CURRENT AFFAIRS COMPENDIUM – MAY 2024

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National Current Affairs

Collapse of the Virupaksha Temple

Recently: A small portion of the **'Salu Mantapa'** at the **'Ratha Beedi'** of the renowned **Virupaksha Temple** in **Hampi** has collapsed following heavy rainfall.

- This led some conservationists to blame **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** officials for allegedly neglecting its protection and conservation.
- However, ASI officials argued that the restoration work of the temple, including the pavilion, was already underway and the rains led to its pre-emptive collapse.
- The **UNESCO website** also noted broader concerns about the heritage site's preservation.

About Virupaksha Temple:

- The Virupaksha Temple is located in Hampi in the **Vijayanagara** district of **Karnataka, India.**
- The temple is dedicated to **Lord Shiva** and it is the **oldest temple** in Hampi and is flocked by pilgrims and tourists.
- It is also otherwise known as the **Pampapathi temple** and is a surviving structure amidst the ruins of Hampi.
- A nationally protected monument, the temple is believed to have its origins in the **7th century.**
- **Inscriptions** associated with Lord Shiva date back to the **9th and 10th** centuries.
- The **paintings on the ceilings** of the temple date back to the **fourteenth and sixteenth century.**
- It was built by **Lakkan Dandesha**, a nayaka (chieftain) of the ruler, **Paruda Deva Raya** during the Vijayanagara rule.
- Virupaksha temple gained prominence and underwent extensive expansion in the **14th century** during the **Vijayanagara Empire (1336 to 1646).**
- The **Chalukyan** and **Hoysala** emperors also have a hand in contributing to the temple.
- The temple was declared as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in **1986** due to its rich architectural heritage and historical significance.
- Major renovation and restoration work, including the broken towers of the **north and east gopura** were undertaken at the break of the **19th century.**
- The Virupaksha temple, Hampi is the only one, which remains intact amidst the others ruined by the **Bahmani sultanates** and is still in worship.
  - ➢ Even the destruction of the Hampi in **1565,** during the battle of Talikota, did not deter the religious sect of **Virupaksha-Pampa** in their worship.

The Architecture:

- Virupaksha temple, Hampi, apart from the sanctum, boasts of **three ante chambers, a pillared hall and an open pillared hall.**
  - ➢ The **sanctum sanctorum** houses the **Shiva lingam**, the main object of worship.
- A pillared cloister, entrance gateways, courtyards, smaller shrines and other numerous structures encompass the temple complex.
- The **nine-tiered eastern gateway**, which accommodates some earlier structures, is **50 meters** and is proportionately constructed.

- It has **a stone base** with a brick structure.
- The **Kanakagiri gopuram** towards the north paves the way to a small enclosure with smaller shrines and leads one forward to the **Tungabhadra River.**
- One of the most interesting features in the Virupaksha temple, Hampi, is the usage of **mathematical concepts** in its construction and decoration.
- The repeated patterns in the construction depict the concept of fractals. The temple is **triangular** in shape.

The collapse and the renovation:

- According to ASI officials, the condition of the stone pillars of the temple, has deteriorated because of natural phenomena such as **rain** over a long period.
- It has been found that only **three metres** of the **19-metre-long pavilion**, consisting of **four pillars**, are damaged due to heavy rain.
- The ASI is responsible for **57 out of the 95** monuments in Hampi that are nationally protected
  - ➤ The rest are under the state government's control.
- Before beginning the restoration work, ASI digitally documented all the monuments under its control.
- The restoration work began in **2019**, with the **first phase** completed between **2019-20** and the **second phase** completed between **2021-22.**
- The pavilion was also supposed to be restored later on.
- Now that a portion is damaged, the ASI is dismantling the entire pavilion and will undertake restoration work on a priority basis.
- **Rs 8 crore** was granted in the last financial year by the Central government for the restoration of monuments in the **Kalyan Karnataka region.**
- According to the ASI, restoring the dismantled pavilion will cost roughly **Rs 50 lakhs a**nd is expected to be completed in **three to four months.**

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI):

- Archaeological Survey of India is the premier organization for archaeological researches and protection of cultural heritage in India.
- It was founded in **1861** by **Alexander Cunningham** who also became its first Director-General.
  - ➢ Alexander Cunnigham is also known as the **'Father of Indian Archaeology'.**
- Archaeological pursuits started much earlier, in the 18th century, when **Sir William Jones** formed the **Asiatic Society** in **1784** together with a group of antiquarians.
- ASI regulates all archaeological activities conducted in the country through the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act), 1958.**
  - ➢ It also regulates the **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.**
- It is a **statutory body** after independence, under the AMASR Act, 1958.
- ASI has more than **3500 protected monuments** and archaeological sites of National Importance that it protects and preserves.
- It is headquartered in **New Delhi** and **Yadubir Singh Rawat** is the current Director General.

Sahitya Akademi Fellowship to Ruskin Bond

Recently: Eminent English author **Ruskin Bond** was awarded the prestigious **Sahitya Akademi Fellowship** at his **Mussoorie** home.

- Bond was named a recipient of Akademi's highest honour in **September 2021.** However, due to his ill health, he could not be given the honour in person.
- The award was presented at his residence in Mussoorie by **Sahitya Akademi President Madhav Kaushik** and **Secretary K Sreenivasarao.**
- Sahitya Akademi Fellowship forms the **highest honor** which the Akademi confers through a system of **electing Fellows and Honorary Fellows.**

Who is Ruskin Bond?

- Ruskin Bond is an **Indian Author** who was born in **Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh**, on **19th May, 1934.**
- Bond has been actively writing for more than **50 years** and has written in various genres of literature, including short stories, children's books, novels, autobiographical works and non-fiction.

- Bond has written over **300 short stories**, essays and novels and more than **30 books for children** besides several other works.
- His notable works include "*Vagrants in the Valley*", "*Once Upon a Monsoon Time*", "*Angry River*", "*Strangers in the Night*", "*All Roads Lead to Ganga*", "*Tales of Fosterganj*", "*Leopard on the Mountain*" and "*Too Much Trouble*".
- The **1978** Hindi film **"Junoon"** is based on Bond's historical novel **"A Flight of Pigeons"** (Indian Rebellion of 1857).
- Adaptations of his stories were aired on **Doordarshan** as the TV serial **'Ek Tha Rusty'.**
- Several of his stories – "*The Night Train at Deoli*", "*Time Stops at Shamli*" and "*Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*" – were included in the school curriculum in India.
- In **2005,** his children's book **"The Blue Umbrell"** was adopted into a film.
- Bond also appeared in **2007** film **'Saat Khoon Maaf'**, directed by **Vishal Bharadwaj,** based on his story, **'Susanna' s Seven Husbands'.**
- He is the recipient of several prestigious awards including:
  - The **Sahitya Akademi Award** in **1992**
  - **Sahitya Akademi's Bal Sahitya Puraskar** in **2012**
  - **Padma Shri** in **1999**
  - **Padma Bhushan** in **2019**

Sahitya Akademi:

- The Sahitya Akademi, India's **National Academy of Letters**, is an organisation dedicated to the promotion of literature in the languages of India.
- It was constituted by the Government of India by a resolution passed on **15 December 1952** and was formally inaugurated in **1954.**
- It initially functioned under executive order, but was subsequently registered as a society under the **Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860.**
- The constitution of the Sahitya Akademi provides that it shall be run by three authorities — a **General Council, an Executive Board, and a Finance Committee.**
- Its office is located in **Rabindra Bhavan** in **Delhi.**

- It publishes two **bimonthly** literary journals: **Indian Literature** in **English** and **Samkaleen Bharatiya Sahitya** in **Hindi.**

Awards conferred by the Sahitya Akademi:

Sahitya Akademi Award:

- The Sahitya Akademi Award is a literary honour in India, which the **Sahitya Akademi** annually confers on writers of the most outstanding books of literary merit.
- These books are published in any of the **22 languages of the 8th Schedule** to the Indian constitution as well as in **English and Rajasthani** language.
- The literary work or book should be first published during the **five years immediately preceding the year of the award**, in any of the languages recognised by the Sahitya Akademi, for being eligible for the award.
- The award was established in **1954** and consists of a casket containing an engraved **copper-plaque, a shawl and an amount of Rs. 1,00,000/-.**
  - ➢ The plaque was designed by the Indian film-maker **Satyajit Ray.**
- The award was first conferred in **1955.**
- The annual process of selecting awardees runs for the **preceding twelve months.**

Sahitya Akademi Fellowships:

- They form the **highest honor** which the Akademi confers through a system of electing Fellows and Honorary Fellows.
- **Sahitya Akademi Award** is the **second-highest literary honor** next to a Sahitya Akademi Fellowship.
- Only **21 Fellows** can be elected at any given time.
- **Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan** was the first writer elected to the Fellowship in **1968.**
- **Mulk Raj Anand** was the **first Indian English writer** to be inducted in **1989.**

- The **first woman** to be elected Fellow was **Mahadevi Varma, in 1979.**
- The **executive board** of the Akademi **recommends** the names of literary persons to be elected as Fellows and Honorary Fellows to the General Council.
- The **General Council**, who operates for the period of **five years**, holds an **authority to elect** a fellow based on the recommendation made by the executive board.
- In **1994**, the Akademi began the practice of holding an event called **'Samvad'** in which Fellows read from their work.
  - The participants in the first series included **Vishnu Bhikaji Kolte, Harbhajan Singh and Nagarjun.**
- Other Sahitya Akademi Fellowships include:
  - Sahitya Akademi Honorary Fellowship: For **non-Indian scholars** who have significantly contributed to Indian literature. It is limited to **10 fellowships** at a time.
  - Premchand Fellowship: For creative writers from **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** countries other than India researching Indian literature and culture.
    - It was established in **2005** during **Munshi Premchand's 125th birth anniversary.**
  - Ananda Coomaraswamy Fellowship: For Asian scholars (excluding Indians) pursuing literary projects. It was instituted in **1996.**

Sahitya Akademi Bal Sahitya Puraskar:

- Conferred for contribution to **children's literature** first published during the **five years** immediately preceding the year of Award.

Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar:

- Conferred for books published by an author of the **age of 35 and below.**

Bhasha Samman:

- Conferred for significant contribution to **Indian languages other than the above 24 major ones** recognized by the academy and also for contributions to classical and medieval literature.
- It was established in **1996** and is given to **3-4 persons every year** in different languages.

Sahitya Akademi Prize for Translation:

- Conferred for **outstanding translations** of major works in other languages into one of the **24 major Indian languages.**
- It is instituted in **1989** at the insistence of then-Prime Minister of India, **P. V. Narasimha Rao.**

Deferral of NHRC's accreditation by UNHRC

Recently: In a setback for India's human rights record, the **Geneva**-based, **United Nations-linked Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)** deferred the accreditation of the **National Human Rights Commission-India (NHRC)** for the **second year** in a row.

- The decision was taken during the meeting of the **Sub Committee on Accreditation (SCA)** on May 1, that included representatives from **New Zealand, South Africa, Honduras and Greece** (the current members of SCA).
- The decision could now affect India's ability to vote at the **Human Rights Council** and some UNGA bodies
- The human rights body stated that the deferral means that the **no final decision** on the accreditation has been taken yet.

How are the NHRIs accredited?

- The United Nations' **Paris Principles**, adopted in **1993** by the **U.N. General Assembl**y, provide the international benchmarks against which National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) can be accredited.
- The Paris Principles set out **six main criteria** that NHRIs are required to meet:
    - Mandate and Competence
    - Autonomy from Government
    - Independence guaranteed by a statute or Constitution
    - Pluralism
    - Adequate Resources
    - Adequate powers of investigation
- '**A' status accreditation** also grants participation in the work and decision-making of the GANHRI, as well as the work of the Human Rights Council and other U.N. mechanisms.
    - The NHRC got the 'A' status of accreditation for the **first time** in **1999**, which it retained in **2006, 2011, and in 2017**.
- **"B" status** institutions may participate as **observers** in the international and regional meetings of the national human rights institutions.
    - They **cannot vote** or hold office with the Bureau or its sub-committees.
    - They are not given NHRIs badges, nor may they take the floor under agenda items and submit documentation to the Human Rights Council.
- Out of the **120 members** of GANHARI, **88 countries** have **"A" status** accreditation, while **32** have **"B" status".**

<u>**Reasons for Deferral?**</u>

- While the committee's latest report is still awaited, its previous report had cited a number of reasons for recommending the deferral.
- These include:
  - The **lack of transparency** in appointing members to the NHRC.
  - The **appointment of police officers** to oversee human rights investigations.
  - The **lack of gender and minority representation** on the member panel - NHRC has just one woman in its top body right now. The representation of the minorities is also not adequate.
- The NHRC's **"A-status"** has only been **deferred** once before, in **2016,** but it was **restored in 2017.**
  - This is the first time India's status has been suspended for **two years in a row,** in **2023** and in **2024.**
- On March 26**, nine human rights organisations**, including **Amnesty International** and **Human Rights Watch**, jointly wrote to GANHRI expressing concern about India's human rights institutions.

<u>**What is Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)?**</u>

- It was established in **1993** as the global network of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) – administrative bodies set up to promote, protect and monitor human rights in a given country.
- It coordinates the relationship between NHRIs and the United Nations human rights system, and is unique as the only non-UN body whose internal accreditation system, based on compliance with the **1993 Paris Principles**, grants access to UN committees.
- It was known as the **'International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions'** prior to **2016**.
- It is composed of **120 members** including India.
- Its secretariat is situated in **Geneva, Switzerland.**

Sub- Committee on Accreditation (SCA):

- The GANHRI, through the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) is responsible for reviewing and accrediting NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles every **five years.**
- The SCA meets in Geneva **twice a year** to consider accreditation applications.
- Once the SCA has considered an application, it presents a report and recommendations to the **GANHRI Bureau**, which has responsibility for making the final decision on the accreditation of NHRIs.
- The members of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) include one NHRI representative from each of the **four regional groupings.**
- Current members-
  - Human Rights Commission of **New Zealand** (Asia Pacific) – Chairperson
  - Human Rights Commission of **South Africa** (Africa)
  - Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de **Honduras** (America)
  - **Greek** National Commission of Human Rights (alternate) / Ombudswoman of **Croatia** from October 2024 (Europe)
- SCA members are **voted** to the position by their respective **regional network**.
- They serve a term of **three years**, which can be renewed.
- The **United Nations Human Rights Office** – through the National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section – is a **permanent observer** and serves as **Secretariat** to the SCA.

National Human Rights Commission:

- It been set up under the Protection of Human Rights Act passed by Parliament in **1993.** The act was later amended in **2006.**
- It was established in order to ratify the **Paris Principle** that India is a signatory to.
- The Protection of Human Rights Act also allowed state governments to establish the **State Human Rights Commission**.
- The NHRC is responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, defined by the act as "Rights Relating to Life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the constitution under **Article 21.**
- The NHRC consists of: The **chairperson and five members** (excluding the ex-officio members).

- A Chairperson, can be someone who has been a **Chief Justice of India** or a **Judge of the Supreme Court**.
- Composition of Members-
  - ➢ **One** member is, or has been, a **Judge of the Supreme Court of India**.
  - ➢ **One** member is, or has been, the **Chief Justice of a High Court**.
  - ➢ **Three** Members, out of which at least one shall be a **woman**, to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights.
- **Arun Kumar Mishra**, a former judge of Supreme Court, is the current chairperson of the commission. His tenure is ending in the next month, i.e. June 2024.
- **Justice Ranganath Mishra** was the first chairperson of the NHRC in **1993.**

United Nations Human Rights Council:

- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.
- It was established in **2006** and is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland.**
- Members of the Council serve for a period of **three years** and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.
- It is made up of **47** United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly (UNGA).
- **Omar Zniber** is the current President of UNHRC.

Eucalyptus Planting Controversy in Kerala

Recently: Forest department cancelled the permission given to **Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC)** to cultivate eucalyptus on its land.

- The **Kerala government** issued an order allowing the **Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC)** to plant eucalyptus trees for its financial sustenance in **2024-2025**.
- Environmentalists soon protested the decision saying the move would adversely affect forests and heightens human-animal conflicts in future.
- Subsequently, the **head of the Forest Force** submitted a report to the **State Forest Minister** saying it hadn't permitted the planting of eucalyptus trees inside forests.
- On May 20, the government amended its order to limit permission to only **cut exotic tree species** from lands in the KFDC's control.

What is Eucalyptus?

- **Eucalyptus, (genus Eucalyptus)** is large genus of more **than 660 species** of shrubs and tall trees of the **myrtle family (Myrtaceae),** native to **Australia, Tasmania**, and nearby islands.
- Other names of these are **Tailapatra, Sugandhapatra, Tailaprana, and Nilgiri Taila**.
- It is the most important genus of trees found in the Australian forests comprising approximately **77%** of all of the trees.
- Today, most commercially grown trees grow in the **Mediterranean** and subtropical regions, including **Spain and Morocco.**
- It attains the height of more than **300 feet**.
- In **India**, It is widely grown in **Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujrat, Haryana, Mysore, Kerala** and in the **Nilgiri Hill.**
- It grows well in **deep, fertile**, well drained **loamy soil** with adequate moisture.
- It is also found in **Nagarhole National Park** and **Bandipur National Park in India.**
- Eucalyptus is used as the **pulpwood** in the manufacture of the **paper** as well as raw material.
- It is used as the poles for the construction of huts and houses. It is used in making plywood, doors and windows.

