies.

THE FINDINGS OF THE REPORT



Hindenburg Research said its two-year investigation has shown that the Adani group was involved in massive and **“brazen stock manipulation”** and an **“accounting fraud scheme”**.

Hindenburg, which has **short-selling positions** in Adani companies through US-traded bonds and non-Indian-traded derivative instruments, said key listed companies in the Adani group had **“substantial debt”** which has put the entire group on a **“precarious financial footing”**.

WHAT IS SHORT SELLING?

“Buy low, sell high” is the traditional investment strategy in which one buys a stock or security at a particular price and then sells it when the price is higher, thereby booking a profit. This is referred to as a **“long position”**, and is based on the view that the **price of the stock or security will appreciate with time**.

Short selling on the other hand is a trading strategy **based on the expectation that the price of the security will fall**. While fundamentally it is based on the **“buy low, sell high”** approach, the **sequence of transactions is reversed** in short selling — to sell high first and buy low later.

3.9 COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES IN THE PARLIAMENT

Rajya Sabha Chairman recently asked the **committee of privileges** to investigate the alleged breach of privilege by 12 opposition lawmakers for repeatedly entering the well of the House, shouting slogans, and obstructing its proceedings.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:

- This committee **consists of 15 members in Lok Sabha (10 in case of Rajya Sabha) nominated by the Speaker (Chairman in case of Rajya Sabha)**.
- In the **Rajya Sabha, the deputy chairperson heads the committee** of privileges.

POWERS & FUNCTIONS

- The committee **examines every question involving a breach of privilege** of the House or of the members or of any Committee thereof referred to it by the House or by the Speaker/Chairman.
- It also **determines with reference to the facts of each case whether a breach of privilege is involved and makes suitable recommendations** in its report.
- It also **states the procedure to be followed by the House in giving effect to its recommendations**.
- When a question of privilege is referred to the Committee by the House, **the report of the Committee is presented to the House by the Chairman or, in his absence, by any member of the Committee**.
- Where a **question of privilege is referred to the Committee by the Speaker**, the report of the Committee **is presented to the Speaker who may pass final orders thereon or direct that it be laid on the Table of the House**.
- The **Speaker/Chairman may refer to the Committee** any petition regarding the **disqualification of a member on the ground of defection for making a preliminary inquiry** and submitting a report to him.
- The **procedure to be followed by the Committee in these cases** is so far as may be the **same as in applicable to questions of breach of privilege**.

3.10 ADENOVIRUS

Bengal health authorities have been asked to be vigilant after the state recently recorded a big spike in adenovirus cases.



ABOUT ADENOVIRUS:

- Adenoviruses are a **group of viruses** that can **cause mild to severe infections throughout your body**.
- They can **cause a wide range of illnesses**, such as the **common cold, fever, sore throat, acute bronchitis, pneumonia, pink eye, and acute gastroenteritis**.
- There are many **different types of adenoviruses**, so that **people can get infected more than once**.
- Adenovirus infections **occur throughout the year**, but they tend to **peak in the winter and early spring**.
- Adenoviruses **can affect people of all ages**, but they're **most common in children younger than 5 years old**.
- Most adenovirus infections are mild, but they can be **more severe in people with weakened immune systems** or existing respiratory or cardiac disease.
- **Transmission modes:**
- Adenoviruses are **very contagious**. They can spread from an infected individual to others **via close contacts, such as touching or shaking hands**.
- Infected particles can also transfer **through coughing and sneezing**.
- **Fecal material can spread** the infection **via contaminated water**, dirty diapers, and poor hand washing.
- **Treatment:**
- There is currently **no specific course of treatment** or approved antiviral medication.
- **Some medications with proper rest** are advised to **control the symptoms**.

3.11 NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has recently imposed a fine of ₹2,232 crore on the Delhi government for damage caused to the environment due to improper solid and liquid waste management.

ABOUT NGT:

- The National Green Tribunal has been established under **the National Green Tribunal Act 2010**.
- New Delhi is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.
- NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of the filing of the same.

COMPOSITION

- The Tribunal comprises **the Chairperson, the Judicial Members, and Expert Members**.
- They shall hold office for a **term of 5 years** and are **not eligible for reappointment**.
- The Chairperson is appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- A Selection Committee shall be formed by the central government to appoint the Judicial Members and Expert Members.
- There are to be at least 10 and a maximum of 20 full-time Judicial members and Expert Members in the tribunal.



POWERS & JURISDICTION

- Established for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- It has **appellate jurisdiction** to hear appeals as a Court.
- The Tribunal is **not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.

3.12 NATIONAL DATA & ANALYTICS PLATFORM

About: It was **launched in 2022 by NITI Aayog**, in collaboration with different ministries and state governments, **providing standardized datasets** from across India's vast landscape of administrative data.

It hosts foundational datasets from central and state government entities, presents them coherently in machine-readable formats, with a user-friendly interface and provides tools for analytics and visualization.

Objective: The platform aims to democratize access to public government data by making data accessible, interoperable, interactive, and available on a user-friendly platform.

Target users: NDAP's target users include policymakers, civil servants, university students and researchers, journalists, innovators, and civil society groups.

NEED FOR NDAP

- **Public data** is often stored on platforms that are **difficult to use** and in formats that delay analysis.
 - Thus, data from different sources **cannot be cross-linked**., users cannot compare data from different departments or data gathered over time.
- Also, **slow updating processes** and **inconsistencies in data quality**, raises concerns if the appropriate data is publicly available.
- Also, the rise of data and digital technologies are rapidly transforming economies and societies, with enormous implications for governments' daily operations.
- Hence, every step of the **NDAP design process** addressed these challenges by including **rigorous user testing** to ensure that the platform precisely solves these issues.

SIGNIFICANCE

- NDAP uses cutting-edge methods to link **diverse datasets** from across the government and enables the use of several types of data at once.
- All datasets are **standardized to a common schema**, which makes it **easy to merge** datasets and do **cross-sectoral analysis**.
- NDAP by following a **use-case based approach** ensures that the datasets hosted on the platform are tailored to the needs of data users from government, academia, journalism, civil society, and the private sector.
 - Its users can create **flexible tables and visualizations** for **easy exploratory analysis** using the platform's in-built analysis tools.
- NDAP is **quality benchmarked** as datasets on the platform are required to meet a minimum data quality standard that is defined using **NDAP's in-house 5-star rating framework**.
- NDAP can **save considerable time** of the civil servants and make their **decisions more data-driven**, resulting better governance and programme outcomes for the common public.



- Its **public access** has provided **opportunities for all**, including states, ministries, and India's data community, to support NDAP by helping improve, expand and update the platform's existing datasets and capabilities.
- NDAP has also been made an integral part of the **State Support Mission of NITI Aayog** and the development of **state-specific portals** on the lines of NDAP helps in cost and time saving ensuring all states become equal partners in data-driven governance.

3.13 LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA

The Union Cabinet recently extended the term of the 22nd Law Commission by one-and-a-half years.

ABOUT LAW COMMISSION:

- The Law Commission of India is a **non-statutory body constituted by the Government of India from time to time.**
- It functions to the **Ministry of Law and Justice as an advisory body.**

HISTORY OF LAW COMMISSION

- The **first Law Commission** was established during the **British Raj era in 1834** by the **Charter Act of 1833** and was chaired by **Lord Macaulay.**
- **In 1955, the first independent Law Commission** was created.
- **Objective:** To **carry out research in the field of law** and **makes recommendations** to the Government (in the form of Reports) as per its terms of reference.
- The commission's **recommendations are not binding** on the Government.
- The Law Commission has **so far submitted 277 Reports.**
- The commission **consists of legal experts and is headed by a retired judge.**
- The Commission is **constituted for a fixed tenure.**

3.14 SANSAD RATNA AWARDS

Recently, the Prime Minister of India congratulated fellow Members of Parliament who will be conferred the Sansad Ratna Awards 2023.

The Sansad Ratna Awards were **instituted in 2010**, inspired by the teachings of former President **APJ Abdul Kalam**, who launched the first edition of the Award function in Chennai.

ABOUT THE AWARDS

- The Jury Committee has chosen a total of 13 MPs and two parliamentary committees for the award, with a lifetime award being presented for the first 2023 awards.
- The jury committee comprises “**eminent Parliamentarians and (members of) civil society**”.
- The nominations were based on an MP's cumulative performance in Parliament, from the beginning of the 17th Lok Sabha until the end of Winter Session 2022
- Factors that the decision is based on include **questions asked, private members' Bills introduced, debates initiated, attendance, funds utilised**, etc.
- The performance data of the members have been sourced from information provided by PRS Legislative Research.

INDEGINOUS TECHNOLOGY CRUISE MISSILE

Recently, India has achieved much-needed success in its indigenous technology cruise missile (ITCM) programme by missile test-firing from launchpad No- 3 of Chandipur in the Balasore district.

ABOUT ITCM



- It was tested on the **subsonic cruise missile Nirbhay platform** from launching complex III of the integrated test range (ITR).
- It was **equipped with** the indigenously developed **small turbofan engine (STFE) Manik** and an upgraded radio frequency seeker, the missile was test fired for a reduced range.
- The domestic Manik engine with a thrust rating of 450 kgf has been designed and developed by Bengaluru-based Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE) for cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles.
- It is a generic twin-spool engine without an afterburner.

ABOUT NIRBHAY MISSILE

- Nirbhay is a **Long-Range Sub-Sonic Cruise Missile**, which can be deployed from multiple platforms.
- It is capable of loitering and cruising at Mach 0.7 (sub-sonic) at an altitude as low as 100 meters. It can carry a nuclear warhead.
- **Developed by:** It has been indigenously designed & developed by Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).

CORRUPT ACT IN RPA,1951

- Recently, the Supreme Court observed that **no one in India votes for a candidate based on their educational qualifications**.
- Hence, providing false information about an electoral candidate's qualifications cannot be considered a corrupt practice under Sections 123 (2) and Section 123 (4) of the Representation of People's Act, 1951 (RPA, 1951).

3.15 REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE'S ACT

Article 324 to 329 of Part XV of the Indian Constitution contains provisions related to the **conduct of free and fair elections in India**.

These provisions **empowered Parliament to make laws** to regulate the electoral process.

In pursuance of these provisions, the Parliament enacted

- **Representation of the People Act, 1950** and
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951**.

Representation of Peoples Act, 1950

RPA Act 1950 deals with the following aspects of electoral process:

- Qualification of voters.
- Preparation of electoral rolls.
- Delimitation of constituencies.
- Allocation of seats in the Parliament and state legislatures.

Representation of Peoples Act, 1951

RP Act 1951 was enacted before first general elections. The act provides for the **actual conduct of elections in India**.

It deals with the following aspects of the election

- Actual conduct of elections;



- Administrative machinery for conducting elections;
- Poll;
- Election offences;
- Election disputes;
- By-elections;
- Registration of political parties.

CORRUPT PRACTICES UNDER RPA, 1951

Section 123 of RP Act 1951 defines the corrupt practices in the electoral process. Following practices have been defined as the corrupt practices:

- **Bribery** - Any gift or offer or promise or gratification to any person as a motive or reward
- **Undue influence** - any direct or indirect interference or attempt to interfere with the free exercise of any electoral right
- **Promoting hatred** - The promotion of feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of the citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, community, or language.
- **Furnishing incorrect information** - The publication of any statement of fact which is false in relation to the personal character or conduct of any candidate or in relation to the candidature.
- **Hiring of vehicle** - The hiring or procuring of any vehicle for the free conveyance of any elector to or from any polling station.
- The incurring or authorizing of expenditure in contravention with the approved limit is also a corrupt process.

PROVISION OF DISQUALIFICATION

- Under the provisions of the Act, an elected representative can be disqualified if:
 - convicted of certain offences;
 - on grounds of corrupt practices;
 - for failing to declare election expenses; and
 - for interests in government contracts or works.

THE PRESENT CASE

- In ‘Anugrah Narayan Singh v. Harsh Vardhan Bajpayee’, the apex court was hearing a plea challenging a 2017 Allahabad High Court ruling. However, the Apex Court refused to interfere with the High Court’s order of dismissal.
 - Allahabad HC had dismissed a similarly titled petition to declare the election of an MLA as null and void.
 - The petition, in the Allahabad HC, had alleged that the accused MLA committed a **corrupt practice under Section 123(2)** by interfering in the free exercise of electoral rights of the voters.
 - He did so by not disclosing his liabilities and correct educational qualifications in his affidavit of nomination.
 - The petition also argued that a **corrupt practice under Section 123(4)** was committed by the accused in publishing a false statement of fact about his character and conduct to influence the outcome of his election, knowingly.

THE ALLAHABAD HC VERDICT

- The Allahabad HC held that the **inaccuracy or concealment regarding educational qualification** of the respondent did not amount to unduly influencing the voters.



- This is due to the fact that the defect in disclosure was **not of substantial character** that could have materially prejudiced the prospects of the election.
- Hence, it can not be termed as a corrupt practice within the meaning of Section 123 of the Representation of People Act.

3.16 SWACHH SARVEKSHAN

MoHUA launched the 8th edition of SS survey 2023 with the theme of **‘Waste to Wealth’**. It is aligned with **SBMU 2.0’s** commitment to **promote circularity in waste management** and focuses on the vision of **‘garbage free’ cities**.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

- SS, introduced by MoHUA in 2016, is the **world’s largest annual survey of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation in villages, cities and towns** across India.
- **Evaluation for SS-23 is based on 3 components:**
 - **Service Level Progress-** covers Segregated collection, Processing, and disposal, Used water management, and Safaimitra Suraksha.
 - **Certification-** for Garbage Free City star rating and ODF/ODF+/ODF++/water + certification.



- Citizens’ voice -through feedback, grievance redressal, engagement, etc.
- Additional weightage has been given to **source segregation of waste, enhancement of waste processing capacity of cities and reduction of waste going to dumpsites**.
- **Ranking of Wards within cities** is being promoted through SS 2023.
- Assessment of cities will be on dedicated indicators on issues of **‘open urination’ (Yellow Spots)** and **‘open spitting’ (Red Spots)**, being faced by cities.
- **SBM-U 2.0**, launched in **2021**, focus on source segregation of solid waste, ensures **grey and black water (used water)** management in all cities other than those covered under AMRUT.





Week 4

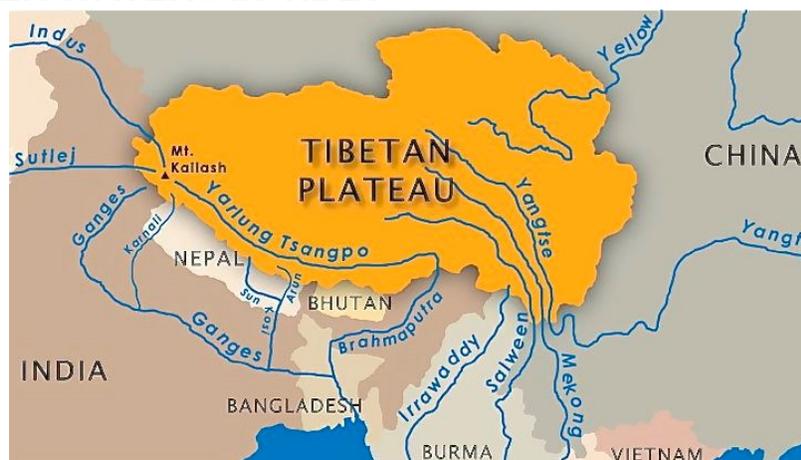
CURRENT AFFAIRS

28/01/2023 TO 03/02/2023

4.1 CHINA'S CONTROL OVER RIVER WATERS IN TIBET

In 2012, the **Government of India** stated that the **per capita water storage capacity** in the country stood at **209 cubic metres (cum)**, the figure for **China was 416 cum**. With nearly **98,000 dams/water storage structures** of various kinds, China today has the largest network of water storage assets in the world.