KDFC and its plantations:

- The **Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC)** was established on **January 24, 1975**, as part of a dynamic **production forestry enterprise.**
- According to the KFDC website, the corporation has around **7,000 hectares (ha)** of plantations.
- The plantation working circle includes the following **(8) species**: Eucalyptus grandis, Acacia auriculiformis, Acacia mangium, Acacia crassicarpa, Acacia pycnantha (also known as wattle), Alnus nepalensis, Casuarina equisetifolia, and Pinus patula.
- Eucalyptus plantations have a rotation age of **nine years**; Acacia auriculiformis trees, **18 years**; and Acacia mangium, **seven years**.
- At the end of each cycle, plantations approved by the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change** are felled.
- Clear-felled plantations are planted with species listed in a management plan.
- Before planting, experts check for soil quality and consult with the **Kerala Forest Research Institute.**
- As of this month, the KFDC website also said plantations of **exotic species**, including **eucalyptus**, would be converted to those of indigenous species **once exotic flora** has been felled "so as to be more ecologically and environmentally friendly".

- This policy aimed at reducing invasive species and enhancing natural habitats to decrease the prevalence of human-wildlife conflicts.

What is the issue with the plantation of Eucalyptus?

- In **2021**, the State government had published an **eco-restoration policy.**
  - ➢ The Eucalyptus plantations were banned under the same policy.
- Among other things, it sought to address what it called the **"proliferation of invasive species that are not suitable for our environment"** and the resulting "depletion of natural forests".
- Such depletion, according to the policy, was in turn forcing wild animals to move to human-occupied land in search of food and thus increasing the prevalence of human-wildlife conflict.
- For example, a recent study by **the Kerala State Forest Protective Staff Organisation** — an association of frontline forest officers — found replacing exotic plants in forested areas with the corresponding natural species could help ensure food for **wild elephants at Chinnakanal in Munnar.**
- The Chinnakkanal landscape is **prime elephant habitat** in the Munnar forest division, and is filled with **eucalyptus trees.**
- Environmental activists alleged following the State's order of permitting the KDFC to plant eucalyptus trees, contravened the policy's aspirations and undermined efforts to beat back invasive species and mitigate human-animal conflicts.

Eco-restoration:

- Kerala has around **27,000 ha** under industrial plantations.
- Given climate change concerns and researchers' claims about trees' potential to mitigate it, Kerala plans to replace **eucalyptus, acacia, wattle, and pine** plantations with natural forests by **2024.**
- This process is called **eco-restoration**.

Liability of Lawyers under Consumer Protection Act

Recently: In a crucial development, the **Supreme Court** held that **advocates** cannot be held liable under the **Consumer Protection Act 1986 (as re-enacted in 2019)** for **deficiency of services**.

- The Court held that professionals have to be treated differently from persons carrying out business and trade.
- As a corollary, the Court held that complaints against advocates alleging deficiency of services are not maintainable before the **Consumer Forum.**

Consumer Protection Act:

- To further strengthen the provisions for consumer protection especially in the new era of globalization the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** was enacted to replace the **Consumer Protection Act 1986.**
- The Consumer Protection Act 2019 has widened the scope of the definition of "**consumer**" to include persons who buy or avail of **goods or services online or through electronic means**.
- The Consumer Protection Act 2019 has also included definition of advertisement as any audio or visual publicity, representation, endorsement or pronouncement made by means of, inter-alia, electronic media, internet or website.
- The protection provided by the Act is for the **goods bought or service utilized.**

- **Section 2(o)** of the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986** defines services, while **Section 2(42) of the current Act** defines the same.
- Service means any kind of service which is made available to the consumers for their use for payment of consideration.
- ➢ **Contract of Service** – It implies a relationship of a master and servant and involves to obey the order in the works to be performed and as to its mode and manner of performance. This **does not** come within the purview of CP Act.
- ➢ **Contract for Service** – It implies a contract whereby one party undertakes to render services e.g., professional or technical services to or for another in the performance of which, he is not subject to detailed direction and control but exercises professional skills and uses his own knowledge and decisions.
- "**Deficiency**" refers to any fault, imperfection, shortcoming, or inadequacy in quality, nature, or manner of performance as required by current laws or undertaken commitments.

The consumer disputes:

- The old act provided for a **three-tier consumer dispute redressal machinery**:
  - ➢ District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum (DCDRF): If the value of the claim is up to **₹20 lakh**.
  - ➢ State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (SCDRC): If the value of the claim exceeds **₹20 lakhs but is within ₹1 crore**.
  - ➢ National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC): If the value of the claim **exceeds ₹1 crore.**

Updated Monetary Jurisdiction under the new act:

- District Commissions: **₹50 lakh**
- State Commissions: **More than ₹50 lakh to ₹2 crore**
- National Commission: **More than ₹2 crore**

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):

- The authority was established on **July 24, 2020** under **Section 10(1)** of **The Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**
- The CCPA, introduced in the new Act, aims to protect the rights of the consumer by cracking down on unfair trade practices, and false and misleading advertisements that are detrimental to the interests of the public and consumers.

The current case:

- The current decision overruled a **2007 judgment** of the **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission** which held that the services provided by lawyers are covered under **section 2 (o) of the Consumer Protection Act 1986.**
- The bench of **Justices Bela M Trivedi** and **Pankaj Mithal** stated that the legislature never intended to bring the services rendered by lawyers under the purview of the Consumer Protection Act.
- The bench accordingly opined that the **1995** Supreme Court judgment in ***Indian Medical Association v. VP Shantna*** "deserves to be revisited".
  - ➢ The court in this case held that **doctors and other medical professionals** can be held liable under the Consumer Protection Act.
- The bench in the current case held that the **legal profession is sui generis (unique)** and cannot be compared with any other profession.

Whether it's a service under a "Contract of Service"?

- The Court noted that comprehensive provisions are contained in **the Advocates Act, 1961**, and the **Bar Council of India Rules** framed thereunder to take care of the professional misconduct of the Advocates.
- It prescribes **punishments** if they are found guilty of professional or other misconduct by the **Disciplinary Committees** of the **State Bar Council or the Bar Council of India**.
- The Court said that a considerable amount of direct control is exercised by the Client over how an Advocate renders his services during his employment.
- Thus, the services hired or availed of an Advocate would be that of a contract '**of personal service**' and would therefore stand excluded from the definition of "**service**" contained in **Section 2(42) of the CP Act, 2019.**
- Therefore, a complaint alleging "**deficiency in service**" against Advocates practising Legal Profession would not be maintainable under the **CP Act, 2019.**

Calcutta High Court's Judgement on Muslim OBC Quota

Recently: The **Calcutta High Court** on May 22, invalidated **all Other Backward Classes (OBC) certificates** issued in **West Bengal** since **2010**.

- The ruling directly affects certificates distributed under the tenure of the **Trinamool Congress administration** led by **Mamata Banerjee since 2011.**
- **West Bengal CM Banerjee** rejected the court's decision, labelling it as a ploy orchestrated by the **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).**

OBC and sub-categories:

- The expression 'Other Backward Classes' was coined to denote backward/ marginalised communities and castes that were **not Scheduled Castes (SCs) or Scheduled Tribes (STs).**
- Affirmative action for OBCs is mandated by **Article 15(4)** of the **Constitution**
  - ➢ "Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens…".

- ➤ Article 29 provides for non-discrimination with regard to admission into state educational institutions on grounds of religion, caste, etc.
- **Article 16(4)** allows the state to make "any provision for the **reservation** of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the **State**".

OBC Commissions

Kaka Kalelkar committee:

- The panel, headed by **Kaka Kalelkar**, was constituted by **Jawaharlal Nehru's government** on **January 29, 1953**, and submitted its report on **March 30, 1955**.
- To identify socially and educationally backward classes, the commission adopted the following criteria:
  - ➤ Low social position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society;
  - ➤ Lack of general educational advancement among the major section of the caste/ community;
  - ➤ Inadequate or no representation in government service;
  - ➤ Inadequate representation in trade, commerce and industry.
- The **First OBC Commission** prepared a list of **2,399 backward** castes or communities in the country, out of which, it categorised **837** as **"most backward".**
- The Commission also recommended enumerating castes in the **1961 census**, providing **25-40% reservation** at different levels of government jobs, and **70% reservation** for admission to technical and professional institutions.
- The report was never discussed in Parliament and **never implemented.**

BP Mandal Commission:

- BP Mandal Commission was appointed in **1979** by **Morarji Desai's Janata government,** but its implementation was announced only in **1990** by the **government of VP Singh.**

- The Mandal Commission identified **3,743 castes** and communities as OBCs.
- It estimated the OBC population at **52%,** and recommended **27% reservation** in government jobs and admissions to all government-run institutions.
- No subcategories were recognised within **the 27%** OBC quota, even though one of the members**, L R Naik**, said in his dissent that OBCs should be split into **intermediate backward classes** and **depressed backward classes**.
- Over the decades, **state governments** have applied their own criteria to distribute quota benefits among the various categories of OBCs, a process that began well before the Mandal recommendations were implemented at the Centre.

The Creamy Layer:

- Under the concept of 'Creamy Layer', individuals are to be excluded from **OBC reservations.**
- According to a **2017 order** issued by the Centre, creamy layer individuals are those who have an **annual income of Rs 8 lakhs or more,** disqualifying them from benefits under the OBC quota.
- The 'creamy layer' threshold has been gradually increased from **Rs 1 lakh/year in 1993** to **Rs 2.5 lakhs, Rs 4.5 lakhs, Rs 6 lakhs and now Rs 8 lakhs**

The West Bengal Case:

- The Calcutta High Court has struck down a series of orders passed by the **West Bengal government** between **March 2010 and May 2012.**
- By these orders, **77 communities (classes), 75** of which were **Muslim**, were given reservation under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category.
- In its judgment delivered on May 22, the High Court noted that between **March 5 and September 24**, **2010**, the West Bengal government issued several similarly-worded notifications, that included "**42 classes, of which 41 were from the Muslim community**, as OBCs.
  - ➤ This entitled them to reservation and representation in Government Employment under **Article 16(4)** of the Constitution.

- In **May 2012**, the Mamata Banerjee government classified another **35** classes as OBC, **34** of which were from the **Muslim** community.
- In **March 2013**, the **West Bengal Backward Classes (Other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) (Reservation of vacancies and posts) Act, 2012**, was notified.
  - All **77 (42+35)** new OBCs were included in **Schedule I** of the Act.
- Also, on **September 24** of that year, an order was issued **sub-categorising** the **108 identified OBCs in the state (66 pre-existing and 42 newly identified)** into **56 "OBC-A (more Backward)"** and **52 "OBC-B (Backward)"** categories.

<u>The current Calcutta High Court ruling:</u>

- The first challenge in the HC was filed in **2011**, arguing that the declaration of **42 classes as OBCs** was based on religion, lacked acceptable data, and relied on an unscientific, predetermined survey.
- Later other notifications were also challenged.
- The current division Bench of **Justices Tapabrata Chakraborty** and **Rajasekhar Mantha** found that **religion** had been the "**sole**" basis for the West Bengal Backward Classes Commission and the state government to provide reservation.
  - This is prohibited by the Constitution and court orders.
- As with most cases where reservations have been challenged, the HC relied heavily on the Supreme Court's judgment in **_Indra Sawhney v Union of India_ (Mandal judgment).**
  - In this judgement, a **nine-judge Bench** held in **1992** that <u>OBCs cannot be identified and given reservation only on the basis of religion.</u>
  - The SC also held that all states must establish a **Backward Classes Commission** to identify and recommend classes of citizens for inclusion and exclusion in the state OBC list.
- In the present case, both the Commission and the government submitted that the Commission had identified the **77 classes** based on applications received from citizens, and then recommended their inclusion to the government.
- The HC noted that the Commission's recommendation had been made with **"lightning speed"** after the then Chief Minister publicly announced a quota for Muslims (in February 2010), without using any "objective criteria" to determine the backwardness of these classes.

<u>West Bengal's Sub-classification of OBCs:</u>

- The court also struck down portions of **West Bengal's 2012 Act**, including:
  - ➢ The provision that allowed the state government to **"sub-classify" OBC reservations** into **OBC-A** and **OBC-B categories for "more backward"** and **"backward" classes** respectively, and
  - ➢ The provision allowing the state to amend the Schedule of the **2012 Act** to add to the list of OBCs.
- The Commission conceded that the government did not consult it before creating the sub-classification within OBC reservations — but argued that such an action was outside its "purview".
- The court held that the state government **must consult the Commission** to make a fair and impartial classification, including sub-classification.
- Sub-classification is meant to address the different levels of deprivation faced by different communities, which the court held could only be done by referring to material collected by the Commission.

Nepal – India Border Dispute

Recently: Nepal's cabinet decided to put a map on its **Rs 100 currency note** showing certain areas administered by India in Uttarakhand as part of its territory.

- The map includes the contentious territories of **Lipulekh**, **Limpiyadhura**, and **Kalapani**, a move that has been condemned by **India**.
- The incorporation was decided in a council meeting chaired by **Nepali PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'**.
- **Rekha Sharma**, who is also the minister for communication, information, & technology, stated that the decision was made following a proposal from the **Nepal Rastra Bank.**
- Kathmandu's decision drew a sharp response from India with External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** saying that Nepal's move will not change the situation or the reality on the ground.

The Dispute:

- The territorial dispute is about a **372-sq-km** area that includes **Limpiadhura, Lipulekh, and Kalapani** at the India-Nepal-China trijunction in **Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district.**
- Nepal has claimed for long that these areas belong to it both **historically and evidently.**
- Nepal's boundary spans more than **1,850 km**, bordering **five** Indian states: **Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh,** and **Uttarakhand.**
- In **2019, India** released a map showing the disputed '**Kalapani**' region in the **Greater Himalayas** as within India's borders.
  - The map portrayed the area as part of the **Pithoragarh district** in the state of **Uttarakhand**.

Kalapani:

- **Kalapani** is a region located in the easternmost corner of **Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district.**

- It shares a broder on the north with the **Tibet Autonomous Region of China** and **Nepal** in the **east** and **south**.

- The area is in **India's control** but Nepal claims the region because of historical and cartographic reasons.

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- The area is the largest territorial dispute between Nepal and India consisting of at least **37,000 hectares of land** in the **High Himalayas.**

- Nepal immediately issued an objection to the map, as it identifies the region as an **unsettled territory of the Darchula district** in the country's **Sudurpashchim province**.
- Relations between India and Nepal saw a slide after Delhi's inauguration of a **80-km new road in May 2020** from **Dharchula** to **Lipulekh** on the **Mansarovar Yatra route**.
  - ➢ This angered the then government of **KP Sharma Oli.**
- Oli government then came out with a new map of **Nepal**, adding to it an area of **370 sq km** at the **tri-junction of Nepal, India,** and **China.**
- A **Constitution amendment Bill** was passed by Nepal's parliament to legitimise the alteration to the country's map with the addition of **Kalapani**, **Lipulekh** and **Limpiyadhura**.
- But Oli's government collapsed eventually and he had to resign in **July 2021** following the reinstatement of Nepal's parliament by its Supreme Court.

Cause of the dispute:

- The issue in itself goes back to the early **19th century**, when the **British** ruled India.
- Nepal was a conglomeration of small kingdoms under the reign of **King Prithvi Narayan Shah.**
- Shah is believed to be the most ambitious ruler among the **Gorkhas**. Under his rule in the late 18th century, Nepal was unified.
- Its domains stretched out as far as Sikkim in the East and the Garhwal and Kumaon region of Uttarakhand in the West.
- By the **second decade** of the 18th century, the **English East India Company (EIC)** had established strong footholds in **Madras**, **Calcutta**, and **Bombay**.
- By the **early 19th century**, as the EIC began expanding its territories northwards in **Awadh**, it came into close proximity with **Palpa**, an independent town within the Nepalese heartlands.
- Soon after, a border dispute arose between the two powers.
- The Nepalese were also proving to be a hindrance in allowing the British to realise their trade ambitions with Tibet.
- Finally, on **November 1, 1814**, the British declared war on Nepal.
- In **1815**, the British general, **Sir David Ochterlony**, managed to evict the Nepalese from **Garhwal and Kumaon**.