Contrary to India, China has consistently invested in creating freshwater storage capacity and this stems from China's desire to establish global hegemony (Pax Sinica).



REASONS BEHIND CHINA'S HUGE STORAGE

- **To monopolise emerging green technologies:**
 - The main objective of the Chinese Communist Party is to **establish a domestic chip industry** since the US is determined to impose restrictions on chip manufacturing technologies.
 - **With huge deposits of rare earth minerals**, China wants to maximise the benefits by monopolising emerging green technologies - be it zero-emission vehicles or chip making. However, such industries require **huge amounts of freshwater**. For example,
 - It is estimated that a large chip fabrication facility can use in excess of 10 million gallons of ultra-pure water per day. This is **equivalent to the domestic consumption** of a quarter million families.
 - Similarly, extraction of rare earth minerals requires huge amounts of freshwater.
 - Both are essential to the future of the communist party and their vision of Pax Sinica.
- **Climate change - Dwindling water resources:**
 - Most of the major rivers of South Asia originate in the **Tibetan plateau** - the 'Third Pole' for water with nearly 46,000 glaciers.
 - According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences, **the Tibetan glaciers are melting at the rate of 7% annually** and two-thirds of the glaciers on the plateau will be gone by 2050.
 - The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development has revealed that Ganga, Indus, Brahmaputra, etc., across the northern India plains **would most likely become seasonal rivers in the near future**.

HOW IS CHINA GAINING CONTROL?



- **China has dammed almost every major river** on the Tibetan plateau, including the Mekong, Salween, Brahmaputra, Yangtze, Yellow, Indus, Sutlej, Shweli and Karnali.
 - **For example**, Indian satellites confirmed the existence of the Zhangmu dam on the **Brahmaputra at the Great Bend** from where the river takes a sharp U-turn, forming the world's deepest gorge, an area reported to have hydropower potential of 38,000 MW.
- It has unveiled plans **to dam the rivers that still remain free flowing**, such as the Arun and the Subansiri. Thus, China is engaged in a dam building spree that borders on panic.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

- China is involved in **border disputes** with almost all its neighbours and as nearly half of the water (48%) from rivers that originate on the Tibetan plateau runs directly into India, this dispute becomes more fierce.
 - **For example**, during the height of the Doklam crisis (2017), China refused to supply hydrological data to India, underscoring how it was **weaponizing the sharing of water**.
- The water in the main artery of the Brahmaputra river system, the Siang, **turns dirty and grey** when the stream enters India from Tibet.
- Building dams in a fragile ecology like the Himalayas can lead to **environmental disasters**.
 - **For example**, the Pareechu Lake burst in Tibet (in 2000 and 2005), causing heavy destruction of livelihoods, infrastructure and socio-economic assets downstream, particularly in Kinnaur and Shimla districts of Himachal Pradesh.

4.2 YAYA TSO LAKE

Recently, **Yaya Tso Lake** was declared **Ladakh's first biodiversity heritage site** under the **Biological Diversity Act**.

The **Biodiversity Management Committee**, the panchayat of Chumathang village, along with the **SECURE Himalaya Project** recently resolved the issue and declared Yaya Tso Lake a biodiversity heritage site.

ABOUT YAYA TSO LAKE

- Lake Yaya Tso is known as a **bird's paradise** for its beautiful lake located at an altitude of 4,820 metres in Ladakh.
- It is a nesting habitat for a large number of birds and animals, such as the bar-headed goose, black-necked crane and brahminy duck
- It is also one of the highest breeding sites of the **black-necked crane** in India.

SECURE HIMALAYA PROJECT

The **Union Environment ministry** in association with the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** has been implementing '**Secure Himalaya**' project to **conserve the habitats of snow leopards since 2017**.

The '**Secure Himalaya**' project is funded by the **Global Environment Facility**.

It **supports the government's efforts for conservation of snow leopard and its habitat by developing and implementing a landscape-based approach for Himalayan ecosystems**, and addresses key issues of **habitat degradation, threatened livelihoods and illegal trade in wildlife**.

FEATURES

- **Conservation of key biodiversity areas and their effective management** to secure long-term ecosystem resilience, habitat connectivity and conservation of snow leopard and other endangered species.



- **Securing sustainable community livelihoods** and natural resource management in high range Himalayan ecosystems.
- **Enhancing enforcement, monitoring and cooperation** to reduce wildlife crime and related threats.
- **Gender Mainstreaming, Monitoring**, evaluation and knowledge management.

WHERE IS SECURE HIMALAYAS IMPLEMENTED?

It is implemented in **four landscapes/regions** in India:

- Changthang, Ladakh Landscape, Jammu & Kashmir
- Lahaul-Pangi and Kinnaur Landscapes, Himachal Pradesh
- Gangotri-Govind and Darma-Byans Landscapes, Uttarakhand
- Khangchendzonga-upper Teesta Valley, Sikkim

4.3 WHAT IS GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)?

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a **multilateral financial mechanism** that provides grants to **developing countries** for **projects that benefit the global environment and promote sustainable livelihoods in local communities**.

WHEN WAS GEF ESTABLISHED?

During the **Rio Earth Summit of 1992**.

HQ: Washington, D.C., United States.

The GEF is **jointly managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.

ECONOMIC SURVEY

Finance Minister recently tabled the **Economic Survey for 2022-23** in the Lok Sabha.

KEY FACTS:

- It is the **flagship annual document of the finance ministry** that contains a detailed analysis of the **economic development of the country**.
- It **reviews the economic development** in India over the **past financial year** by giving **detailed statistical data of all the sectors**-industrial, agricultural, manufacturing among others.
- It **analyses the whole macroeconomics of the country** in the past year and provides an outline for the next financial year.
- The Survey **has two parts**--one, **one consists of the economic challenges** that the country is facing & might face ahead and the **second is the review of the year gone by**.
- **When was the first Economic Survey of India presented?**
 - The first Economic Survey in India was presented in the **year 1950-51**.
 - Up to 1964, it was presented along with the Union Budget. **From 1964 onwards, it has been delinked from the Budget**.
- **When and who present it?** It is **presented normally a day before the presentation of the Union Budget** in the Parliament **by the Finance Minister**.
 - This year's survey was presented by the CEA V Anantha Nageswaran, after being tabled by Finance Minister in the parliament.



- **Who prepares it?** It is prepared by the **Economics Division of the Department of Economic Affairs** in the Finance Ministry under the **overall guidance of the Chief Economic Adviser** and is released after it is **approved by the finance minister**.

ECONOMIC SURVEY: KEY TAKEAWAYS

● GDP GROWTH RATE

- The Survey said India's growth estimate for FY23 is higher than for almost all major economies.
- It projected the economy to grow by somewhere between 6% - 6.8%, depending on global factors in 2023-24, with 6.5% a baseline expectation.
- Despite global uncertainties and slowing world economy, India's growth is supported by solid domestic demand and a pickup in capital investment.
- India's projected growth rate, that too without the advantage of a base effect, is a reflection of India's underlying economic resilience.