- A year later in **1816**, the war came to an end with the signing of the **Sugauli treaty** between **EIC** and **Guru Gajraj Mishra.** The treaty **delimited the boundaries** of Nepal, as it stands today.
- According to the treaty, Nepal lost the regions of **Kumaon-Garhwal in the west** and **Sikkim in the east.**
- According to **Article 5**, the King gave up his claims over the region **west** of **the river Kali** which originates in the **High Himalayas** and flows into the great plains of the Indian subcontinent.
- The British rulers recognised Nepal's right to the region that fell to the **east** of the **river Kali**. The terms were reiterated by a **second treaty** between **Nepal and British India** in **1923**.
- Here lies the historic origin of the dispute. According to Nepal's experts, the east of the Kali River should begin at the **source of the river**.
  - ➢ The source according to them is in the mountains near **Limpiyadhura**, which is higher in altitude than the rest of the river's flow.
- Nepal claims that a land mass, high in the mountains that falls to the east of the entire stretch starting from **Limpiyadhura downwards,** is theirs.
- India on the other hand says the border begins at **Kalapani** which India says is where the river begins.
- The dispute is mainly because of the **varying interpretation of the origin of the river** and its various tributaries that slice through the mountains.
- While Nepal's claim of the territory east of Kali is based on the **Limpiyadhura origin**, India says the river actually takes the name Kali near **Kalapani.**
- Some scholars suggest the lack of consensus is due to the river's shifting course over time.
- Others argue that British cartographers shifted the demarcation line eastwards for strategic reasons.
- The dispute over the location of the river, and consequently that of the territoriality of Kalapani, was first raised by the Nepalese government only in **1998**.

India-China-Nepal:

- The importance of Himalayan passes with the Tibetan plateau was amply highlighted in the **1962 war**.
- Since the **1962 war** with China, India has deployed the Indo- Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) at **Kalapani**, which is advantageously located at a height of over **20,000 ft** and serves as an observation post for that area.

- Nepal calls it an encroachment by the Indian security forces. Nepal has also been unhappy about the China-India trading post at **Lipu Lekh**, the earliest to be established between the two countries.
- India and China were in clear violation of Nepal's concerns during the **2015 Lipulekh agreement** between **India and China** which renewed India's **Mansarovar pilgrimage connection**.
- Neither side consulted Nepal or sought its opinion before that agreement that boosted pilgrimage and trade to Tibet.
- Nepal's then Prime Minister, the late Sushil Koirala, reportedly cancelled a visit to Delhi following this agreement.

The 'Open border' paradox:

- Since the launch of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries on **17 June 1947**, India and Nepal have worked to maintain their mutual commitment to peaceful relations.
- It was after the **Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950** was signed by India and Nepal that the two countries formally accepted "**open border**" between them.
- An "open border" means that there is free and unrestricted movement of people from either side.
- Problems arose in **1989** when India unilaterally closed **22 border crossing points** and **15 transit points** for Nepal.
- This border blockade was a blow to what was then a nascent Indo-Nepal bilateral relationship.
- Eventually, two points in the border were opened up: the **Jogbani-Biratnagar** and **Raxaul-Birganj.**
- In **2015** a second blockade took place between the two countries, often referred to as a **humanitarian and economic crisis** for the Himalayan neighbour.
- The situation was responsible for further disrupting the border-centric relationship because it took place right after the small country was hit by a devastating earthquake.
- Moreover, the event had also come across at a point when the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been emphasising on India's stance towards the **'Neighbourhood First'** policy.

Susta Region conflict:

- The **1816 treaty** took the **Gandak** as the international boundary between **India (Bihar)** and **Nepal**.

- The right bank of **Gandak** came under **Nepal's control**, and the **left** bank became Indian territory.
- At the time the treaty was signed, **Susta** was on the right bank of the Gandak and **a part of Nepal**.
- But, over the years, the Gandak changed its course and Susta moved to the left bank, that is, on the Indian side of the river.
- The residents of Susta, which comprises over **265 families**, claim they are part of **Ward 4 of Triveni Susta panchayat** in **Nawalparasi district of Nepal.**
- Both the countries are trying to resolve the matter, but Susta remains a bone of contention.

The Naga Issue

Recently: Recently, The **Nagaland government** has constituted a **'Political Affairs Committee' (PAC)** to find an inclusive solution to the Naga Political issue.

- The PAC was constituted during a high-level political meeting held under the chairmanship of **Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio**.
- The PAC is being initiated once again in pursuit of a broad consensus for an early and amicable settlement.

What is Nagaland political issue?

- Nagaland's insurgency is the longest continuous one in India's history.
- The Naga tribes are said to have migrated from **southwest China** to **Burma (now Myanmar) and Thailand**, eventually settling in **North East India** and North West Myanmar.
- The Naga tribes are accumulated in **Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur,** and **Myanmar.**

Pre- Independence:

- The British annexed **Assam** in **1826**, and in **1881**, the Naga Hills too became part of British India.
- The first sign of Naga resistance was seen in the formation of the **Naga Club in 1918**, which told **Simon Commission in 1929** "to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times".
- The Nagas did not consider themselves a part of British India. The British adopted a way of governance over the Nagas that involved **preserving their traditional ways of life, customs, and laws** to a large extent.
- This was achieved by placing **British administrators** at the top of the governance structure.
- Finding this approach favourable, the colonial government later declared the Naga hills an "**excluded area**" in the **Assam province** in **1935**.

Post- Independence:

- As the British withdrew, Naga tribes feared losing cultural autonomy with India's independence, worried about 'outsiders' entering their territory.
- These led to the formation of **Naga Hills District Tribal Council** in **1945**, which was renamed **Naga National Council (NNC)** in **1946** under the leadership of **Angami Zapu Phizo**.
- Amid uncertainties over the post-independence future of the Nagas, NNC declared the independence of the **Nagas** on **August 14, 1947**, a day before India's.
- The underground insurgency began in the early 1950s when Mr. Phizo founded the **Naga Federal Government (NFG)** and its armed wing, the **Naga Federal Army (NFA).**

- The NNC resolved to establish a "**sovereign Naga state**" and conducted a "**referendum**" in **1951**, in which "**99 per cent**" supported an "**independent**" **Nagaland**.
- On **March 22**, **1952**, Phizo formed the underground **Naga Federal Government (NFG)** and the **Naga Federal Army (NFA).**
- The Nagas, led by Mr. Phizo, boycotted the **1952** and **1957** general elections and armed clashes grew.
- The Government of India sent in the Army to crush the insurgency and, in **1958**, enacted **the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.**
- Some leaders among the NNC formed their own group to hold discussions with the government, leading to the formation of the state of **Nagaland** in **1963** as the **16th State** of the Indian Union.
- On **June 29, 1947**, **Assam Governor Sir Akbar Hyderi** signed a **9-point agreement** with moderates **T Sakhrie and Aliba Imti**, which was almost immediately **rejected by Phizo.**
- The Naga Hills, a district of Assam, was upgraded to a state in **1963**, by also adding the **Tuensang Tract** that was then part of **NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency).**
- In April the next year, **Jai Prakash Narain**, **Assam Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha** and **Rev. Michael Scott** formed a Peace Mission.
- They got the government and NNC to sign an agreement to **suspend operations** that September.
- This, however, did not satisfy many in the NNC and NFG.
- The NNC/NFG/NFA continued to indulge in violence, and after **six rounds of talks**, the Peace Mission was abandoned in **1967**, and a massive counter-insurgency operation launched.

NSCN:

- On **November 11, 1975**, the government got a section of NNC leaders to sign the **Shillong Accord**, under which this section of NNC and NFG agreed to **give up arms**.
- A group of about **140 members** led by **Thuingaleng Muivah**, who were at that time in **China**, **refused to accept** the Shillong Accord.
- After the disagreement they formed the **National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)** in **1980** to continue the armed movement.

- NSCN consists of **three main NNC leaders-**
  - ➤ **Thuingaleng Muivah** of the **Tangkhul Naga tribe** of **Manipur's Ukhrul district**
  - ➤ **Isak Chishi Swu** of the **Sema tribe**
  - ➤ **S S Khaplang** from **Myanmar's Hemis tribe**
- The motto of the NSCN was to create a **People's Republic of Nagaland** free of Indian rule and based on the principle of socialism as an economic solution and **Christianity** as religious affiliation.
- In **1988**, after years of infighting and violent clashes along tribal lines and over the main cause of the movement, the NSCN split into two factions after a violent clash.
  - ➤ **NSCN (IM)** – led by **Thuingaleng** Muivah and Isak Chishi Swu
  - ➤ **NSCN (K)** – led by **S S Khaplang**

The differences between 2 groups:

- The **NSCN-IM** demanded and continues to demand **'Greater Nagaland' or Nagalim.**
- It wants to extend Nagaland's borders by including Naga-dominated areas in neighbouring **Assam**, **Manipur** and **Arunachal** Pradesh, to unite **1.2 million Nagas.**
- The **NSCN-K** on the other hand was suspicious of the IM secretly holding parleys with the government.
- The NSCN (IM) is also insistent on **separate Flag and Yehzabo (Constitution).**
- As it is, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has already conceded that the organisation can fly its flag whenever it needs to but not on Indian national holidays or Government Offices.
- Besides, the **NSCN (IM)'s Yehzabo** is most likely slightly different from those of the various other groups.
- Even the Flags of all the groups vary slightly from the original **Naga National Flag** hoisted at **Parashen** in **1956**.
- While the NNC began to fade away, and **Phizo** died in London in **1991**, the **NSCN (IM)** came to be seen as the "**mother of all insurgencies"** in the region.
- The NNC also split into two organisations after Phizo's death to **NNC(A)**, under **Phizo's daughter Adino leadership**, and **NNC(K),** led by previous NNC vice-president **Khodao Yanthan.**
- The final settlement as proposed by the Shillong Accord still stands incomplete as of today.

Ceasefire agreement:

- The NSCN-IM and its activities posed a political roadblock for three consecutive administrations at the Centre.
  - Prime Ministers **P V Narasimha Rao**, **H D Deve Gowda**, and **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** held multiple meetings with **NSCN-IM in Paris**, **Zurich, Geneva, and Bangkok** in attempts to address the issue.
- In **1997**, the **Government of India** got the **NSCN-IM** to sign a **ceasefire agreement** to begin the holding of talks with the aim of signing a **Naga Peace Accord.**

How is the dialogue progressing?

- There have been nearly **100 rounds** of talks.
- In **August 2015**, the group signed a **framework agreement** with the Indian government for the **Naga Peace Accord.**
- The then **Joint Intelligence Chief R.N. Ravi** was appointed interlocutor to take the talks to their conclusion.
- In **November 2017**, Ravi signed an agreement with **seven groups** who had come together under the banner of the **Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs)**, which did not include the **NSCN (IM).**
- Ravi later became **Nagaland's Governor in 2019** to further the negotiations.
- But while both the government and Naga groups said the talks successfully concluded on the government's deadline of **October 31, 2019**, no accord was signed.
- Relations between Ravi and the NSCN(IM) unravelled after the talks concluded.
- Following the abolition of **Article 370 on August 5, 2019,** there are apprehensions in Nagaland about the possibilities of a similar action against its **special provisions** that are enshrined in **Article 371A.**
  - **Article 371A** of the Indian Constitution states that "no act of Parliament shall apply to Nagaland in respect of the religious or social practices of the Nagas, the Naga customary law and procedure…."
- In **January 2020**, the government had IB special director **Akshay Mishra** step in and continue the engagement.

The Political Affairs Committee (PAC):

- The PAC has been formed to find an inclusive solution to the long-drawn Naga Political issue as a **facilitator** between the centre and the insurgent groups.
- The PAC comprises the **council of ministers and leaders** from all political parties within the **14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly.**
- To address this, all legislative party leaders have been instructed to establish **'Political Consultative Committees' (PCCs)**, focusing solely on the mentioned purpose.
- The composition of the PCCs will depend on the number of party legislators in the NLA.
- A **committee of seven members** will be established for **parties with 10 or more MLAs**, and a **committee of five members for parties** with **five or more MLAs**.
- Additionally, a **committee of three members** will be formed for parties with **one or more MLAs**, while **Independent MLAs will have a convener and co-convener.**

Navratna Status to IREDA

Recently: Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) has granted **'Navratna Status**' to **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA).**

What are "Ratna" statuses?

- **Public Sector Undertakings or Public Sector Enterprises** in India are **government-owned enterprises.**
- In these enterprises, **51 percent** or more share capital is held by the **Government of India** or **state governments** or **joint ventures** between multiple Public Sector Enterprises.
- India's central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) are classified into three major categories - **Miniratna**, **Navratna** and **Maharatna.**
- The main aim of assigning the "**ratna**" statuses to various CPSEs was to give **operational freedom** and **decision-making power** to the state-run entities.
  - The CPSEs can decide on certain matters such as **investment** and **new projects** without approaching the government until a particular threshold.

Miniratna Status:

- CPSEs are put in two sub-categories under the Miniratna status **- Miniratna-I** and **Miniratna - II.**
- Miniratna Category-I status:
  - CPSEs which reported profits in **three consecutive years**, have a pre-tax profit of **₹30 crore or more** in at **least one of the three years,** and have a **positive net worth**, are classified as a Miniratna-I PSU.
- Miniratna Category-II status:
  - PSUs with a **profit** for the last **three successive years** and have a **positive net worth** are classified as Miniratna-II companies.
- In addition to these conditions, a CPSE should **have not defaulted on repayment of loans** or interest due to the government.
- Also, Miniratna entities need not depend upon budgetary support or government guarantees.

Navratna status -

- The Navratna scheme was introduced in **1997** along with miniratna scheme.

- PSUs that have a **Miniratna-I status** and have obtained an **"Excellent"** or **"Very Good"** MoU rating in **three out of the last five years** are eligible.
- They must have a composite score of **60 or more** out of **100** in **six** selected performance **indicators.**
- These are the **six parameters** with different scores :
  - ➢ Net Profit to Net Worth
  - ➢ Manpower Cost to Total Cost of Production
  - ➢ Profit before depreciation, interest and tax (PBDIT) to Capital Employed
  - ➢ Profit before interest and tax To Turnover
  - ➢ Earnings Per Share
  - ➢ Inter-Sectoral Performance
- To achieve Navratna status, a company must report a **net profit of more than Rs 5,000 crore** for **three consecutive years**.
- Additionally, it must maintain an average annual turnover of **Rs 25,000 crore** for **three years**, or have an **annual average net worth** of over **Rs 15,000 crore for three years.**
- The PSUs should also should have significant global presence/international operations.
- With IREDA in the list, the total number of **navratna** PSEs is now **17**.

Benefits for Navratna status:

- Normally, a CPSE requires permission from the **Indian government** to invest a large sum of money in a project or a deal.
- The Navratna companies are granted financial independence to invest up to **₹1,000 crore** without seeking approval from the central government.
- Navratna companies are also allowed to invest up to **15% of their net worth on a single project**, or **30% of their net worth** in a given year, subject to a cap of **₹1,000 crore.**

Maharatna status:

- A PSU is eligible for being granted a "Maharatna" status if it have a **Navratna status** and in case it meets the following criteria:
  - ➢ Listed on the Indian stock exchanges
  - ➢ Compliant with minimum shareholding norms
  - ➢ Average annual turnover of more than **₹25,000 crore** and average annual net worth of over **₹15,000 crore** in the last **three years**
  - ➢ Average annual net profit of over **₹5,000 crore** in the **last three years** along with significant global presence.

What is IREDA?

- **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA)** is a GoI Enterprise under the administrative control of **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).**
- IREDA is a Public Limited Government Company established as a **Non-Banking Financial Institution** in **1987**.
- It promotes, develops, and extends financial aid for projects on renewable energy and energy efficiency, with the motto **"ENERGY FOR EVER".**
- The government holds a **75 per cent ownership stake** in the company.
- Recently, the company's board has approved the establishment of a **subsidiary company.**
  - ➢ This subsidiary will cater to **retail business** in renewable energy and emerging sectors such as PM KUSUM, rooftop solar, and other B2C segments.
- Comparing year-on-year figures, IREDA witnessed a **32 per cent rise in net profit**, while it remained consistent quarter-on-quarter at **₹337 crore.**
- IREDA shares jumped over **12%** during the trading session following its designation as a 'Navratna' company by the Indian government.

International Current Affairs

Myanmar's Myitsone Dam

Recently: Myanmar's junta has revived plans for **a $3.6 billion Chinese-backed** dam in the north of the country that was suspended more than **10 years** ago following huge public opposition.

- A notice from the military administration's Information Ministry, announced the formation of a **new leadership** team for the Myitsone project.
- The board for the project was formed with **11 members** from different departments.
  - **Aye Kyaw**, a deputy minister of the Electricity Ministry, was appointed the board's leader.
- It plans to work with China's **State Power Investment Corporation's (SPIC) Yunnan International Power Investment Company** on "research, technical solutions, and public relations".
  - SPIC is a Chinese state-owned group and one of the biggest utility companies in the country.

What is Myitsone Dam Project?

- The Myitsone Hydroelectric Project is located at the confluence of the **Mali and Nmai rivers**, about **37 km from Myitkyina**, the capital of **Kachin State** in northern Myanmar.
  - Mali and N'Mai rivers come together to form the **Irrawaddy River** in Kachin State.
- The dam is **152 metres long** and **152 metres high** and would have flooded an area about the size of **Singapore.**
- It is part of a larger plan comprising **seven dams** along the **Irrawaddy, Mali Hka, and N'Mai Hka rivers**, with a total capacity of **13,360 MW.**
- Once completed, Myitsone dam was projected to rank as the **15th largest** hydropower station **globally,** with a capacity of **6,000 MW.**
- Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power-1, China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) and Myanmar's Asia World Company are developing the project.
- The **$3.6 billion** Myitsone project was **first agreed** by a previous junta in **2006.**
- The **construction began** in **2009** and it was scheduled to be completed in **2019.**
- In **2011**, President **Then Sein**, who headed a military-backed government, took the unprecedented step of **suspending** the dam's construction, citing the "wishes of the people."
- The suspension of the Myitsone dam was followed by a series of then-unthinkable economic and political reforms, which were terminated by the coup d'etat of 2021.