UPSIDE	MEASURED STEPS	DOWNSIDE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Limited impact of Covid spread in China on the rest of the world > Pause in interest rate hikes by central banks in US, Europe may help foreign fund flows into India > If China's opening up does not trigger inflation elsewhere, India could gain > Stable domestic inflation rate of below 6% > Encouraging signs of pick-up in private sector investment > Lower chances of recession in US, Europe could boost exports 	 <p>MEASURED STEPS: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman at Parliament on Tuesday</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Export slowdown if global growth doesn't recover > If commodity prices remain high, they could impact India's current account deficit > High current account deficit could lead to rupee depreciation, making imports expensive and fuelling inflation > If inflation remains sticky globally, interest rates could stay high too > High interest rates would mean a squeeze on fund flows as well as lower investment

○ Indian economy in 2022-23 has nearly:

○ **recouped** what was lost,

○ **renewed** what had paused, and

○ **re-energised** what had slowed during the pandemic and since the conflict in Europe.

○ The survey also highlighted few **downside risks** which might affect the growth:

○ Low demand for Indian exports due to poor global growth may widen India's trade deficit and make the rupee depreciate.

○ Also, sustained monetary tightening (higher interest rates) may drag down economic activity in FY24.

● Inflation

- The RBI has projected headline inflation at **8%** in FY23, outside its comfort zone of 2% -6%.
- The Survey sounded optimistic about the inflation levels and trajectory as both wholesale and retail inflation are on the descending slope.
- However, any re-emergence of Covid-19 situation in China or a reversal of slump in commodity prices poses risks to the inflation trajectory going ahead.

● Unemployment

- The Survey said employment levels have risen in the current financial year.
- It pointed to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), which showed that **urban unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above declined from 9.8% in the quarter ending September 2021 to 7.2% one year later**.



- The Survey also underlined that the fall in unemployment rate is accompanied by an improvement in the labour force participation rate.
- **Capital expenditure (capex) target**
 - Capital expenditure has started to stimulate private investment, and the budget target of ₹7.5 lakh crore for the current fiscal year is expected to be met.
 - Strong domestic demand and a pickup in capital investment will support the country's growth trajectory in FY24.
 - There is an expectation of a recovery in private capex, driven by improved balance sheets, resurging credit, and the crowding in from public capex.
 - The survey said that the government's thrust on capex, particularly in the infrastructure-intensive sectors like roads and highways, railways, and housing and urban affairs, has longer-term implications for growth.
 - **PM Gati Shakti** has additionally assisted in accelerating infrastructure development.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows**
 - Due to India's rapid economic growth and enhanced business environment, FDI into the nation is anticipated to increase in the upcoming months.
 - According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), FDI equity inflows into India decreased by 14% to USD 26.9 billion over the period from April to September this fiscal.
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD)**
 - The need for careful monitoring of the current account deficit, which could continue to grow due to elevated global commodity prices, was emphasised.
 - The country's current account deficit increased to 4.4% of GDP in the quarter ending in September from 2.2% of GDP during the April-June period (RBI Data).
- **Rupee likely to remain under depreciation pressure**
 - The pressure on the Indian rupee's depreciation may continue as a result of the export market's slowing and the subsequent expansion of the current account deficit.

SECTORAL POINTERS

- **Regulating crypto ecosystem**
 - The recent collapse of the cryptocurrency exchange FTX and the ensuing sell-off in the crypto markets have placed a spotlight on the vulnerabilities in the crypto ecosystem.
 - Crypto assets are self-referential instruments and do not strictly pass the test of being a financial asset because it has no intrinsic cash flows attached to them.
- **EV Market may cross 1-crore sales**
 - India's Electric Vehicle (EV) market is expected to grow to 1-crore units annual sales by 2030 and create 5 crore direct and indirect jobs.
 - In December 2022, India became the third-largest automobile market, surpassing Japan and Germany in terms of sales.
- **5G can unleash new eco avenues**



- The rollout of 5G services can unleash new economic opportunities and help India leapfrog the traditional barriers to development, while boosting innovations by startups and business.

KEY SUGGESTIONS

- The Survey has called for:
 - entirely dismantling the **LIC** (licensing, inspection and compliance) regime to accelerate economic growth,
 - harnessing women power (nari shakti),
 - renewed focus on energy security and energy transition, education and skilling, administrative reforms.
- The survey sought determined efforts to make public sector asset monetisation scheme successful, besides addressing (by states) of the power sector issues.
- The Survey has also placed sufficient emphasis on fiscal consolidation, which it notes is critical for low interest rates in the long term.

4.4 ECONOMIC SURVEY: AGRICULTURE

The **Economic Survey 2022-23** said that the **agriculture sector needs re-orientation** given challenges like adverse impacts of climate change, fragmented landholdings and rising input costs. The Survey highlighted that Indian agriculture needs re-orientation in the backdrop of certain challenges like adverse impacts of **climate change, fragmented landholdings, sub-optimal farm mechanisation, low productivity, disguised unemployment, rising input costs**, etc.

The performance of the agriculture sector remains critical to growth and employment in the country.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Agriculture sector is growing at a robust annual growth rate**
 - The Survey noted that the Indian agriculture sector has been growing at an **average annual growth rate of 4.6 per cent during the last six years**.
 - It grew by **3.0 per cent in 2021-22** compared to 3.3 per cent in 2020-21.
- **India emerged as the net exporter of agricultural products**
 - In recent years, India has rapidly emerged as the net exporter of agricultural products.
 - In 2020-21, exports of agriculture and allied products from India grew by 18 per cent over the previous year.
 - During 2021-22, agricultural exports reached an all-time high of \$50.2 billion.
- **Strong agri growth led to a YoY dip in monthly demand for MGNREGS**
 - There has been an Year-on-Year (YoY) decline in monthly demand for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) work.
 - The number of persons demanding work under MGNREGS was seen to be trending around pre-pandemic levels from July to November 2022.
 - In FY23, as on 24 January 2023, 6.49 crore households demanded employment under MGNREGS, and 6.48 crore households were offered employment out of which **7 crore availed employment**.
 - This is resulting from normalisation of the rural economy due to strong agricultural growth and a swift bounce-back from Covid-19.



- The significant growth in rural India, led by agriculture sector, was the major shock absorber during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- When majority of the workforce reverse-migrated to rural areas, agriculture as well as MGNREGA supported the domestic economy.
- The survey also credited the MGNREGS with having a positive impact on income per household, agricultural productivity, and production-related expenditure.
- It added that this helped with income diversification and infusing resilience into rural livelihoods.

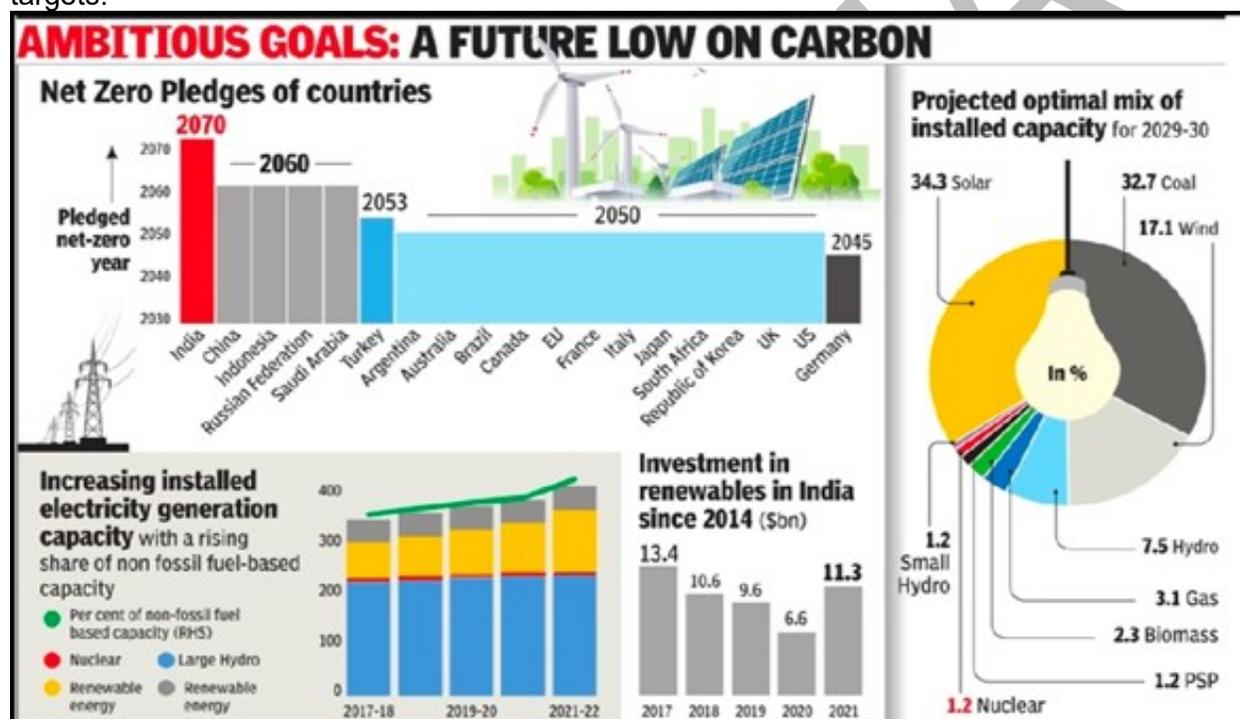
4.5 ECONOMIC SURVEY: INDIA'S GREEN GOALS