Reasons for opposition and Suspension:

Environmental Impact:

- Environmental activists have said the dam would displace countless villagers and upset the ecology of the Irrawaddy River, one of the country's most vital national resources.
- The dam site is situated close to (less than 100km) the **earthquake prone Sagaing fault lin**e, raising concerns about seismic risks.
- Submergence resulting from the dam will **inundate significant historical and cultural sites** along the Mali and N'mai Hka rivers, including areas regarded as the birthplace of Burma.

- Notable landmarks like historical churches, temples, and the sacred banyan tree at the confluence of the Mali Hka and N'Mai Hka rivers will be submerged.
- A **2015** environmental assessment commissioned by the Myanmar government strongly advised against the dam's construction, saying the move could **alter the river flow** on a wide scale.
- A **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) report in 2018** estimated that some **34 million** people in Myanmar live in the Ayeyarwady basin, roughly two thirds of the country's population.
- A report commissioned by **CPI** itself and conducted by Chinese and Myanmar experts recommended building **two smaller hydropower dams** to substitute the Myitsone Dam.

The Electricity Issue:

- The project was supposed to export about **90%** of the electricity it generated to China.
- The Myanmar government was receiving about **$500 million annually**, some **20 percent** of the revenue.
- This arrangement was questioned by the opponents when nearly **70% of Myanmar** at that time had no access to electricity.
- Myanmar currently suffers from prolonged power outages that have become a major burden since the army seized power in February 2021, ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.
- Power cuts in Yangon, the country's biggest city, now typically last **eight hours a day.**
- According to the state-owned Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation, the current power production can meet only **50% of demand.**

Significance of the project for China:

- Myanmar is a vital piece of **China's Belt and Road Initiative**, Xi's flagship **$1 trillion project** that includes maritime, rail and road projects in Asia, Africa and Europe.
- After Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy came to office in **2016,** China made several attempts to restart the project.
- In **2018**, then-ambassador **Hong Liang** paid a visit to Kachin State during which he declared that further delays to the Myitsone project could hamper bilateral relations.

- China had considered the dam an important part of a national strategy to **reduce its reliance on fossil fuels** and meet its targets to cut pollution.
- During Chinese President **Xi Jinping's state visit** to Myanmar in **2020,** protesters gathered in commercial hub Yangon to demonstrate against any reinstatement of the controversial mega-dam.

Ayeyarwady River:

- It is the **largest river** in Myanmar that stretches **approximately 2,170 kilometres** in length.
- Originating from the confluence of the **N'mai and Mali rivers**, it flows from north to south before emptying through the **Irrawaddy Delta** in the **Ayeyarwady Region** into the **Andaman Sea.**
- Its tributaries are **Chindwin River and Mu River** in the left and **Myitnge river** in the right.
- The Irrawaddy River basin is **rich in biodiversity**, hosting various species of flora and fauna, including endangered species like the **Irrawaddy dolphin.**

World Hydrogen Summit 2024

Recently: India's inaugural participation at the World Hydrogen Summit 2024 in **Rotterdam, Netherlands** marks a significant milestone, with the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** orchestrating one of the **largest pavilions.**

Hydrogen and Green Hydrogen as a fuel:

- Hydrogen, the **most common element** in nature, exists only in combination with other elements.
- It has to be extracted from naturally occurring compounds like water (which is a combination of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom; **H2O**).
- Hydrogen is a clean molecule, but the process of extracting it is energy intensive.
- While hydrogen's potential as a clean fuel source has a history of nearly **150 years**, it was only after the oil price shocks of the **1970s** that the possibility of hydrogen replacing fossil fuels came to be considered seriously.
- Three carmakers — **Japan's Honda and Toyota**, and **South Korea's Hyundai** — having since moved decisively to commercialise the technology, albeit on a limited scale.
- The sources and processes by which hydrogen is derived are categorised by **colour tabs.**
    - ➢ Hydrogen produced from **fossil fuels** is called **grey hydrogen**, which constitutes the bulk of the hydrogen generated today.
    - ➢ Hydrogen generated from **fossil fuels with carbon capture and storage options** is called **blue hydrogen.**
    - ➢ Hydrogen generated using **electrolysers** powered by renewable power sources is called **green hydrogen.**

Green Hydrogen:

- Green hydrogen (GH2) is hydrogen produced by the **electrolysis of water**, using **renewable electricity**.
- The global Green Hydrogen Standard defines green hydrogen as "hydrogen produced through the electrolysis of water with **100% or near 100% renewable energy** with close to **zero greenhouse gas emissions**.
- Other definition of green hydrogen also includes hydrogen produced through various other methods that produce relatively low emissions and meet other sustainability criteria.

- Green hydrogen's principal purpose is to help limit global warming to **1.5 °C,** reduce fossil fuel dependence by replacing grey hydrogen, and provide for an expanded set of end-uses in specific economic sectors, sub-sectors and activities.

What is World Hydrogen Summit:

- World Hydrogen 2024 Summit & Exhibition is the largest and most senior global hydrogen event and it returns to **Rotterdam** with its **biggest edition** yet.
- The event features:
  - C-level Summit
  - The largest hydrogen-focused exhibition in the world
  - The Africa Hydrogen Forum
  - 2 x H2 Tech Series Stages
  - The World Hydrogen Awards
  - Site visits to the Port of Rotterdam hydrogen projects
- Around **15,000 delegates** from around the world attended the Summit.
- The India Pavilion at the conference provides India with an opportunity to showcase to the world the progress made by the country in the field of Green Hydrogen.
- The Indian delegation comprises nominees from:
  - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
  - Department of Science and Technology
  - The Ministry of Railways
  - The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
  - Private Sector Companies

India's Green Hydrogen Mission:

- The National Green Hydrogen Mission of India was approved by the Union Cabinet on **4 January 2022** and was launched in **January 2023** with an overall outlay of **Rs 19,744 crores.**
- It aimed at making India the Global Hub for production, usage and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.

- Mission outcomes projected by **2030** are:
  - ➢ Development of green hydrogen production capacity of at least **5 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) per annum** with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about **125 GW** in the country.
  - ➢ Over **Rs. Eight lakh crores** in total investments.
  - ➢ Creation of over **Six lakh jobs.**
  - ➢ Cumulative reduction in fossil fuel imports over **Rs. One lakh crore.**
  - ➢ Abatement of nearly **50 MMT** of annual greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** is the **nodal ministry** for the project.
- Under the mission, the government is implementing the **Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT)** programme.
  - ➢ This programme aims to establish **electrolyser manufacturing base** and green hydrogen producing facilities.
  - ➢ **State-run Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)** is the implementing agency.
- Under **Component 1 of SIGHT**, the MNRE has allocated **Rs 4,440 crore** for manufacturing electrolysers for the period **FY26 to FY30.**
- **Component 2** deals with an allocation of **₹13,050** for producing green hydrogen from **FY26 to FY30.**
- Overall, under SIGHT, the total financial incentive is **₹17,490 crore.**

India's commitment for renewable Energy:

- As on date, the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has awarded tenders for setting up **412,000 tonnes** of Green Hydrogen production capacity and **1,500 MW** of electrolyzer manufacturing capacity.
- At COP26 held in 2021, India committed to an ambitious five-part **"Panchamrit"** pledge.
- They included reaching **500 GW** of **non-fossil electricity capacity, generating half of all energy requirements from renewables,** to **reducing emissions** by **1 billion tonnes** by **2030.**
- India as a whole also aims to reduce the **emissions intensity of GDP** by **45 per cent.**
- Finally, India commits to **net-zero emissions** by **2070.**
- About **44 per cent** of India's energy requirements at present come from **non-fossil sources** and are likely to touch as high as **65 per cent** by **2030.**

Scarlet Johnson v. OpenAI

Source- https://www.hindustantimes.com/ht-img/img/2024/05/21/550x309/Sam_Altman_ChatGPT_Scarlett_Johansson_vs_OpenAI_1716260493821_1716260505028.jpg

Recently: Hollywood actor **Scarlett Johansson** has expressed "shock" and "anger" over hearing the voice for **GPT-4o**, OpenAI's latest AI model, which she has said sounds **"eerily similar"** to her own voice.

- Johansson has joined the list of several individuals and organisations who have accused OpenAI of using their copyrighted creative works without permission.

What is the issue?

- OpenAI unveiled its latest AI model called **GPT-4o**, saying it would improve on the existing features of ChatGPT.
- One such feature, named **Voice Mode**, lets users have voice conversations with the AI chatbot, and lets them choose from **five kinds of voices.**
- Johansson said one of these voices, named **'Sky',** was allegedly copying her voice.
- It sounds like the actor's performance in the **2013 film "Her,"** about a man who falls in love with an artificial intelligence.

- The actress claimed that she had **twice declined** OpenAI chief executive **Sam Altman**'s offer to clone her voice for the latest chatbot.
- Johansson gave a statement raising the issue in the public eye and stating that she is forced to take **legal action** against Sam Altman, CEO of Open AI.

Open AI's Response:

- OpenAI **denied intentionally replicating** Scarlett Johansson's voice.
- They claimed that Sky's voice was created using a **different actress**, whose identity remains undisclosed due to privacy concerns.
- Under mounting legal pressure, OpenAI eventually agreed to discontinue the use of Sky's voice.
- They replaced it with a new voice, dubbed **"Juniper,"** in an effort to resolve the controversy.
  - ➤ This change marked the end of Sky's brief but contentious existence.

Other such lawsuits against OpenAI:

- Johansson is not the first to bring up issues of copyright in relation to AI. Newspapers, including **The New York Times**, have earlier sued for copyright infringement.
- **Large language models (LLMs)** are fed huge amounts of data, which helps them to analyse patterns and train themselves on language, visual data, computation, etc.
- But entities like The NYT have argued that this amounts to "unauthorised" use of their already published work.
- The **Authors Guild of America** filed a similar lawsuit on behalf of writers such as **George R R Martin** and **John Grisham**, alleging illegal use of the authors' copyrighted works by OpenAI.

Personality Rights:

- Personality rights refer to the right of a person to protect his/her personality under the **right to privacy or property.**
- These rights are important to celebrities as their **names, photographs or even voices** can easily be misused in various advertisements by different companies to boost their sales.
- Generally, there are **two types** of Personality Rights: the first is the right to publicity and the second is the right to privacy.

Right to Publicity:

- In the right to publicity, the **image, voice or any other different trait** of a celebrity is not to be misused for commercial exploitation without the permission of that celebrity and without a contract with the personality.
- The right to publicity can **last until the death** of a personality and after the death of that individual, his personality rights are **seized by the Court.**
  - ➤ After the death of the personality, his legal heir cannot not own his personality rights.
- The right to publicity is guaranteed under **Article 19** of the Constitution of India, which defines **freedom of speech and expression.**
- In India, actors such as **Rajinikanth, Anil Kapoor and Jackie Shroff** have approached the courts over "personality rights".
- On May 15, the **Delhi High Court** protected the personality and publicity rights of **Jackie Shroff** while restraining various e-commerce stores, AI chatbots, etc. from misusing the actor's name, image, voice, and likeness without his consent.
- In a case involving **Anil Kapoor,** the Delhi HC granted an ex parte, omnibus injunction restraining **16 entities** from using the actor's name, likeness, and image using technological tools like AI, face morphing, and GIFs for commercial purposes.
- ***D.M. Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. v. Baby Gift, 2010:***
  - ➤ **Justice S Ravindra Bhat** acted on a petition filed by a company to which singer **Daler Mehndi** had assigned his personality rights.
  - ➤ The company alleged that certain gift shops were selling dolls that were "cheap imitations of, and identical to the likeness" of Mehndi and even sang a few of his songs.
  - ➤ Allowing relief to the singer, the court said that the commercial use of his identity was intended to increase sales by fusing his identity with the products, thereby encashing on his goodwill and persona.

<u>Right to Privacy:</u>

- Representing one's personality without their permission is a violation of their Right to Privacy.
- Celebrities, like any other ordinary man, have the Right to Privacy, and following them, leaking their pictures and videos without their consent is in violation of their Right to Privacy.
- Right to Privacy is included under the ambit of **Article 21** after the celebrated judgement of ***KS Puttaswamy v. Union of India, 2017.***

Indian laws for the protection of the Personality Rights:

<u>Trademark Act, 1999:</u>

- A trademark is any word, name, symbol or device used to identify and distinguish goods and/or services from those of others.
- The personalities can **register their name, voice, signature, etc**. under the Trademark Act 1999.
- **Section 14** of the Trademark Act restricts the use of personal names and representations.
  - ➢ If somebody uses any celebrity's name illegally or misrepresents them, then the person should be liable under this Section.
- ***Krishna Kishor Singh vs. Sarla A Saraogi & Ors. (2023):*** The plaintiff, who is the father of the late famous Indian actor **Sushant Singh Rajput**, filed a plea seeking an ex-parte interim injunction against the use of his son's **name, caricature, and lifestyle** in upcoming films like "**Nyay.**"
  - ➢ The plaintiff argued that such publication and production infringed upon personality rights and the right to privacy, including the right to publicity.
  - ➢ The Delhi High Court dismissed the petition stating that there is no explicit statutory recognition of publicity, personality, or celebrity rights in India.

<u>Passing Off:</u>

- Passing off means **"no one has the right to represent his goods in the name of another person."**
  - ➢ It is recognized by the **trademark law** under **Section 27.**

- To earn the benefit of passing off, the plaintiff has to prove misrepresentation of his personality trait and what damages have been done to him because of using personality traits.

<u>Copyright Act, 1957:</u>

- A copyright is a type of intellectual property that gives the creator of an original work, or another right holder, the exclusive and legally secured right to **copy, distribute, adapt, display, and perform** a creative work, usually for a limited time.
- These rights are only granted to authors and performers, which means actors singers musicians dancers creators, etc.
- Basically, the **fame of a person who is famous belongs only to that person** and that person has the right to profit from it.
- No one can misuse his name or personality trait for gain.
- *Mr. Gautam Gambhir vs. D.A.P. & Co. & Anr. (2017):* Indian cricketer Gautam Gambhir filed a suit against the defendant because he found that his name was used by the defendant as a tagline for restaurants **'by Gautam Gambhir'.**
  - The cricketer claimed that his rights were violated because his name was used in a tagline that he had no connection with.
  - The honourable **Delhi High Court** found in evidence that the defendant **does not commercialise** the plaintiff's name.
  - It was also held that **no loss is incurred** to the plaintiff in his field, i.e., cricket, by running the restaurant with the tagline 'by Gautam Gambhir'.

What is OpenAI?

- OpenAI is an American artificial intelligence (AI) research organization founded in **December 2015**, researching artificial intelligence with the goal of developing **"safe and beneficial"** artificial general intelligence.
- The organization consists of the **non-profit OpenAI, Inc.** registered in **Delaware** and its **for-profit** subsidiary **OpenAI Global, LLC.**
- It was founded by **Ilya Sutskever, Greg Brockman, Trevor Blackwell, Vicki Cheung, Andrej Karpathy, Durk Kingma, Jessica Livingston, John Schulman, Pamela Vagata, and Wojciech Zaremba.**
- **Sam Altman** and **Elon Musk** serving as the initial **Board of Directors members.**

- **Microsoft**, one of the largest stakeholder and backer of the company, provided OpenAI Global, LLC with a **$1 billion** investment in **2019** and a **$10 billion** investment in **2023.**
- Its first offering was an open-source toolkit for developing reinforcement learning algorithms **(OpenAI Gym)**, which prompted it to focus on AI research for more general purposes.
- In **2018,** OpenAI released the concept of a **Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT),** which is a neural network (a machine learning model) that simulates human brain and is trained on data sets.
- In **2021**, **DALL-E** was released, an **image version** of ChatGPT where humans can prompt the generative AI model to produce images.
- **ChatGPT** was released in **November 2022**, and became the most popular chatbot and generative AI tool–for producing anything from chatbot responses to survey questions to resumes.
- On **November 17, 2023**, the board **removed Altman as CEO**, while **Greg Brockman** was **removed as chairman** and then **resigned as president.**
- Four days later, **both returned** after negotiations with the board, and most of the board members resigned.