India's green goals- ambitious and needs money.

The Economic Survey **emphasised India's commitments** for climate actions.

However, it noted that **availability of adequate and affordable finance** remains a **constraint for the country**.

India's current priority is to grow economically and integrate development goals with climate action targets.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- India has so far largely met its requirements from domestic sources only.
- The survey said the **country ranks third globally** (after China and Australia) with respect to the net gain in average annual forest area between 2010 and 2020.
- It mentioned that the likely installed capacity by end of 2029-30 is expected to be more than 800 GW.
 - Of this, non-fossil fuel would contribute more than 500 GW, resulting in the decline of average emission rate of around 29% by 2029-30, compared to 2014-15.
- The survey highlighted that India is progressively becoming a favoured destination for investment in renewables.
 - During the period 2014-2021, total investment in renewables stood at \$78.1 billion in India.
 -



4.6 ECONOMIC SURVEY: DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- India's **digital public infrastructure (DPI)** can add around **60-100 basis points (bps)** to the country's potential GDP growth rate.
 - DPI includes platforms like **Aadhaar, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and the account aggregator network.**
- According to the Survey, **payments made through UPI** accounted for **over half of all digital transactions in India in FY22 (2021-22).**
 - In FY22, UPI accounted for 52 per cent of the total 8,840 crore financial digital transactions with a total value of Rs 126 lakh crore.
- The Survey said that the **country had a fintech adoption rate of 87 per cent among the public**, compared to the global average of 64 per cent, making **India the third biggest market** for such transactions after the US and China.

ECONOMIC SURVEY: INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

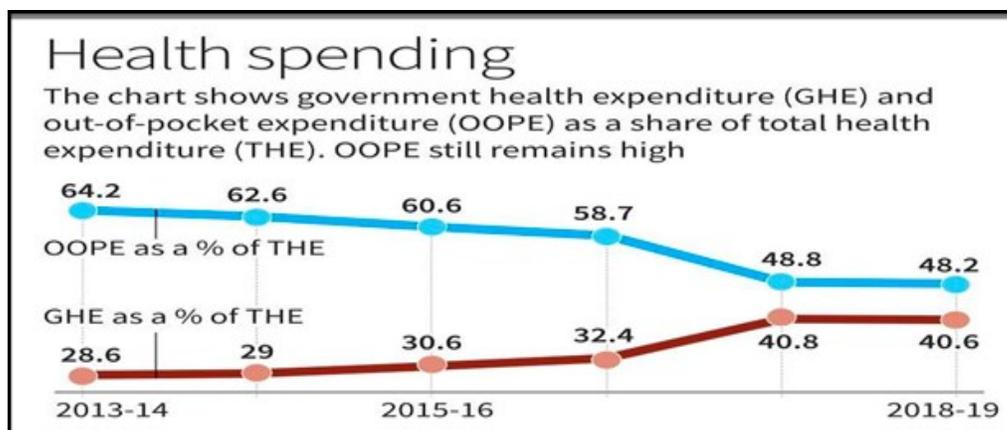
- **GDP Growth –**
 - India has already become the world's **5th largest economy** in the 75th year of Independence.
 - The Economic Survey estimates that **India's nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will reach \$3.5 Trillion by the end of March, 2023.**
 - In real terms, the economy is expected to grow at 7% for the year ending March 2023. This follows an 8.7% growth in the previous financial year.
 - It further said the fundamentals of the Indian economy are sound as it enters its "**Amrit Kaal**" – the 25-year journey towards its centenary as a modern, independent nation.
- **Impact of Goods and Services Tax –**
 - Goods and Services Tax collection is showing a higher buoyancy than the pre-GST system.
 - Giving a 5-year analysis of tax collection pre- and post-GST, the survey said the taxes which were subsumed in the Goods and Services Tax had a buoyancy of one.
 - However, the buoyancy improved to 1.1 after the GST implementation on July 1, 2017.
 - Tax buoyancy **highlights the relationship between the change in the government's tax revenue growth and the changes in GDP.** When a tax is buoyant, it shows an increase in its revenue rate without increasing the tax rate.
- **Startups in India –**
 - DPIIT-recognized **startups created 2.69 lakh jobs in 2022**, compared to 1.98 lakh in 2021.
 - About 48% of the startups are from Tier-II & III cities.
- **Credit flow to MSMEs –**
 - Credit flow to Micro, Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (MSMEs) has seen a significant increase, assisted in part by the introduction of the **Emergency Credit Linked Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).**
 - As of November 2022, 1.2 crore MSME units availed the ECLGS scheme and raised **collateral-free resources for Rs 3.6 lakh crore.**



- **Skill Upgradation –**
 - The Survey noted that formal vocational/technical training for the age group 15-29 years rose from 2.8% in 2018-19 to 4.1% in 2020-21.
 - Under the **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0**, between 2017 and 2023, **about 1.1 crore persons have been trained.**
- **Information Technology Industry –**
 - The Information Technology-Business Process Management (IT-BPM) industry showed resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - It registered **5% growth** during the financial year 2021-22.
- **Growth of FinTech & E-Commerce Sector –**
 - The e-commerce sector “witnessed a renewed push and a sharp increase in penetration in the aftermath of the pandemic,” the Economic Survey 2022-23 said.
 - The growth was also fueled by –
 - Growing internet penetration,
 - Rise in smartphone adoption,
 - Innovation in mobile technologies, and
 - Increased adoption of digital payments.
 - The sector is projected to **grow at 18% annually.**
- **Significance of Green Hydrogen –**
 - Green hydrogen is **hydrogen produced by splitting water by electrolysis**. This produces only hydrogen and oxygen.
 - According to the Economic Survey 2022-23, green hydrogen will be crucial for:
 - India’s economic development,
 - energy security and
 - achieving decarbonization of harder to abate sectors such as fertilizers, refining, methanol, maritime shipping, iron & steel, etc.
- **Shipbuilding Industry –**
 - The Survey identifies the shipbuilding industry as a **strategically important industry** due to its role in energy security, national defence, and the development of the heavy engineering industry.
 - The Survey noted that it has the potential to increase the contribution of the industry and the services sector to the national GDP.
 - The industry has the potential to strengthen the mission of an ‘**Aatmanirbhar Bharat**’, the survey said.