GPT 4o:

- **GPT-4o ("o" for "omni")** is a step towards much more natural human-computer interaction—it accepts as input **any combination** of text, audio, image, and video and generates any combination of text, audio, and image outputs.
- It can respond to audio inputs in as little as **232 milliseconds**, with an **average of 320 milliseconds**, which is similar to human response time (opens in a new window) in a conversation.
- GPT-4o is especially better at **vision and audio understanding** compared to existing models.
- In GPT-4o, OpenAI trained a single new model end-to-end across **text, vision, and audio**, which means that all inputs and outputs are processed by the **same neural network.**
  - GPT-4o is our first model **combining all of these modalities** which was not possible with **GPT 3.5** and **GPT 4.**

77th World Health Assembly

Recently: The **Seventy-seventh** World Health Assembly was held in **Geneva, Switzerland**, on **27 May – 1 June 2024.**

- The theme of this year's Health Assembly is: **All for Health, Health for All.**
- The plenary session, attended by health ministers and heads of delegation from **194 member countries**, opened the Health Assembly.
- The main agenda includes a report from WHO Director-**General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** on various activities and the adoption of executive board resolutions.
- During the assembly, the World Health Organization (WHO) conferred the **Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion for 2024** to the **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru.**
  - ➢ The award was created in **2019.**

Highlights of the Assembly:

Resolution on Climate Change & Health:

- The World Health Assembly passed a resolution highlighting the increasing **impact of climate change on health** and called for radical measures to counter health risks on May 31.
- The resolution marks the WHO's commitment to encourage support for implementing policies and strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change on health.
- At the **28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28),** more than **123** countries adopted a declaration that noted the benefits for health from reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, lower air pollution, active mobility, and shifts to sustainable healthy diets.
  - ➤ For the first time, **$1 billion** in financing for climate and health was announced during COP28.
- In 2023, according to the **State of Environment in Figures 2024**, India experienced its **second-hottest year** on record and its hottest minimum temperature in **122 years.**
- On **May 29,** a **north Delhi** weather station recorded the **highest-ever temperature** at 52.9 degrees Celsius.
- Due to the increasing threat of climate change, the months conducive to dengue transmission by the **_Aedes Aegypti_** breed of mosquitos have risen by **5.6 months** yearly in India, according to the **Lancet Countdown on Climate Change and Health.**

Resolution to Improve Organ Transplant:

- At the 77th World Health Assembly, member states approved a draft resolution on improving **organ transplantation availability**, including human cells and tissues.
- The resolution tasked countries with developing a global strategy to be presented for adoption in **2026.**
- It also encouraged the establishment of a **World Donor Day** to raise public awareness and donations.
- It also emphasised on encouraging donation after the neurological determination of death and, where appropriate, donation after the circulatory determination of death.
- The resolution urged the director-general to establish an **expert committee** under the **Regulations for Expert Advisory Panels and Committees**, to help the Secretariat in developing the proposed global strategy and its implementation.

Resolution for Mental Health Support:

- The World Health Assembly on May 29 approved a draft resolution advising member countries to incorporate **mental health support** in their response to humanitarian crises.
- Over the last decade, **one in five**, or **22 per cent** of people have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, following war or conflicts, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The resolution called upon member states to carry out the **WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-30** adopted at the **66th World Health Assembly**, which included goals to achieve universal health coverage for mental health.
- Further, the draft said that progress would be followed in annual reports presented to the assembly from **2025 to 2031.**
- On **World Mental Health Day** on **October 10, 2023**, WHO published a report titled *Mental Health of Refugees and Migrants: Risk and Protective Factors and Access to Care.*
  - ➢ The report found that an extended stay in asylum centres could lead to a **30-fold increase** in the risk of psychopathology among children aged **11-16 years.**
- Recently, an investment case was launched by WHO for its financial strategy (2025-28) with a total budget of **$11.1 billion.**
  - ➢ The **member states** have agreed to cover **$4bn** of this budget.

Consensus for Global Preparedness for Pandemics:

- The assembly approved new steps to improve global preparedness for and response to **pandemics like COVID-19 and mpox**, and set a new deadline for agreeing on a broader treaty.
- Countries agreed by consensus to amend the **International Health Regulations**, which were last changed in **2005**, such as by defining the term **"pandemic emergency".**
  - ➢ It also included helping developing countries to gain better access to financing and medical products.
- The countries have defined a **pandemic emergency** as a **communicable disease** that has a **"wide geographical spread"** or a high risk of one, and has exceeded or can exceed the ability of national health systems to respond.
  - ➢ It's also defined as an outbreak that has or could cause **"substantial" economic or social disruption** and requires quick international action

- The plans to adopt a more sweeping pandemic "treaty" at the meeting was shelved largely over disagreements between developing countries and richer ones about better sharing of technology and the pathogens that trigger outbreaks.

Strengthening Health and Well-Being through Sport Events:

- The World Health Assembly has officially adopted a resolution titled **'Strengthening Health and Well-Being through Sport Events'.**
- The resolution was first introduced by **Qatar** during the **154th session** of the **WHO Executive Board** in January 2024 and was co- sponsored by several other countries.
- The Executive Board unanimously adopted the resolution, which has now been officially endorsed by the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA).
- The resolution acknowledges the global burden of non-communicable diseases, which account for **74 percent** of all deaths worldwide.
- The resolution recognises the crucial role of sports in promoting health and well-being, the importance of sports events in reaching large populations, its impact on society at all levels and its ability to influence human behaviour, well-being and physical and mental health.

India:

- The **five-member** Indian delegation was led by **Union health secretary Apurva Chandra.**
- India chaired the **Committee A,** which discussed topics such as universal health coverage, public health emergency preparedness and response, antimicrobial resistance, climate change, and sustainable financing for the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The country focused on showcasing on how **digital tools and services** have brought on a health transformation in the India.

<u>Women, Children and Adolescent Well- being:</u>

- India hosted a side event on **Women, Children and Adolescent Health during the conference.**
- It was in collaboration with **Norway, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH).**
- The purpose of the event was to share emerging evidence and discoveries, fostering dialogue on pivotal opportunities for investment in maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and well-being.
- India's **Reproductive and Child Health (RCH)-I, RCH-II** initiatives, and the **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram**, which stressed on adolescent health, were highlighted.
- The rollout of **TeleManas** was also mentioned as a key initiative taken by India.
    - ➢ TeleManas is a comprehensive mental health care service of India.
- **Hekali Zhimomi**, Addl Secretary, Union Health Ministry; **Aradhana Patnaik,** Addl Secretary and Managing Director (NHM), Union Health Ministry; and other senior officials of the Union Health Ministry were present on the occasion.

World Health Organization:

- World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations' specialized agency for Health was **founded in 1948.**
- It is an inter-governmental organization and works in collaboration with its member states usually through the Ministries of Health.
- There are **194 Member States**, 150 country offices, six regional offices.
- It began functioning on **April 7, 1948** – a date now being celebrated every year as **World Health Day**.
- Its official publication, the **World Health Report**, provides assessments of worldwide health topics.
- It is Headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland.**

World Health Assembly:

- The WHO is **governed** by the World Health Assembly (WHA), which is composed of its **194 member states.**
- The WHA elects and advises an executive board made up of **34 health specialists**; selects the WHO's chief administrator, the director-general.

- The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to:

  - ➢ Determine the policies of the Organization,
  - ➢ Appoint the Director-General,
  - ➢ Supervise financial policies, and
  - ➢ Review and approve the proposed programme budget.

- The Health Assembly is held **annually** in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Divorce in Philippines

Recently: The **Philippines**, **the only country other than the Vatican** where most married couples are not allowed to **legally divorce**, has taken a first step towards remedying the situation.

- The lower house of Philippines' Parliament passed a **Bill** to legalise divorce in the country.
- The Bill will go to the **Senate in August**, and will require presidential assent to become law.

Divorce in the Philippines:

- According to the **2020 Census**, **Roman Catholics** account for **78.8% of the household population**, which is among the **highest** in the world in terms of percentage.
- **Muslims (6.4%)** are the **second-biggest** group. Notably, Muslims have the right to divorce as they are governed by **Sharia law** in personal matters.
- Muslims in Philippines are allowed to divorce because president **Ferdinand E. Marcos** signed the legislation in **1977** allowing it.
- Divorce remains illegal in the Philippines largely because of the influence of the **Catholic Church**.
- For **traditional Christians, specifically Catholics**, marriage is seen as a sacred commitment made not just to a spouse but to God and society.
- Married Catholic couples may separate in some cases, but they cannot remarry in church.
- English monarch **Henry VIII (1509-47)** broke from the Catholic Church and named himself **Supreme Head of the Church of England** when **Pope Clement VII** denied his request to annul his marriage to **Catherine of Aragon,** enabling him to marry **Anne Boleyn.**
- Over the centuries the Church has relaxed its position in most parts of the world — barring **the Vatican, the seat of the Pope**.
- The case of the Philippines is unique.

History of divorce in Philippines:

- Divorce was allowed in the Philippines before the **Spanish rule** in the **16th Century**.
- Under the **American occupation in 1917**, the **Filipinos** could end their marriage in case of **adultery and concubinage**.
- The **Japanese**, who occupied the Philippines during **World War II,** expanded the divorce law, allowing Filipinos **11 grounds** to seek a divorce.
- The divorce legislation was struck down in **1950**.

What options do Filipinos have currently?

- Divorce is not allowed — but **legal separation** and **annulment of marriage** is.
  - ➢ The former allows parties to **live separately** but does not end the marriage, which means neither party can marry again.
  - ➢ In an annulment, the marriage is declared **void** — as though it never happened.
- Grounds for separation include physical violence or grossly abusive conduct and marital infidelity.
- The grounds for annulment are insanity, fraud, force, intimidation at the time of wedding, etc.
- These grounds have to be **proven in court**, and the legal remedy is costly and could take years.
- Women in bad marriages could continue to face domestic abuse, and their legal documents and assets may stay linked with their husbands' even after separation.

The new bill:

- Known as the **Absolute Divorce Act**, the Bill was passed in the House with a narrow margin of **131 to 109 votes**, with **20 abstentions.**
- The bill stipulates the grounds for absolute divorce, which include psychological incapacity, irreconcilable differences, domestic or marital abuse, when one of the spouses undergoes a sex reassignment surgery or transitions from one sex to another, and separation of the spouses for at least **five years**.
- The grounds for legal separation under the Family Code of the Philippines can also be considered grounds for absolute divorce.
- Lack of parental consent; insanity; fraud, force, intimidation or undue influence; impotence; and sexually transmissible diseases are also grounds for annulment of marriage and for absolute divorce.
- Petitioners can approach a family court, which will give a mandatory **60-day cooling-off period** in certain cases, if there is scope for **reconciliation**.
- If the petition goes ahead, it must be decided within **a year**.

Who is opposing it?

- In **2018**, a similar legislation passed the House only to fail in the Senate.
- Conservative lawmakers and Catholic and Christian groups continue to oppose the Bill.

- This time, some local surveys have shown about half the population to be accepting of divorce — a higher percentage than earlier.
- **Current President Bongbong Marcos** has extended his qualified support to divorce.

<u>Overview of divorce laws in India:</u>

- Divorce, as a legal option for separation, was identified and practiced in **British India** in the year **1869** which was majorly for the Christians seeking divorce lawfully.
- Currently, Divorce among Christians is governed by **the Indian Divorce Act, 1869**.
- Divorce among **Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains** is governed by the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.**
- Divorce among **Muslims** is governed by the **Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939**, and among **Parsis** by the **Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936.**
- **Civil and inter-community marriages** are governed by the **Special Marriage Act, 1956.**
- The divorce rate in India is about **1.1 per cent**, one of the lowest in the world.

BIMSTEC Charter

Recently: The **Charter** of the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** entered into force on **20 May 2024.**

What is BIMSTEC?

- Amid the financial crisis of **1997**, leading **Southeast Asian** and **South Asian nations** of the **Bay of Bengal region** came together.
  - ➢ They formed the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).**
- BIMSTEC is a multilateral regional organization established with the aim of accelerating shared growth and cooperation between littoral and adjacent countries in the Bay of Bengal region.
- It has a total of **seven member countries** –
  - ➢ **Five** from **South Asia**, including **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka**
  - ➢ **Two** from **Southeast Asia**, including **Myanmar** and **Thailand**.

- It was founded as **BIST-EC**, in **June 1997**, with the adoption of the **Bangkok Declaration**, with **Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka** and **Thailand** as members.
- It became **BIMST-EC** (**Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand - Economic Cooperation**) with the entry of **Myanmar** in **late 1997.**
- And eventually, it was named in its current form, when **Nepal** and **Bhutan** became members in **2004**.
- The aim of setting up the regional grouping was not to create a new region for cooperation but to revive the connectivity and common interests of the members of the Bay of Bengal region.
- What makes BIMSTEC different from other regional groupings is that it is a **sector-driven organisation**.
- BIMSTEC had initially focused on **6 sectors** and expanded in **2008** to **14 sectors** with **climate change** being the **14th** one.
- Out of the multiple sectors , **India** was made responsible for areas like **transportation, tourism, and counter-terrorism** earlier.
- However, during the **5th summit** in **2022,** members decided on a complete reorganization of cooperation activities**.**
- They streamlined these activities into **seven pillars,** as opposed to the earlier bifurcation of **14 sectors.**
- It further stated that **India** will be BIMSTEC's pillar for **security;** this will include areas of **counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTCC) Disaster Management** and **Energy.**
- The **seven Sectors and Sub-sectors** of BIMSTEC Cooperation are:
  - ➢ Trade, Investment and Development
  - ➢ Environment and Climate Change
  - ➢ Security; Sub-sectors- Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime; Disaster Management; Energy
  - ➢ Agriculture and Food Security; Sub-sectors: Agriculture; Fisheries and Livestock
  - ➢ People-to-People Contact; Sub-sectors: Culture; Tourism; People-to-People Contact
  - ➢ Science, Technology, and Innovation; Sub-sectors: Technology; Health; Human Resource Development
  - ➢ Connectivity
- The 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting approved including **Blue Economy, Mountain Economy**, and **Poverty Alleviation** as sub-sectors for adoption by the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit.

Working mechanism of BIMSTEC until now:

- Until the **5th summit** in **2022**, BIMSTEC did not have a formal document or organisational architecture.
- However, it did have a working mechanism for policy making and operational goals.
- **National Focal Points (NFP)** within the **Ministries of External or Foreign Affairs** of each Member State act as the contact points for all BIMSTEC communications and coordination between the BIMSTEC Secretariat and Member States.
- Policy making is done through **two types of meetings:**
  - ➢ **Summits**, which are supposed to be held every **two years**;
  - ➢ **Ministerial meetings** of **Foreign and Commerce Ministers** of member countries for deciding on trade and economic affairs, to be held once **every year.**
- An operational meeting of senior officials to monitor the activities of the grouping is also supposed to be held **twice a year.**
- Since its inception, BIMSTEC's policy making meetings have not been held as per plan.
- Just **five summits** have been held in **27 years**.
- Meanwhile, **19 ministerial meets** have taken place so far; and **between 2014 and 2017**, the Senior Officials meet was postponed **seven times**.
- BIMSTEC has a coordinating body called the **BIMSTEC Working Group.**
  - ➢ It has a rotating chairman based on which member country chairs the organisation.
  - ➢ Under this, meetings are to be held monthly at the **Dhaka secretariat** to review the progress of the regional grouping.
- BIMSTEC didn't have an official headquarters or secretariat until **2011** and **2014**, respectively.
- The headquarters were established in **Dhaka.**
- Its first **Secretary General** was **Sri Lankan diplomat Sumith Nakandala**.
- The **current Secretary General** of the BIMSTEC is **Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey** from **India**.

Significance:

- The BIMSTEC region hosts **22%** of the **world population** or 1.68 billion people; and the member states have a combined GDP of **US$3.697 trillion/per year.**
- For India, BIMSTEC aligns with its **'Act East' policy** for greater regional cooperation in southeast Asia.
- It aligns with India's goal to gain trade and security prominence in the **Indian Ocean** and supports the **'Indo-Pacific' concept**, a major focus of Quad countries.
- India had also invited BIMSTEC heads of state for Mr. Modi's swearing-in ceremony in **2019**.

- In this context, India also made efforts to enhance the pace of BIMSTEC's progress in recent years.
- The **BIMSTEC Energy Centre** was set up in **Bengaluru**, along with the **BIMSTEC Business Council**, a forum for business organisations to promote regional trade.

BIMSTEC's Charter:

- A charter is a written grant by a sovereign or legislative power that establishes a body and defines its **rights and privileges.**
- It paves the way for external partnerships and admission of observers and new members.
- Following the pandemic, the leaders of the BIMSTEC nations met virtually on **30 March 2022** as **5th summit** under the chair ship of **Sri Lanka** and adopted the charter.
- The chair of BIMSTEC was taken up by **Thailand** after the **5th leaders' summit.**
- Last month, **Nepal's** parliament took up the BIMSTEC charter and **ratified it** which paved the way for the coming into force of charter.
- With the charter taking effect, BIMSTEC has gained legal recognition.
- This development enables BIMSTEC to engage in **formal diplomatic discussions** with other alliances and nations.
- The implementation of the charter establishes a legal and institutional structure facilitating substantial collaboration and enhanced integration within the Bay of Bengal region.

Cannes Film Festival 2024

Recently: The **77ᵗʰ Cannes Film Festival**, held from **May 14 to 25** this year, saw several Indian artists win major prizes and receive critical acclaim for their works.

What is Cannes film festival?

- The **Festival de Cannes** is now the world's **most prestigious film gathering**, as well as its most widely publicised cultural event.

History:

- Its history goes back to **1936** when tensions were building up to World War II.
- In **1938**, a few months before **the War began in Europe**, some countries assembled in **Italy** to attend the **Venice Film Festival.**
- At that point, it was one of the very few competitive film festivals in the world, featuring the **USA** and **a few countries from Europe.**
- **Italy** and **Germany** were ruled by fascist parties under **Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler**, respectively.

- When it was time to give the best film award, the jury was unanimous in its choice for an **American film.**
- However, under pressure from Hitler, the **Nazi propaganda film Olympia** by director **Leni Riefenstahl** and the Italian film **Luciano Serra, Pilot** by director **Goffredo Alessandrini** reaped the ultimate accolade, named the **Mussolini Cup.**
  - ➢ **Riefenstahl** made propaganda films for Hitler's Nazi regime.
- **The UK, the USA** and **France** quit the event in response, reflecting the geo-political tensions in the region as well.
- **French** representative **Phillipe Erlanger** would then plan to establish a French event as an alternative.
- Thus, in **1939**, a festival was ready to be announced, with support from countries like the United States.
- Among the cities in contention was **Cannes**, a coastal city on the **southern tip of France**, chosen for its location as a resort town and lobbying by local hoteliers and businessmen.
- But tensions because of the War in Europe would push the **first edition** to open in **1946**, attended by stars like Kirk Douglas, Sophia Loren, Grace Kelly, Brigitte Bardot, Cary Grant, Gina Lollobrigida and the painter Pablo Picasso.
  - ➢ It featured **19 countries** and an **international jury**.

What happens at Cannes?

- The festival essentially witnesses film **premieres and screenings**, with media members and the general public having limited access to the entirety of events.
- **Invitees** to the event are **limited** and restricted to professionals in the industry.
- The hive of activity is the **Palais**, a massive complex by the sea full of cinemas with names like Buñuel, Bazin and, the granddaddy, the Grand Théâtre Lumière.
- This is where the **red carpet** runs in Cannes, nightly hosting **two or three world premieres** beneath a glass canopy flanked by rows of photographers.
- Unlike most movie premieres, there are **no reporters on the carpet**. Instead, filmmakers and casts speak with the media the day after their film premieres.
- Around **2,000 films** are submitted to the Cannes Film Festival **every year**, and the **selection committee** watches every one of them.
- The organisers added an article to the **festival regulations** authorising the withdrawal of a film submitted to it under certain conditions, to avoid issues over choosing a film.

- > This was then removed in **1957**.
- Only about **56 feature films** and **14 short films** are chosen to be part of the **Official Selection**, the main body of work that is the centre of the festival.
- Several more films are shown as **opening and closing films** and during the "sidebar" screenings of the **Directors' Fortnight** and **International Critics' Week.**
- The films that make up the **Official Selection** are divided into several categories:
  - > Competition: Feature films and Short films
  - > Feature Films Out of Competition
  - > Un Certain Regard
  - > Cinefondation
- For a film to be considered for **Competition, Out of Competition or Un Certain Regard,** it must have been produced during the **12 months** leading up to the festival, and it can't have been presented in any **international context**.
- For **Competition**, the rules also state that the film must have been released theatrically in **France.**
- Short films can't run more than **15 minutes** and Feature films can run as long as they want.
- Films that are screened **Out of Competition** are generally those that **the Cannes selection committee** really wants to recognize but don't quite fit the Competition criteria.
- **Un Certain Regard** is often used to display **first-time films**, experimental techniques, and progressive trends showing up in the work of established directors but not yet recognized in mainstream cinema.
- The **Cinefondation category**, established in **1998**, is exclusively for film students currently enrolled in film school.

Awards:

- There are two official juries at the Cannes Film Festival:
  - > **The Feature Films Jury**
  - > **The Short Films and Cinefondation Jury**
- Voting is by **secret ballot and majority rules**. Members of the juries cannot have a film in competition.
- Jury members are invited by the same selection committee that chooses the films.
- Barbie's mastermind **Greta Gerwig** has been bopping around this year's Cannes Film Festival as the **jury president**.

- There are lots of awards at the Cannes Film Festival, but the biggest of them all is the **Palme d'Or** established in **1955**, which is awarded to the **best feature film** and the **best short film** in competition.
- In general, when people refer to "the Palme d'Or," they mean the one for **feature films.**
- The **first and only Indian film** to won the Palme d'or was **1946's Neecha Nagar**, directed by **Chetan Anand.**
- The **Camera d'Or** is awarded by a separate jury to the best **first-time film** in the entire festival, including all sections of the Official Selection, the Directors' Fortnight and International Critics' Week.
- By Cannes standards, a **"first-time film"** is at least an **hour long** and its director has never before made a movie of that length for the cinema or TV.

India's Awards:

- At the 77th Cannes Film Festival, a crop of new films ended India's long-standing also-ran status at the annual event.
- Not only did **8 titles from the subcontinent** play across the festival's official and parallel sections, India also returned with a historic haul of **3 awards.**
- **Filmmaker Payal Kapadia** made history, as she became the **first person from India** to clinch the **prestigious Grand Prix**, the **second highest prize** after the Palme d'Or.
  - ➢ Kapadia's film "**All We Imagine As Light**" is a drama centered on **two Malayali nurses** who have moved to a beautifully-shot **Mumbai**, and are navigating life, love and sisterhood.
  - ➢ It is the first Indian movie in **three decades** to compete in Cannes' main competition.
  - ➢ "All We Imagine As Light" received **an eight-minute standing** ovation when it premiered during the festival.
  - ➢ Kapadia had previously won the festival's **L'Oeil d'Or award** in **2021** for her acclaimed documentary **"A Night of Knowing Nothing**."
  - ➢ "**Salaam Bombay**!" won the **festival's Camera d'Or** in **1988.**
- **Anasuya Sengupta** clinched the **best actress prize** in the **Un Certain Regard sidebar** for her performance in **Konstantin Bojanov's** India-set drama **The Shameless**.
- Mysore-based **Chidananda S. Naik's FTII certificate film "Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know"** bagged the **La Cinef first prize**, only the **second Indian film** to do so.

- Indian films at Cannes 2024 moved away from the Mumbai gangster theme that had dominated recent selections, especially in Directors' Fortnight (e.g., "Gangs of Wasseypur," "Peddlers," "Ugly," "Rama Raghav 2.0").

Other Winners:

- American director **Sean Baker's Anora** won the **Palme d'Or,** the top prize at Cannes.
- **"The man who could not remain silent"** by **Nebojša Slijepcevic** got the Palme d'or for **short films.**
- The **Portuguese director Miguel Gomes** recognized as the **Best Director prize** for **Grand Tour**.
- **Selena Gomez, Karla Sofía Gascón, Zoe Saldaña, Adriana Paz** got the **best actress prize** in **competetion** for **Emilia Perez.**
- **Jesse Plemons** got the award for **best actor in competetion category** for **kinds of kindness.**
- **Armand** by **Halfdan Ullmann Tøndel** got the **Caméra d'or award.**

Chabahar Port

Recently: **The US** has warned of potential sanctions for any country considering business deals with **Iran**, hours after **India signed a 10-year contract** to operate the **Chabahar port with Tehran**.

- **Sarbananda Sonowal**, India's shipping minister, called it a "historic moment in India-Iran ties" while attending the event with his counterpart **Mehrdad Bazrpash**.
- Analysts in New Delhi say the threat of sanctions could dampen hopes of turning the port into a trading hub.

What is Chabahar port?

- "**Chabahar**" literally means a place where **all four seasons** of the year are like **spring**.
- Chabahar is a **deep water port** in **Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province.**
- It is the Iranian port that is the **closest to India**, and is located in **the open sea**, providing easy and secure access for large cargo ships.
- The Chabahar Port, which sits at the mouth of the **Gulf of Oman,** offers India an alternative route for trade with **Afghanistan and Central Asia** - with Pakistan denying India land access to these regions.
- It serves as **Iran's only oceanic port**, and consists of **two** separate ports named **Shahid Kalantari** and **Shahid Beheshti**, each of which has **five berths.**
- It is only about **170 kilometres west** of the **Pakistani port of Gwadar.**

Why it is important for India?

- For India, Chabahar port is an optimally located node for accessing **Afghanistan**, **Central Asia**, the **Caucasus** and **Eurasian markets.**
- The **Kandla port in Gujarat** is the closest to **Chabahar port** at **550 Nautical Miles.**
- The distance between **Chabahar and Mumbai** is **786 Nautical Miles.**
- West Asian experts argue that Chabahar is a linchpin in India's quest for regional connectivity, economic growth, and geopolitical influence.
- Amid regional tensions and geopolitical rivalries in the Middle East, Chabahar offers India a crucial **alternative route** for trade and connectivity.
- By bypassing Pakistan's ports, particularly **Karachi** and **Gwadar**, India aims to reduce its dependency on traditional routes vulnerable to political disruptions
- This diversification strategy aligns with the country's broader foreign policy objectives of strengthening ties with **energy-rich Central Asian countries.**
- Iran holds significant reserves of **oil and natural gas**, making it a crucial partner for India's energy security.
- The key Iranian port serves as a lifeline for delivering **humanitarian assistance**, reconstruction efforts, and trade supplies to **Afghanistan**.
- As China expands its footprint across South Asia through its **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, India seeks to counterbalance Chinese influence by bolstering its own connectivity projects.
- Chabahar is also part of the proposed **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, **a 7,200-km-long** multi-modal transportation route linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the **Caspian Sea via Iran.**
  - It extends to **northern Europe via Saint Petersburg** in **Russia**.
  - Shipments through the INSTC route will take **15 days less** compared to the **Suez Canal route**, according to industry estimates.

India's involvement in the Chabahar port:

- It was the year **1973**, when **Iran inaugurated the Chabahar port**, marking its strategic significance.

- India's involvement began in **2002**, when **Hassan Rouhani**, then National Security Advisor (NSA) to **President Syed Mohammad Khatami**, held discussions with his Indian counterpart, **Brajesh Mishra**.
- On President Khatami's visit to India the following year, he and PM **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** signed a roadmap of strategic cooperation, one of the key projects in which was **Chabahar.**
- This interest materialised in **2008** when India and Iran signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** for Chabahar and the development of a **transit corridor.**
- By **2012**, India committed **$100 million** to kickstart Chabahar's infrastructure development.
- A key moment came in **May 2016** when **India, Iran,** and **Afghanistan** inked the **Trilateral Agreement**, solidifying Chabahar's role as an **International Transport and Transit Corridor.**
- This laid the groundwork for India to **take over operations** of the **Shaheed Behesti port** in December **2016**.
- Meanwhile, in **January 2015, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL)** was incorporated under the **Companies Act, 2013**, for the development of ports overseas.
- In **October 2017**, India dispatched its **maiden wheat** shipment to **Afghanistan** through Chabahar and in **2018**, Iran granted **IPGL** operational control over the port through its wholly owned subsidiary, **India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ).**
- By **2019**, the **United States** exempted Chabahar port from its sanctions on **Iran**, recognising its pivotal role in facilitating Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts.
- In **2020**, despite US sanctions on Iran's nuclear program and the pandemic, India stayed devoted to Chabahar's development, stressing its regional trade importance.
- In **2022**, India announced intentions to secure a **long-term arrangement** with Iran for Chabahar's management.

The latest agreement:

- India and Iran signed a **10-year contract** for the operation of a terminal at the strategically important **Chabahar port** in **Iran.**
- Union Minister for Shipping, Ports and Waterways **Sarbananda Sonowal** witnessed the signing of the contract between **IPGL** and **Ports & Maritime Organisation of Iran (PMO)** in **Tehran.**

- The new pact replaces the **2016 agreement**, which covered India's operations at **Shahid Beheshti terminal** in Chabahar port and was **renewed annually.**
- This is the **first time** India takes over the **management of an overseas port** that is expected to boost exponentially trade among India, Iran and Afghanistan.
- The management of India will be restricted to **Shahid Beheshti terminal out of the 2 terminals.**
- The Ministry of External Affairs has allocated **₹ 100 crore** for the Chabahar Port for **2024-25.**
- IPGL will invest approximately **$120 million** to equip and operate the port for the duration of the contract.
- The two sides will further extend their cooperation in Chabahar thereafter.
- India has also offered a credit window in rupees equivalent to **$250 million** for **mutually identified projects** to improve infrastructure related to the port. In simple terms, $250 mn will be given through **debt financing**.

Why was the agreement delayed?

- The progression of the port's development was hindered by US sanctions on Iran due to its suspected nuclear program.
- In years when **western sanctions** against **Iran** increased, the Chabahar project has been put on the back-burner.
- In the years when nuclear talks that resulted in the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** or the **Iran Nuclear Deal** in **2015** came into being, the Chabahar port has been easier to work on.
- In **2018**, the **U.S. Trump administration** put paid to India's plans by walking out of the JCPOA and slapping new sanctions on dealing with Iran.
- This led to the Modi government **"zeroing out"** all its oil imports from Iran, earlier a major supplier to India, causing a strain in ties.
- Even with a U.S. exemption, sourcing equipment and engaging companies for Chabahar's development remains challenging due to fears of secondary sanctions.

India-Iran relations:

- The two countries shared a border till **1947** and share several common features in their language, culture and traditions.
- Independent **India and Iran** established diplomatic links on **15 March 1950.**
- In addition to the **Embassy** in **Tehran**, India currently has **two Consulates** in **Iran** - **Bandar Abbas and Zahedan**.

- After the **2003 Vajpayee-Khatami agreement**, follow-up action was slow as India drew closer to the administration of **President George W Bush.**
- The US had put Iran in the so-called "**axis of evil**" along with **Saddam Hussein's Iraq** and **Kim Jong-Il's North Korea** which put pressure on New Delhi to go slow in its relationship with Tehran.
- But recent developments – visa-free travel for Indians, and Iran's entry into BRICS -- seem to provide reason for cautious optimism.

International Solar Alliance

Recently: Spain has become the **99th member** of the **International Solar Alliance.**

- External Affairs Ministry spokesperson **Randhir Jaiswal** said that Spain handed over the International Solar Alliance **Instrument of Ratification**.
- This occurred during the meeting of Ambassado**r José María Ridao Domínguez** of Spain with the Head of Depository, Joint Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry **Abhishek Singh** in **New Delhi.**

International Solar Alliance (ISA):

- International Solar Alliance (ISA) is one of its kind multilateral organisation established to catalyse global solar growth.
- The vision of the organisation is "**Let us together make the sun brighter."**
- While the mission is "**Every home no matter how far away, will have a light at home."**
- The Headquarters is in India with its Interim Secretariat being set up in **Gurugram.**

- **Dr Ajay Mathur** is the **Director General** of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)**,** The Director General has a term of **four years** and is eligible for re-election.
- In **2021**, the **UN General Assembly** granted **Observer Status** to the ISA, a decision India praised for fostering cooperation between the Alliance and the UN to boost global energy growth and development.

Formation:

- The ISA was conceived as a joint effort by **India** and **France** to mobilize efforts against climate change through deployment of **solar energy solutions.**
- It was conceptualized on the sidelines of the **21st Conference of Parties (COP21)** to the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** held in **Paris** in **2015**.
- The ISA was formed by **PM Narendra Modi** and **then French President Francois Hollande** on **November 30, 2015**.

Membership:

- ISA was earlier an alliance of **sunshine countries**, which lie either completely or partly between the **Tropic of Cancer** and the **Tropic of Capricorn.**
- With the amendment of its **Framework Agreement in 2020**, all member states of the **United Nations** are now eligible to join the ISA.
- At present, **119 countries (latest Malta)** are signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement, of which **99 countries** have submitted the necessary instruments of **ratification** to become full members.
- Certified copies of the Framework Agreement of the ISA are to be signed in original in **three languages English, Hindi,** and **French**.

Aim:

- The ISA strives to develop and deploy cost-effective and transformational energy solutions powered by the sun.
- Its aim is to help member countries develop **low-carbon** growth trajectories, with particular focus on delivering impact in countries categorized as **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** and the **Small Island Developing States (SIDS).**
- The ISA is guided by its '**Towards 1000' strategy**.
  - ➢ This strategy aims to mobilize **USD 1,000 billion** of investments in solar energy solutions by **2030**.

- It also aims to deliver energy access to **1,000 million** people using clean energy solutions and result in the installation of **1,000 GW of solar energy capacity.**
- This would help mitigate global solar emissions to the tune of **1,000 million tonnes** of **CO2 every year.**
- The ISA has set a target of **1 TW (terawatt) of solar energy** by **2030**, which current **French President Emmanuel Macron** said would require **$1 trillion to achieve**.

Implementation:

- For meeting its goals, the ISA takes a programmatic approach.
- Currently, the ISA has **9 comprehensive programmes**, each focusing on a distinct application that could help scale deployment of solar energy solutions.
- Activities under the programmes focuses on **3 priority areas** – **Analytics & Advocacy, Capacity Building**, and **Programmatic Support**, that help create a favourable environment for solar energy investments to take root in the country.