4.7 ECONOMIC SURVEY: HEALTH & EDUCATION

- According to the recently released Economic Survey 2022-23, almost half of all **health** spending in India is still paid by patients themselves, although this has dropped as the government’s share of spending on health went up significantly after 2013-14.
- While the expenditure on social services increased from ₹9,15,500 to ₹21,32,059 crore, the budgetary allocation for **education** as a percentage of total expenditure has dropped over the past seven years, from 10.4% to 9.5%.

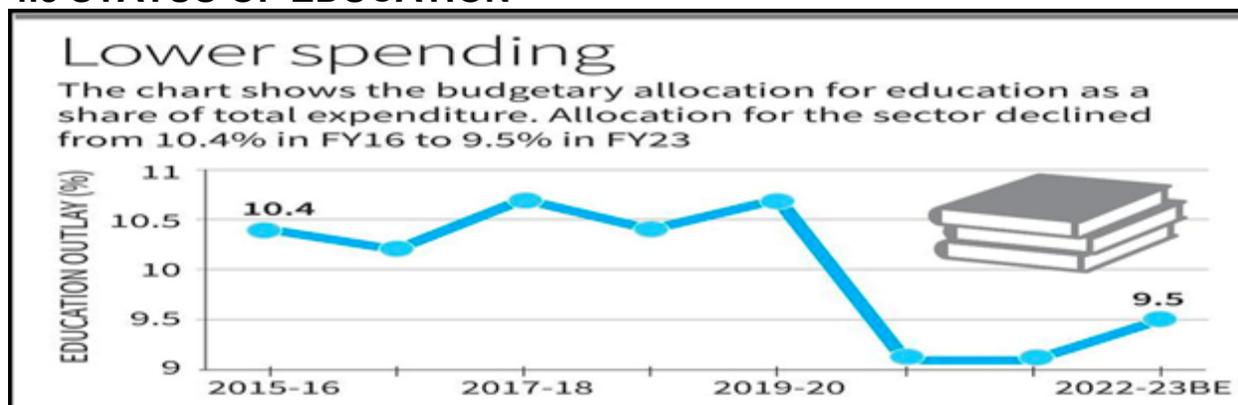


ABOUT THE FINDINGS

- **Increase in the share of government health expenditure:** It was just 28.6% (in comparison to the total health expenditure) in the financial year 2013-14, but rose to **40.6% by 2018-19**.
 - For 2018-19, India's total health expenditure was estimated to be ₹5,96,440 crore (current + capital expenditures by the govt, private sources including external funds), which is **2% of GDP and amounts to ₹4,470 per capita**.
 - **India's budgeted expenditure** on the health sector reached 2.1% of the GDP in financial year 2023 (Budget estimates) and 2.2% in FY 2022 (revised estimates).
 - This is closer to the recommendations (**2.5% by 2025**) made in the National Health Policy 2017 as well as the 15th Finance Commission.
- **Decline in out-of-pocket expenditure:** Consequently, it declined as a percentage of total health expenditure from 64.2% in 2013-14 to 48.2% in 2018-19.
 - Out-of-pocket expenditure is the money paid directly by households, at the point of receiving health care.
- **Increase in the share of health expenditure in total expenditure on social services:** It has increased from 21% in FY 2019 to 26% in FY 2023 (BE).
 - This underscores the rising importance of public healthcare and social security in ensuring **universal health coverage**.
 - One of the major factors for this increase is the **expenditure incurred in the national Covid-19 vaccination programme** (97% have received both the doses).
- **Ayushman Bharat Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-JAY) falling short of the target:**
 - Under the Union Health Ministry's largest cashless health insurance scheme, approximately 21.9 crore beneficiaries have been verified, including 3 crore beneficiaries verified using State IT systems.
 - This is **less than 50% of the originally targeted approximately 50 crore beneficiaries** under the scheme.
- **The rate of overweight children (under 5) and men-women has gone up:**
 - According to the National Family Health Survey, for children it has gone up from 2.1% in 2015-16 to 3.4% in 2019-21.
 - Similarly, the number of women who are overweight or obese has increased from 20.6% to 24%, while the number of men has gone up from 18.9% to 22.9%



4.8 STATUS OF EDUCATION



- **Decline in the govt share of expenditure:**
 - The share of education expenditure **within the social services umbrella category** shrank from 42.8% to 35.5% between 2015-2016 and 2022-2023, mainly due to the faster growth in spending on health and other measures.
 - As a share of total GDP, the budgetary allocation for education saw only a minimal gain of 0.1 percentage points, **from 2.8% to 2.9%** during the same seven-year period.
- **Decline in the govt share of expenditure:**
 - The share of education expenditure **within the social services umbrella category** shrank from 42.8% to 35.5% between 2015-2016 and 2022-2023, mainly due to the faster growth in spending on health and other measures.
 - As a share of total GDP, the budgetary allocation for education saw only a minimal gain of 0.1 percentage points, **from 2.8% to 2.9%** during the same seven-year period.
- **COVID worsens dropout rates:**
 - Though school dropout rates have improved since 2013-2014, **there has been some reversal of gains** since COVID-19.
 - The total dropout rate in **primary school** was 0.8% in 2020-2021 but **rose back to 1.5% in 2021-2022** (significantly better than the 4.7% dropout rate in 2013-14).
 - In **upper primary** classes, dropout rate was 2.3% in the year 2020-21, but rose to 3% in 2021-22, only marginally lower than the 3.1% level seen in 2013-2014.
 - In the **secondary classes**, however, the situation has steadily **improved**, with the dropout rate falling from 16.1% in 2019-2020 to 14% the following year and 12.6% last year.
- **Number of schools:**
 - **Between 2013-2014 and 2021-2022**, the total number of schools declined from 15.2 lakh to 14.9 lakh.
 - Though the number of secondary and senior secondary schools rose.
- **Higher education enrolment up:**
 - The total enrolment in higher education has increased to nearly 4.1 crore in financial year 2020-21 from 3.9 crore in 2019-20.
 - Since 2014-15, there has been an increase of around 72 lakh or 21% in enrolment, while distance education has also grown at a similar rate of 20%.



- **Number of higher education institutions:**
 - As far as higher education is concerned, the number of medical colleges in the country increased from 387 in 2014 to 648 in 2022.
 - The number of **Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** rose from 16 to 23 between 2014 and 2022 and **Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs)** increased from 13 to 20.
 - The strength of Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) was 25 in 2022 against 9 in 2014.
 - In 2014, there were 723 Universities in the country, which have increased to 1,113.

4.9 TAX BUOYANCY & TAX ELASTICITY

The **Economic Survey 2022-23** submitted recently in Parliament said that **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** collection is showing a **higher buoyancy than the pre-GST system**.

TAX BUOYANCY

- Tax buoyancy **explains the relationship between the changes in government's tax revenue growth and the changes in GDP.**
- It refers to the **responsiveness of tax revenue growth to changes in GDP.**
- When a **tax is buoyant, its revenue increases without increasing the tax rate.**
- **It depends upon:**
 - the size of the tax base;
 - the friendliness of the tax administration;
 - the rationality and simplicity of tax rates;

WHAT IS TAX ELASTICITY?

- It refers to **changes in tax revenue in response to changes in tax rate.**
- For example, how tax revenue changes if the government reduces corporate income tax from 30 per cent to 25 per cent indicate tax elasticity.

WHAT IS LAFFER CURVE?

It is an economic theory pioneered by economist **Arthur Laffer** suggesting that **tax rates above a certain threshold reduce tax revenue since they incentivize people not to work.**

As such, it suggests that lowering tax rates motivates people to earn more money, resulting in greater tax revenue.

4.10 INDUS WATER TREATY

The World Bank has appointed a **Neutral Expert (NE)** and a Chairman of the Court of Arbitration (CoA) regarding the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants.