Major projects of ISA:

One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG):

- The idea for the OSOWOG initiative was put forth by Modi, at the **First Assembly of the ISA** in **October 2018.**
- The **Green Grids Initiative — One Sun, One World, One Grid initiative** was jointly launched by **Indian PM Modi**, and the then **UK PM Boris Johnson.**
  - This launch took place during the '**Accelerating Innovation and Clean Technology Deployment' event** at the World Leaders Summit held on **2 November 2021** during **COP26.**
  - In addition to the launch of the initiative, this event also included the launch of the '**One Sun Declaration**' as approved by the **Fourth Assembly** of the **ISA.**
- The initiative aims at connecting energy supply across borders.
- The vision behind the OSOWOG initiative is the mantra that **"the sun never sets".**

- The OSOWOG initiative aims to connect different regional grids through a common grid that will be used to transfer renewable energy power.
- It has been taken up under the technical assistance program of the **World Bank.**

STAR-C Initiative:

- The STAR C initiative aims to develop the necessary skills in a country's populace to support energy transition activities, create jobs, and boost economic growth.
- **STAR Centres** act as hubs of technology, knowledge, and expertise on solar energy and are a go-to place for a Member Country at the regional or country levels.
- ISA is working towards setting up several STAR Centres, which serve as shared facilities within a particular region.

ITEC Scheme:

- The Government of India has been supporting the ISA by providing training to master trainers in the field of solar energy through the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Scheme**.
- The duration of the training is **21 days** and all costs are borne by the Government of India.
- In **2018-2019**, **133 candidates** from **25 countries** were trained at the **National Institute of Solar Energy, Gurugram**, with the support of the ITEC programme.

ISA solar fellowship for mid-career professionals:

- Under this scheme, fellowships in the field of solar energy management will be offered to **mid-career professionals** from ISA countries for pursuing a master's degree in renewable energy management and economics.
- They would be expected to contribute towards policy development in their home country.
- **21 candidates from 18 ISA Member countries** are currently pursuing Masters degree in RE Management and Economics in the first batch that commenced **on 22 July 2019**.

6th session of ISA:

- The **Sixth Assembly** of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was hosted at Bharat Mandapam, in **New Delhi** on **October 31, 2023.**
- It was presided over by the Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Government of India, **Shri R. K. Singh** in his capacity as the **President** of the ISA Assembly.
- Ministers from **20 countries** and delegates from across **116 Member and Signatory countries** participated in the Assembly.
- 6th Assembly of International Solar Alliance Assembly decided to increase **Viability Gap Funding Cap** for solar projects from **10% up to 35%** of project cost.
- ISA-funded **4 new projects** were inaugurated in **Malawi Parliament** and projects in **Fiji, Seychelles and Kiribati.**
- The Assembly is the **apex decision-making body** of ISA, in which each Member Country is represented. This body makes decisions concerning the implementation of the ISA's Framework Agreement and coordinated actions to be taken to achieve its objective.

Peru classifies 'Trans' People as mentally- ill

Recently: Hundreds of protesters in Peru's capital marched to demand the scrapping of a **new law** that describes transgender people, among others, as having a **mental illness,** so they can access health benefits.

- Around 500 demonstrators peacefully walked the streets of Peru's capital **Lima**, hoisting banners with slogans that **read "No more stigmas"** and **"My identity is not a disease."**

What is the matter?

- The government of Peru has officially declared transgender people "mentally ill."
- The decree will reportedly update **Peru's Essential Health Insurance Plan (PEAS)** to officially classify certain conditions as **mental health disorders.**
- These conditions include "transsexualism," "dual role transvestism," "gender identity disorder in childhood," "other gender identity disorders," "fetish transvestism," and "egodystonic sexual orientation".
- **WHO** had adopted the **eleventh edition** of its **International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD)** in **2018** where it withdrew 'gender incongruence' from the mental health disorder category and classified it as a **sexual health condition**.

Government's Argument:

- Peru's **Ministry of Health (Minsa)** confirmed its position that "gender and sexual diversity are not diseases" and its "rejection of the stigmatization of sexual diversity."
- The ministry states that the update to PEAS is carried out in the face of the **need to ensure the benefit of comprehensive mental health interventions**, as conditions for the full exercise of the right to health and well-being of the person, the family and the community.
- According to the government, it was the **only way it could "guarantee full coverage of medical attention for mental health"** for trans, non-binary, and intersex people under the country's universal health insurance.
- The statement also stated that "Sexual orientation and gender identity of a person does not in itself constitute a physical or mental health disorder and therefore should not be subjected to treatment or medical care or to so-called conversion therapies," which are illegal in Peru.

<u>**Contentions:**</u>

- Critics of the law have argued that the update of the country's PEAS health regulations was **unnecessary,** since <u>existing rules already allowed for universal access to mental health services.</u>
- It is also being contended that the decision showed a **lack of awareness** around the complexity of LGBTQ+ issues.
- According to activists and experts, the change will exacerbate the situation in a super-conservative society, where the LGBT community has no rights and labeling them as mentally ill opens the door to conversion therapy.

<u>**What is Transgender?**</u>

- Transgender is a broad term that can be used to describe people whose <u>gender identity is different from the gender they were thought to be, when they were born.</u>
- **Sex** is a label — **male or female** — that you're assigned by a doctor at birth based on the appearance of the genitals you're born with.
- **Gender identity** is the internal knowledge of one's gender – for example, your knowledge that you're a man, a woman, or another gender.
- **Gender expression** is how a person presents their gender on the outside.
- When a person begins to live according to their gender identity, rather than the gender they were thought to be when they were born, this time period is called **Gender Transition.**
- Some transgender people identify as **neither a man nor a woman**, or as a **combination** of male and female, and may use terms like **nonbinary or genderqueer** to describe their gender identity.
- The opposite of transgender is **cisgender**, which describes persons whose gender identity matches their assigned sex.
- Being transgender is distinct from **sexual orientation.**
  - ➢ Sexual Orientation is the emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction that a person feels towards another person.

<u>**What is Transexual?**</u>

- Historically and medically, the term transsexual was used to indicate a difference between one's internal sense of gender and what was assigned at birth.
- More specifically, the term is often used to communicate that one's experience of gender involves **medical changes**, such as hormones or surgery, that help alter their anatomy and appearance to more closely align with their gender identity.
- Some transgender people who **desire medical assistance** to transition from one sex to another identify as **transsexual.**
- Some transgender people find the word transsexual to be **offensive and stigmatizing.**
- This is because of its history and roots in the professional fields of medicine and psychology, which used this term to incorrectly label all transgender people as **mentally ill or sexually deviant.**
- Professionals in medicine and mental health now understand that having a transgender or transsexual gender identity isn't a mental illness, and that transgender identities are a naturally occurring part of human gender diversity and gender experiences.
- **May 17** is observed as the **International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).**

History of Transgender in India:

Ancient Times:

- Transgender community comprises of **Hijras, eunuchs, Kothis, Aravanis, Jogappas, Shiv-Shakthis etc.**
- The concept of **tritiyaprakriti (third-nature)** or **napumsaka** has been integral to Hindu mythology, Vedic and Puranic literature, epics and folktales.
  - ➤ The term napumsaka here indicates the **absence of the ability to procreate**, thus, distinguishing them from both masculine and feminine markers.
- These are also spelled out in the **Kama Sutra** (c. 4th century AD) and elsewhere as **pumsprakrtistri-prakrti** (female-nature), and **tritiya-prakrti** (thirdnature).
- Various texts suggest that third sex individuals were well known in **pre-modern India**, and included male bodied or female-bodied people as well as **intersexuals**, and that they can often be recognized from childhood.

- The foundational work of Hindu law, the **Manu Smriti (200 BC – 200 AD)** explains the biological origins of the three sexes:
  - ➤ "A male child is produced by a greater quantity of male seed, a female child by the prevalence of the female; **if both are equal**, a **third-sex child** or boy and girl twins are produced."
- Indian linguist **Patanjali**'s work on Sanskrit grammar, the **Mahabhaya (200 BC)**, states that Sanskrit's **three grammatical genders** are derived from **three natural genders.**
- The earliest Tamil grammar, the **Tolkappiyam** (3rd century BC) also refers to **hermaphrodites** as a **third "neuter" gender.**
- In fact, the **Jain text** even mentions the concept of **"psychological sex",** which emphasized the **psychological make-up of an individual, distinct from their sexual characteristics.**
- The trans persons (referred to as hijras in the **Ramayana**) were the ones who **waited in the woods for 14 years** after Lord Rama asked "men and women" to "wipe their tears and go away," after being exiled.
  - ➤ This was because they did not fall within the gender-binary.
  - ➤ Impressed with their loyalty, Rama sanctioned them the power to **confer blessings on people** on auspicious occasions like child birth and marriage, and also at inaugural functions.
- The epic **Mahabharata** carries two main references to trans persons — **Aravan and Shikhandi.**

Medieval Times:

- Mughal Period Hijras played a famous role in the royal courts of the Islamic world, particularly in the **Ottoman empires** and the **Mughal rule** in the Medieval India.
- They rose to well-known positions as political advisors, administrators, generals as well as guardians of the harems.
- They were able to influence state decisions and also received large amount of money to have been closest to kings and queens.

British Era:

- In the beginning of the British period in Indian subcontinent, hijra used to accept **protections and benefits** by some Indian states.

- Through the onset of colonial rule from the 18th century onwards, the situation changed drastically.
- Accounts of early European travelers showed that they were repulsed by the sight of Hijras and could not comprehend why they were given so much respect in the royal courts and other institutions.
- In the second half of the 19th century, the British colonial administration vigorously sought to **criminalize the hijra community** and to **deny them the civil rights.**
- Hijras were considered to be **separate caste or tribe** in different parts of India by the colonial administration.
- The **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871**, included all hijra who were concerned in kidnapping and castrating children and dressed like women to dance in public places.
  - ➢ The punishment for such activities was up to **two years imprisonment** and a fine or both.
- The Act was **repealed in 1952,** however, its legacy continues.
  - ➢ For instance, The **Karnataka Police Act was amended in 2012** to "provide for registration and surveillance of Hijras who indulged in kidnapping of children, unnatural offences and offences of this nature".
- Therefore, pre-partition history influences the vulnerable circumstances of hijra in this contemporary world.

Contemporary Conditions:

- The transgender in India is possibly the most well-known and popular third type of sex in the modern world.
- In the contemporary time, the Government of India introduced so many welfare policy and schemes such as:
  - ➢ Census, documentation, issuing of the citizenship ID Cards, issuing passports, social- economic development and constitutional safeguards for the transgender people.
- The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** is a major initiative of the **11th Five Year Plan** period which brought **employment opportunities for transgender people.**
- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment enacted "The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**" for protection of rights of transgender people and their welfare.
- On 21st Aug, 2020, **National Council for Transgender Persons** was constituted to advise Government on policies, programmes, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.
- **SMILE - Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise"** was introduced on **12.02.2022,** which includes sub scheme - **'Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons'.**

> ➢ The focus of the sub-scheme is on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities and intervention, counseling, education, skill development, economic linkages to the transgender persons.

Important Judgements concerning the LGBTQ+ community:

Naz Foundation v Government of NCT Delhi, 2009:

- In this judgement for the first time **Delhi High Court** declared **Section 377** to be **unconstitutional.**
- **Section 377 of the IPC** criminalized sexual relationship between same sex couple.

Suresh Kumar Koushal vs Naz Foundation, 2013:

- A two- judge bench of **Supreme Court** overturned the Delhi High Court judgement in Naz Foundation v. NCT of Delhi and **reinstated section 377 of IPC.**

National Legal Services Authority vs the Union of India, 2014:

- For the first time in legal history, **Transgender people were recognised as citizens of this country,** all the Fundamental Rights were extended to them and they were given the identity of **Third Gender.**

Justice (Retd) K S Puttaswamy vs Union of India, 2017:

- In the judgement, **Article 21** of the Constitution of India which grants us the **Right to Life and Liberty** was also expanded to include the **Right to Privacy.**
- It recognized the privacy for members of the **LGBTQIA community** as an inalienable right and granted them autonomy and protection from State action while exercising their **right to choose their partners**.

Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, 2018:

- It is popularly known, is the seminal judgement that **decriminalized homosexuality in India.**
- The Supreme Court Bench struck down **Section 377** to the extent that it criminalized **sex between two consenting adults.**
- The Supreme Court further held that Section 377 violates **Articles 14, 15, 16 and 19 1 (a) of the Constitution of India.**

Arun Kumar v Inspector General of Registration, Tamil Nadu, 2019:

- It is a case from the **Madras High Court** which reads into the category of brides to include **transwomen.**
- Under **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955** the definition of marriage only includes men and women. This judgement expands the category of women to include **transgender people to identify as women, to be brides** as well.

Conditions of LGBT in Peru:

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Peru face some legal challenges not experienced by other residents.
- **Same-sex sexual activity** among consenting adults is **legal.**
- However, households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for the same legal protections available to opposite-sex couples.
- In **2017,** a government decree prohibited all forms of discrimination and hate crimes on the basis of **sexual orientation** and **gender identity.**
- In a landmark ruling published on **9 January 2017**, the **7th Constitutional Court** of **Lima** ruled in favor of recognizing and registering a **same-sex marriage**, between a **Peruvian citizen and a Mexican citizen**, performed in Mexico City in **2010.**
  - ➤ In **March 2018**, the **ruling was reversed** by the Supreme Court of Peru on procedural grounds.
- Homosexuality has been used as **grounds for separation or divorce.**
- Society's attitude towards homosexuals has generally been hostile and is still heavily influenced by the Catholic Church.

Economy & Business

30 years of TRIPS

Recently: WTO members commemorated on 25 April the **30th anniversary** of the Agreement on **Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS),** concluded in **Marrakesh** as part of the historic package of multilateral agreements that brought the **WTO** into existence in **1995.**

- Speaking at a High-level Dialogue to mark the date, **WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** said the anniversary was an opportunity to engage in a forward-looking dialogue on how the WTO can best respond to current and future intellectual property needs and interests of its members.

The evolution of International Trade:

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT):

- GATT traces its origins to the **1944 Bretton Woods Conference**, which laid the foundations for the post-World War II financial system and established two key institutions, the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and the **World Bank.**
- The conference delegates also recommended the establishment of a complementary institution to be known as the **International Trade Organization (ITO),** which they envisioned as the third leg of the system.
  - GATT was the outcome of the **failure of negotiating governments** to create the International Trade Organization (ITO) after the **US** senate failed to ratify the **Havana Charter** or the draft charter for the ITO.
- The **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** was signed on **October 30, 1947**, by **23 nations,** and came into effect on **January 1, 1948.**
- It was a legal agreement that aimed to **reduce trade barriers** by abolishing or decreasing quotas, tariffs, and subsidies while retaining considerable restrictions.
- Large multilateral trade conferences were conducted under GATT, on a regular basis to hammer out tariff reductions and other issues.
- From **1947 to 1993**, **seven** such "rounds" were held:
  - 1st Round- **Geneva** in **1947**
  - 2nd Round- **Annecy, France,** in **1949**
  - 3rd Round- **Torquay, England**, in **1951**
  - 4th Round- **Geneva** in **1956** and again in **1960–62.**
  - 5th Round- The **Kennedy Round (1964–67)**
  - 6th Round- The **Tokyo Round (1973–79)**
  - 7th Round- The **Uruguay Round (1986–94)**
- These agreements were successful in lowering average tariffs on industrial goods throughout the world from **40% of their market value** in **1947** to less than **5% in 1993.**
- The Uruguay Round was the most comprehensive collection of trade liberalization accords ever negotiated by the GATT.

The Uruguay Round:

- In the biggest negotiating mandate on trade ever agreed, the Uruguay Round talks aimed to extend the trading system into several new areas, notably trade in services and intellectual property.

- The **550-page** *"Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Discussions,"* was signed by ministers in **Marrakesh, Morocco**, on **April 15, 1994**, hence known as **Marrakesh Agreement.**
- At the end of the round, a global trade deal was signed that dropped tariffs on industrial products by an average of **40%**, decreased agricultural subsidies, and contained ground-breaking new accords on services trade.
- The agreement also established the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** as a new and stronger global organization tasked with monitoring and regulating international trade.
- A long list of about **60 agreements, annexes, decisions, and understandings was adopted.** The agreements fall into **six main parts**:
  ➢ The Agreement Establishing the WTO
  ➢ The Multilateral Agreements on Trade in Goods, including the GATT 1994 and the Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS)
  ➢ The General Agreement on Trade in Services
  ➢ The Agreement on **Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights**
  ➢ Dispute settlement
  ➢ Reviews of governments' trade policies
- The GATT 1947 was terminated and WTO preserved its provisions in form of **GATT 1994** and continues to govern trade in goods.
- The trade in services and intellectual property rights were not covered by regular GATT rules.

World Trade Organization:

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland** that regulates and facilitates international trade.
- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
- The WTO is the world's largest international economic organization, with **164 member states** representing over **98% of global trade** and **global GDP.**
- It also has **23 observer governments** (like Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc).
- **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** is the current Director- General of WTO.

- Its top decision-making body is the **Ministerial Conference**, which is composed of all member states and usually convenes **biennially.**
- Day-to-day functions are handled by the **General Council**, made up of representatives from all members.
- A **Secretariat** of over **600 personnel**, led by the **Director-General and four deputies,** provides administrative, professional, and technical services.
- **Goal 10** of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals also referenced WTO agreements as instruments of reducing inequality.

Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS):

- The Agreement on TRIPS is an international legal agreement between all the member nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that came into force in **1995**, as part of the **Marrakesh Agreement** that established the **World Trade Organisation (WTO).**
- It is crucial for promoting trade in knowledge and innovation, resolving intellectual property trade disputes

What is Intellectual Property?