- The appointments were made under the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) to resolve the disputes between India and Pakistan over India's **run-of-the-river** hydroelectric projects.
- **Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project (KHEP)** located on Kishanganga or Neelum, a tributary of Jhelum, was inaugurated in 2018.
- **Ratle Hydroelectric Plant (RHEP)** is being constructed on the **Chenab Rivers**.
- The World Bank is not financing either project.
- Earlier, Pakistan had asked the World Bank to facilitate the establishment of a Court of Arbitration to consider its concerns about the designs of the two HEPs.



- While India had asked for the appointment of an NE to consider similar concerns over the two projects.

ABOUT INDUS WATER TREATY

The treaty was signed between both countries in presence of World Bank. Overall, **80% water is to be allotted to Pakistan, and 20% to India**. The entire river system is **divided into two parts**.

THE ISSUE

- **In order to change** the more than 60-year-old IWT that controls how the two nations share the waters of six rivers in the Indus system, **India has sent Pakistan a notice** via the Indus Commissioners.
 - Article XII (3) of the IWT states that it may occasionally be altered by a treaty that has been properly approved.
- The notice comes as a result of Pakistan's continuous inaction in enforcing the IWT by repeatedly **objecting to the development of hydroelectric projects** on the Indian side.
- Two hydroelectric power projects, one on the **Kishanganga** river (a tributary of the Jhelum), and the other on the **Chenab** (Ratle), have been the subject of a prolonged controversy.
- **In 2013**, the Court of Arbitration gave a partial award on the **Kishanganga Hydel Power Project (KHEP)**, upholding India's right to divert water for the project.
- Pakistan has also contested the **Ratle project on grounds of design and violations of the IWT**. The project was delayed but work resumed in 2019.
 - Meanwhile, Pakistan asked the WB to establish a Court of Arbitration to look into the project.
- The WB in 2022 started a **parallel process** of simultaneously appointing a Neutral Expert and a Chair of the Court of Arbitration to resolve the dispute, which India claims presents both logistical and legal difficulties.
 - India wanted a Neutral Expert to settle the conflict, whereas Pakistan wanted a Court of Arbitration.
 - As per India, Pakistan's unilateral decision to approach the Permanent Court of Arbitration, bypassed the graded pathway.



4.11 FINANCE COMMISSION OF INDIA

- **Is it a constitutional body?** It is constitutional body for giving recommendations on **distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States** and amongst the States themselves.
- **Who constitutes?** The Finance Commission is **constituted by the President under article 280** of the Constitution.
- **When is it constituted?** It is constituted at the **end of every fifth year or earlier**, as the deemed necessary by the President.



- **Parliament may by law determine** the requisite qualifications for appointment as members of the Commission and the procedure of their selection. On account of this, The **Finance Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1951** was passed.

MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION

It is the duty of the Commission to **make recommendations** to the President as to:

- the **distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes** which are to be, or may be, divided between them **and the allocation between the States** of the respective shares of such proceeds;
- the **principles which should govern the grants-in-aid** of the revenues of the States **out of the Consolidated Fund of India**;
- the **measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State** to supplement the resources of the **Panchayats and Municipalities** in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State;
- any other matter referred to the Commission by the President in the interests of sound finance.

COMPOSITION, QUALIFICATION & TENURE OF MEMBERS

- **Composition:** It consists of a **Chairman and four other members** appointed by the President.
- **Qualifications of members:** The **Chairman of the Commission** is selected from among **persons who have had experience in public affairs** and the **four other members** are selected from among persons who
 - are, or have been, or are **qualified to be appointed as Judges of a High Court**; or
 - **have special knowledge of the finances** and accounts of Government; or
 - have had **wide experience in financial matters** and in administration; or
 - have **special knowledge of economics**
- **Tenure of members:** Every member will be in office **for the time period as specified in the order** of the President and is **eligible for reappointment**.
- **Recommendations** of the Finance Commission **are not binding on the government**.

JUSTICE ROHINI COMMISSION

- The commission was **set up by the President under Article 340** of the Indian Constitution on October 2, **2017**.
- It is **headed by** former Delhi High Court judge, **Justice G. Rohini (retd)**.
- **Mandate:** To **examine the issues** related to the **sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes**.

OBJECTIVES

- to **examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation** among the castes or communities included in the broad category of Other Backward Classes, with reference to such classes included in the Central List;
- to **work out the mechanism, criteria, norms** and parameters in a scientific approach **for sub-categorisation within such Other Backward Classes**;



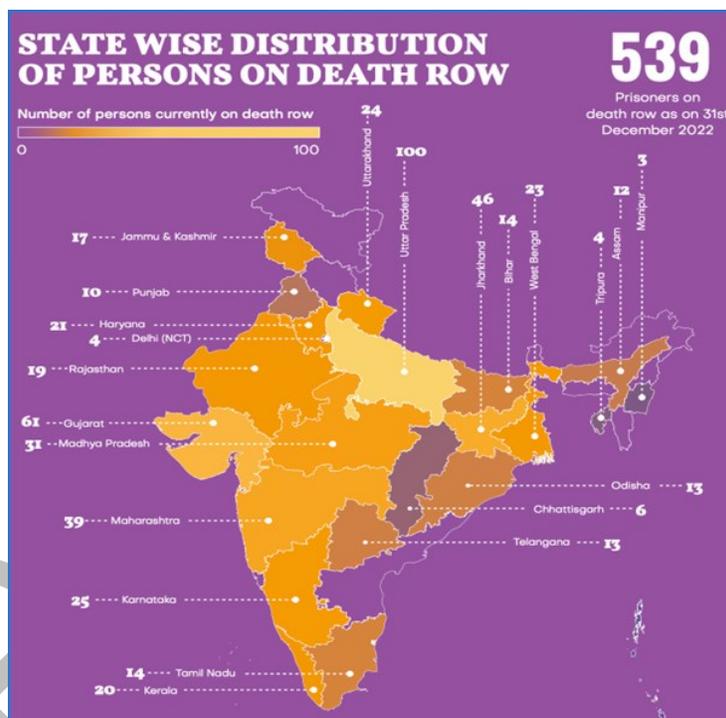
- to take up the exercise of **identifying the respective castes or communities** or sub-castes or synonyms in the **Central List** of Other Backward Classes and **classifying them into their respective sub-categories**.

4.12 DEATH PENALTY IN INDIA REPORT

According to the ‘**Death Penalty in India: Annual Statistics**’ Report for the year 2022, the Trial Courts sentenced **165 people to death in 2022**.

ABOUT THE REPORT:

- Death Penalty in India Report is published by **Project 39A**.
 - Project 39A is a criminal law reforms advocacy group at the National Law University, Delhi.
- It is inspired by **Article 39A** of the Constitution of India.
 - Article 39A of the Constitution of India provides for **free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society** and ensures justice for all.
 - The article was inserted by the **42nd Amendment Act of 1976**



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- The trial courts across the country imposed 165 death sentences in 2022, which is the highest in a single year in the last two decades.
- Also, **539 prisoners were on death row by the end of 2022**, which was the highest since 2016.
- The large death row population signals the continued imposition of a high number of death sentences by trial courts with a low rate of disposal by appellate courts.
- The highest number of people on death row were in the states of **Uttar Pradesh (100)**, **Gujarat (61)**, **Jharkhand (46)**, **Maharashtra (39)** and **Madhya Pradesh (31)**, the report said.

LEGAL REMEDIES AVAILABLE

- The award of the death sentence by a trial court **must be reaffirmed by a High Court** to make it final.
- **Article 137** of the Indian Constitution provides the power to the Supreme Court to review the orders and judgments passed by it.
 - The **Review Petition** can be filed under Section 114 and Order 47 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).
- **Article 72 and Article 161** of the **Constitution** provides the power to pardon the petitioner to the **President and the Governor**, respectively.

ARGUMENTS (FOR & AGAINST)



- **On Moral Grounds:**
 - **Supporters** of the death penalty believe that those who commit murder, because they have taken the life of another, have **forfeited their own right to life**.
 - Furthermore, they believe, **capital punishment is a just form of retribution**, expressing and reinforcing the moral indignation not only of the victim's relatives but of law-abiding citizens in general.
 - **Counter argument:** Opponents of death penalty argue that, by legitimizing the very behaviour that the law seeks to repress—killing—capital punishment is counterproductive in the moral message it conveys.
- **Utilitarian arguments:**
 - Supporters of capital punishment also claim that it has a uniquely potent **deterrent effect** on potentially violent offenders for whom the threat of imprisonment is not a sufficient restraint.
 - **Counter argument:** Opponents, however, point to research that generally has demonstrated that the death penalty is not a more effective deterrent than the alternative sanction of life or long-term imprisonment.

IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS

- **Ediga Anamma v/s State of Andhra Pradesh (1974):**
 - The Supreme Court laid down the principle that life imprisonment for the offence of murder is the rule and capital sentence is the exception in certain cases.
 - The Court also stated that a special reason should be given if the court decides to impose a death sentence.
- **Bachan Singh v/s State of Punjab (1980):**
 - The Supreme Court held that only in **rarest of rare cases** that are brutal, the death penalty should be imposed.

RECENT LAWS

- In 2021, **Punjab and Madhya Pradesh** introduced the death penalty for causing **deaths by spurious liquor.**
- Maharashtra introduced death penalty for **'heinous'** offences of rape and gangrape.
- The **Union Ministry of Women & Child Development** also introduced a Bill proposing the capital punishment for repeat aggravated trafficking offences involving children and women.

4.13 UPI CAN BE USED BY NRIs FROM 10 COUNTRIES

According to a notice by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**, non-resident account types that have **international mobile numbers** will now be allowed to transact with Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

Consequently, the Union Cabinet approved an incentive scheme (with an outlay of ₹ 2,600 crore) for the promotion of RuPay debit Cards and low value BHIM UPI transactions (person to merchant) in FY 2022-23.

BENEFITS & SIGNIFICANCE

- **Non-resident accounts** such as non-resident external accounts (NRE) and non-resident ordinary accounts (NRO), having international numbers, will now be allowed into the UPI payment system.



- **NRE accounts** are those used by non-residents Indians (NRIs) to transfer earnings from foreign soil to India while **NRO accounts** are used to manage income earned in India (rent, interest, pension, etc) by NRIs.
- The NPCI had allowed UPI transactions **to and from NRO/NRE accounts** linked to Indian numbers back in October 2018.
- At present, **users from 10 countries** will be able to avail the facility - Singapore, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Oman, Qatar, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the U.K.
- The development would **allow NRIs to -**
 - **Use the payment method for making utility bill payments** for their families (or themselves) in India,
 - Make purchases from e-commerce or online platforms and
 - Make payments to physical merchants who accept UPI QR based payments when they travel to India.
- **Currently**, all the internal systems as well as ecosystem players such as banks, NPCI, etc., only understand India-based mobile numbers for UPI transactions.
- With this enablement, **a significant number of systems** will need **infrastructural and technological changes** required to support such payments.

WHAT IS MERCHANT DISCOUNT RATE?

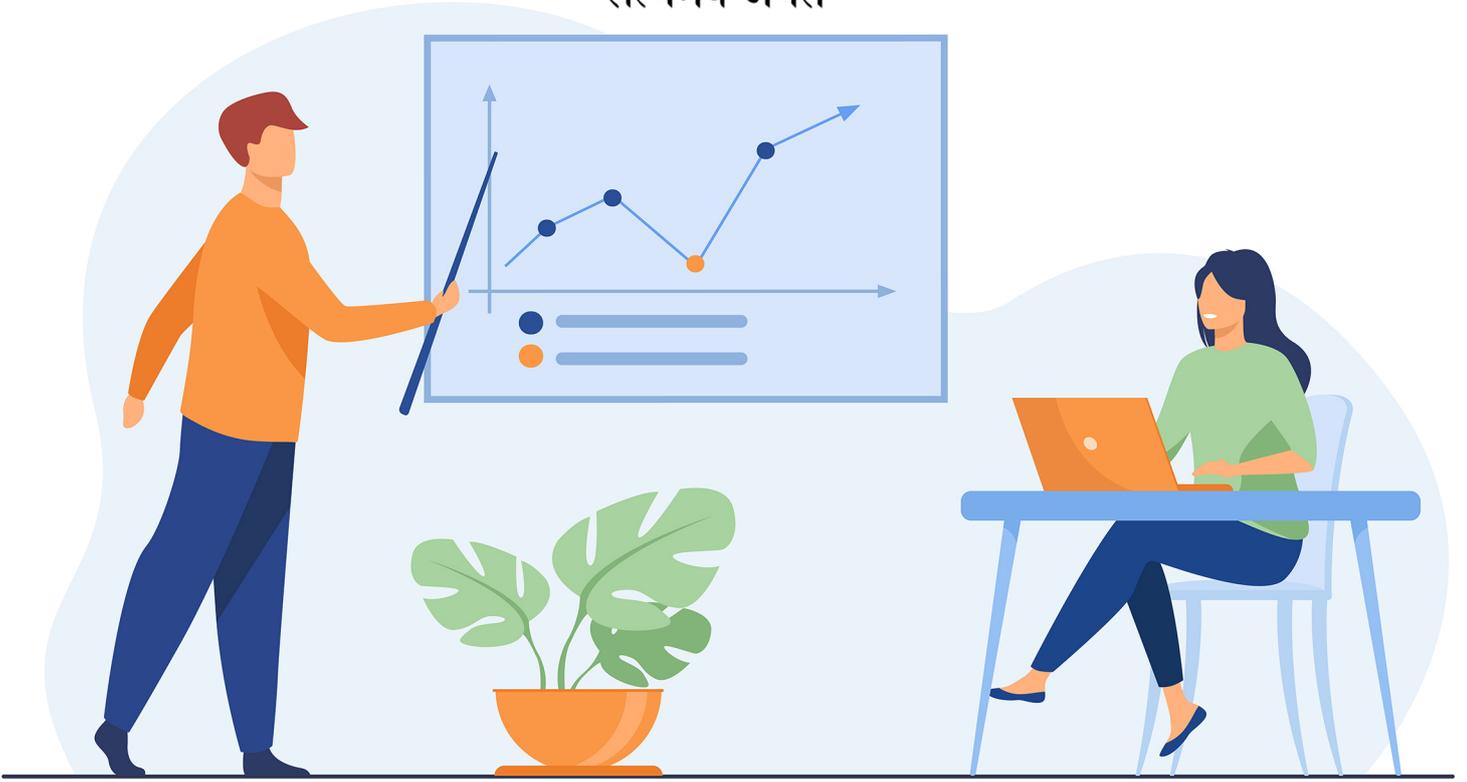
- MDR (alternatively referred to as the Transaction Discount Rate (TDR)) **is the sum total of all the charges and taxes** that a digital payment entails.
- For instance, the MDR **includes bank charges**, which a bank charges customers and merchants for allowing payments to be made digitally.
- Similarly, **MDR also includes the processing charges** that a payments aggregator has to pay to online or mobile wallets or indeed to banks for their service.
- Presently, **there is no MDR charge levied for RuPay** based debit card and UPI transactions.
- In 2022, the Finance Ministry stated that **it was not planning to levy any charges for UPI services** and the concerns of the service providers for cost recovery have to be met through other means.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and various stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential adverse **impact of the zero MDR regime on the growth of the digital payments' ecosystem.**
- **The NPCI requested the incentivisation** of BHIM UPI and RuPay debit card transactions to -
 - Create a cost effective value proposition for ecosystem stakeholders,
 - Increase merchant acceptance footprints and
 - Faster migration from cash payments to digital payments.



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