- What is an Intellectual Property?
- Intellectual property (IP) is a category of property that includes intangible creations of the human intellect.
- It is a form of legal protection in the form of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) given to individuals or companies for their creative and innovative works.
- **Article 27** of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** talks about these rights.
- **Patent, Copyright, Trade Secret, Geographical Indication, Trademark** are some of the common areas of Intellectual Property.
- Trade Marks Act, 1999, The Patents Act, 1970 (amended in 2005), The Copyright Act, 1957, the Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, are some of the Indian statutes that protect Intellectual Property in India.
-
- In **1883,** the **Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property** was signed as the first step for the establishment of the protection for intellectual properties.
- On **April 26th 1970**, the Convention establishing the **World Intellectual Property Organisation** entered into force, creating **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**, which became a UN specialised agency in **1974.**

- The whole TRIPS Agreement is further divided into **seven parts** which contain the complex provisions regarding intellectual property:
  - ➤ **Part I-** General Provisions and Basic Principles (**Article 1 to Article 8**)

- ➢ **Part II-** This part covers the requirements for the availability, scope, and application of intellectual property rights. (**Article 9 to Article 40)**
- ➢ **Part III-** The enforcement of IPRs is the focus of this part. (**Article 41 to Article 61**)
- ➢ **Part IV-** This part covers the procedures for obtaining and maintaining intellectual property rights. (**Article 62**)
- ➢ **Part V-** This part deals with the prevention and resolution of conflicts resulting from the provisions of the Agreement. (**Article 63 to Article 64**)
- ➢ **Part VI-** This part is about transitional agreements. (**Article 65 to Article 67**)
- ➢ **Part VII-** This part of the Agreement deals with a variety of institutional arrangements. (**Article 68 to Article 73**)
- The TRIPS agreement introduced intellectual property law into the multilateral trading system for the first time and remains the **most comprehensive multilateral agreement on intellectual property** to date.
- In **2001,** developing countries, concerned that developed countries were insisting on an overly narrow reading of TRIPS, initiated a round of talks that resulted in the **Doha Declaration.**
- The Doha declaration is a WTO statement that clarifies the **scope of TRIPS**, stating for example that TRIPS can and should be interpreted in light of the goal "to promote access to medicines for all."
- It has **164 members** (all WTO members) and is based in **Marrakesh, Morocco.**
- In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, **India and South Africa** had proposed to the WTO in **October 2020** that the TRIPS Agreement be waived off for COVID vaccines, medicines and diagnostics for the time period of the pandemic in order.
    - ➢ This would make the vaccines more available to people of developing countries and also LDCs.
- The US, which was opposed to any TRIPS waiver, has backed this proposal, along with the EU.

Zimbabwe's new Currency

Recently: Zimbabwe rolled out a new **gold-backed currency** called the **ZiG,** or **Zimbabwe Gold**, in an effort to mitigate the currency instability and hyperinflation that has plagued the country for decades.

- This innovative legal tender aims to provide stability and restore confidence in the country's financial system after years of crippling hyperinflation and exchange rate volatility.
- **John Mushayavanhu** is the **Governor** of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe.

The History of Zimbabwe's currencies:

- Zimbabwe has long struggled with high inflation, with inflation rates **exceeding 500%** in recent years.
  - ➢ In March 2024, the annual rate of price increases at **55.3%,** a **seven-month high.**
- In **2008,** hyperinflation peaked at staggering levels, causing the Zimbabwe dollar, introduced in **1980**, to lose its value and the government to abandon it in **2009.**

- Since then, the US dollar and other foreign currencies have been widely-used throughout the economy.
  - US dollar accounts for around **85% of transactions** in the country.
  - The Zimbabwe dollar is currently trading at **$1 US for every $2,000** on the black market.
- Zimbabwe was forced to abandon the use of US dollars after greenbacks vanished from circulation.
  - Greenbacks were emergency paper currency issued by the US during the **American civil war.**
- To fix the problem, the country's central bank introduced **bond notes** in **2016**, a currency it said had the same value as the greenback.
  - The **bond note crashed** when the government began printing excess money.
- In **2018**, Zimbabwe again **reintroduced the Zimbabwe dollar**, also known as the **real time gross settlement (RTGS)** dollar.
- In **2019,** the US dollar was outlawed in local transactions.
- In **2022**, Zimbabwe introduced **gold coins** and in **2023,** the country introduced **gold- backed digital currency.**

About ZiG:

- The ZiG, now the **sixth currency** used by Zimbabwe, has been in circulation since **April 5, 2024.**
- Banks in Zimbabwe have been converting the previous national currency, the **Zimbabwe dollar, into ZiGs,** aiming to promote simplicity, certainty, and predictability in monetary and financial matters.
- ZiG notes and coins will be available and issued in denominations: **1ZiG, 2ZiG, 5ZiG, 10ZiG, 20Zig, 50ZiG, 100ZiG, and 200ZiG.**
- Zimbabweans have **21 days to exchange** old, inflation-hit notes for the new currency.
- **Coins will also be introduced** to overcome the shortage of US coins.
- The Zimbabwe gold-backed digital currency will be used as **legal tender** and a store of value alongside the Zimbabwean dollar and bond notes.
- Backed by a certain amount of gold, which helps keep its value stable, this currency is **tied to the market value** of the gold – unlike a fiat currency.
- Ideally, backing a digital currency with gold involves having a certain measure of **gold reserves** and depends on the **current market value** of gold.

- According to state-owned media reports, Zimbabwe in April had **350kgs (12,346 ounces) of gold** in reserves valued at **$22.80m** at the current price and intends to build reserves to **around $100m.**
- Zimbabwe's gold-backed digital tokens have a vesting period of **180 days,** have a **prescribed asset status**, and are **acceptable as collateral** for loans, too.

<u>Reports & Indices</u>

<u>Global Travel & Tourism Index 2024</u>

Source- https://images.app.goo.gl/3uvQLmv1FJfWLVE49

<u>Recently:</u> The 2024 edition of the Global Tourism & Travel Index was released by the **World Economic Forum.**

About the Index:

- The **Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI)** was first introduced in **2022.**
- It benchmarks and measures the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable and resilient development of the **Travel & Tourism (T&T) sector.**
- The index is a direct evolution of the **Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI)**, which has been published biennially since **2007.**
- The 2024 edition of the TTDI was produced in collaboration with the **University of Surrey.**
  - As the index **knowledge partner,** the university provided valuable technical and strategic support for the TTDI and related content.
- The biennial index analysed the travel and tourism sectors of **119 countries** around a range of factors and policies.
- This edition of the index also includes several improvements that are designed to take advantage of newly available data.
  - The data includes **World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)'s** recently developed indicators on the environmental and social impact of T&T.
- The changes made to the index limit its comparability to the previously published **TTDI 2021.**
  - Therefore, this release of the index includes **recalculated 2019 and 2021 results**, using new adjustments.
- The index is comprised of **five dimensions, 17 pillars and 102 individual indicators**, distributed among the different pillars.
- The **five pillars** of the index are:
  - Enabling Environment
  - T&T Policy and Enabling Conditions
  - Infrastructure & Services
  - T&T Resources
  - T&T Sustainability
- However, the five dimensions are not factored into the calculation of the index and are used only for presentation and categorization purposes.

<u>**Global Rankings and Findings:**</u>

- **US topped** the list followed by **Spain, Japan, France, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Italy and Switzerland.**
- While **71 of the 119** TTDI-ranked economies increased their scores between the **2019 and 2024** editions, the **average index score** is just **0.7%** above pre-pandemic levels.
- Out of the top **30 TTDI scorers** in 2024, **26** are **high-income**, **19** are based in **Europe, 7** are in **Asia-Pacific**, **3** are in the **America** and **1** is in the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** region.
- The top 30 TTDI scorers accounted for over **75% of T&T industry GDP** in **2022** and **70% of GDP growth** between **2020 and 2022.**
- **Low to upper-middle-income economies** accounted for **52 out of the 71** economies that have **improved** their TTDI scores **since 2019.**
- **Saudi Arabia** (+5.7%, 50th to 41st) and the **United Arab Emirates** (+4.4%, 25th to 18th) are the **only high-income economies** to rank among the **top 10 most improved** between 2019 and 2024.
  - ➤ The remaining are developing countries
- Nonetheless, despite **above-average growth**, non-**high-income economies** account for nearly **90%** of **below-average index scorers**.

<u>**India:**</u>

- India ranked **39th** in the 2024 edition of the index.
- India was ranked **54th** in the previously published index in **2021,** though changes made to the index parameters limit its comparability to earlier years.
- The index shows that India is <u>highly price-competitive (18th) and boasts competitive Air Transport (26th) and Ground and Port (25th) infrastructure.</u>
- In particular, <u>India's strong Natural (6th), Cultural (9th) and Non-Leisure (9th)</u> Resources help drive travel.
- The country is only **one of three** to score in the **top 10** for all the resource pillars.

- It further said that as with many economies, travel and tourism enabling conditions in India have been impacted by global inflationary supply-side trends for the sector.
  - The price competitiveness is declining, while air transport and tourist services infrastructure are yet to recover to the 2019 level.
- As a result, the country's **overall TTDI (Travel and Tourism Development Index) score** is **2.1 per cent below** its **2019 level**.

World Economic Forum:

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) is an international non-governmental and lobbying organisation for multinational companies.
- The foundation is mostly funded by its **1,000 member companies**, typically global enterprises with more than US$5 billion in turnover.
- It was founded on 24 January **1971** by German engineer **Klaus Schwab.**
- The WEF is mostly known for its annual meeting at the end of January in **Davos.**
- It is based in **Cologny**, Canton of Geneva, **Switzerland.**
- Executive Chairman- **Klaus Schwab**
- President- **Børge Brende**
- Major reports published by the organization:
  - Energy Transition Index
  - Global Competitiveness Report
  - Global IT Report
  - Global Gender Gap Report
  - Global Travel and Tourism Report

Oxford Global Cities Index 2024

Recently: Oxford Economics released its Global Cities Index, which it calls as a "comprehensive evaluation of the world's **1,000 largest urban economies**."

What is Global Cities Index?

- It is an annual report that ranks about **1,000** largest cities in the world.
- These cities span over **163 countries** of the world.
- The ranking is done on the basis of **five important categories** and **27 indicators.**
- The five categories are:
  - ➢ Economics (Including GDP size, growth and economic diversity)
  - ➢ Governance (Scores are calculated at a national level so countries are shown to represent the major cities, with indicators including institutions, political stability and civil liberties)
  - ➢ Quality of Life (Including life expectancy, income per person and recreation & cultural sites)
  - ➢ Environment (Including air quality, natural disasters and temperature anomalies)

- Human Capital (Including educational attainment, corporate headquarters and population growth)
- The index places most emphasis on economic factors such as **GDP and employment growth.**
- It also considers the **education level, resident well-being, climate volatility, political risks**, etc, of the cities.
- In 2023, cities in the report accounted for **60% of global GDP** and **30% of the world's population.**
- The report assigns scores to 1000 cities, and rankings are based on these scores.
  - The **highest scoring** city achieves a score of **100.**

Global Rankings:

- **New York** achieved the **1st rank** on the Oxford Economics Global Cities Index 2024.
  - It has scored the highest ranking in all the categories with a score of **100.**
- The **second position** has been secured by **London**, and the **third rank** has been secured by **San Jose.**
- The **first 50 places** of the list were dominated by the **US and Europe.**
- Aside from **Tokyo**, in **fourth place**, Asia's next showing was **Seoul** in **41st position** and **Singapore** in **42nd.**
- Australian cities fared better, with **Melbourne** in **ninth** place, **Sydney** in the **16th** spot and **Perth** in **23rd.**
- In **Pakistan, Islamabad and Rawalpindi** were ranked the highest in the country at the rank of **578.**
- Cities under military control and on the verge of war have been ranked above many Indian cities.
- For instance, **Kyiv**, the capital of Ukraine, obtained the **311th rank,** surpassing India's highest-ranked city, **Delhi (350th).**
- Similarly, **Myanmar,** which has been under military control since 2021, was ranked **680th**, above most Indian cities.

Indian Cities:

- The index ranked **Delhi at the 350th** position which makes it the highest ranked city in the country.
- **Bengaluru** secured the **411th rank** while **Mumbai** secured **427th rank.**
- **Sultanpur**, a city in **Uttar Pradesh**, secured the **1000th position.**

- **Mumbai** was ranked **915th** in the category of **quality of life.**
  - ➢ In the same category, however, **Thrissur,** a city in Kerala, secured the **757th position.**
- In the category of **Human Capital**, **Delhi** managed to secure the **55th** position. However, in the **Economics** category, **Delhi** secured the **108th** position.
- In the category of **Human Capital**, **Bengaluru** secured the **179th** category and in the category of **Economics**, the city secured the **171st rank.**
- In the category of **Governance**, all the Indian cities scored **380.**

<u>Defence, Space and Environment</u>

<u>NASA's PREFIRE Mission</u>

Recently: Rocket Lab launched the **"PREFIRE and ICE,"** the **second** of two cube-sats for **NASA's PREFIRE climate change mission** on **May 31st, 2024**, sitting atop **Rocket Lab's Electron rocket** from **Māhia, New Zealand.**

- The **first satellite** of the mission named **"Ready, Aim, PREFIRE,"** was launched on **May 25th, 2024**, atop Rocket Lab's Electron rocket from Māhia, New Zealand.

What is NASA's PREFIRE Mission?

- The primary goal of **the "Polar Radiant Energy in the Far-InfraRed Experiment" or PREFIRE mission** is to investigate the amount of heat radiated from Earth's polar regions into space and its impact on the global climate.
- It is a collaborative effort between **NASA and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.**
- Nasa's **Jet Propulsion Laboratory** manages the mission and provides the **spectrometers**, while **Blue Canyon Technologies** built the **CubeSats.**
- The **University of Wisconsin-Madison** will **process the collected data**.

Need for the Mission:

- The polar regions play a vital role in regulating Earth's climate by radiating heat absorbed at the tropics back into space.
- A large amount of the heat radiated from the **Arctic** and **Antarctica** is emitted as **far-infrared radiation** — wavelengths of **3 μm to 1,000 μm** within the infrared range of electromagnetic radiation.
- However, there is currently no way to measure this type of energy and therefore, only **40 per cent** of the energy escaping from the Arctic has been systematically measured.
- As a result, there is a **gap in knowledge** about the planet's **energy budget**.
  - ➤ Energy Budget is the balance between the amount of heat incoming to Earth from the Sun and the amount of heat outgoing from Earth into space.
- The PREFIRE Mission can change that as the two **CubeSats can study far-infrared radiation** from the Earth's.
  - ➤ The data collected by them would help scientists better understand the energy budget of the planet.

- PREFIRE's observations of this heat exchange will enhance the understanding of **polar ice loss** and its implications for **sea level rise** and **sea ice loss.**

Working of the Mission:

About the CubeSats:

- CubeSats are essentially miniature satellites whose basic design is a **10 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm** (which makes up for **"one unit" or "1U"**) cube.
- It is just a little bigger than a Rubik's cube — and weight not more than **1.33 kg.**
- Depending on the CubeSat's mission, the number of units can be **1.5, 2, 3, 6, and 12U.**
- These satellites were first developed in **1999** by C**alifornia Polytechnic State University** at San Luis Obispo and **Stanford University**, as educational tools.
- However, owing to their **low cost and less mass** in comparison to traditional satellites, they began to be put in orbit for technology demonstrations, scientific research, and commercial purposes.

- Each of the PREFIRE satellites is a **6U CubeSat.**
- They measure around **90 cm in height** and nearly **120 cm in width** when the solar panels, which will power the satellite, are deployed.
- The two satellites will be placed in a **near-polar orbit** (a type of low Earth orbit) at an altitude of about **525 kilometres.**

- Each of the PREFIRE CubeSat is equipped with a thermal infrared spectrometer — known as **Thermal Infrared Spectrometer (TIRS).**
  - ➢ This will enable it to measure the amount of infrared and far-infrared radiation from the Arctic and Antarctica.
- The spectrometer features specially **shaped-mirrors and detectors** for splitting and measuring infrared light.
- The CubeSats will be placed in **asynchronous**, near-polar orbits, allowing them to crisscross over the Arctic and Antarctica, measuring thermal infrared radiation.
- The CubeSats will also measure the amount of far-infrared radiation trapped by atmospheric water vapour and clouds at the poles and how this influences the greenhouse effect in the region.
- PREFIRE data will be **publicly accessible** through **Nasa's Atmospheric Science Data Center**, allowing researchers and the public to benefit from the mission's findings.

Cyclone Ramal

Recently: The first cyclone in the **Bay of Bengal**, for this pre-monsoon season, the Cyclone Remal has made a landfall between **Bengal and Bangladesh** coasts, resulting in a trail of destruction with houses being damaged, trees being uprooted and rail and flight operations being disrupted

- In a latest IMD Update with respect to the Cyclone Remal, the cyclone has weakened into a **'cyclonic storm'.**
- The **Kolkata Airport**, which had suspended all flight operations for almost **21 hours**, has also resumed operations.

What is a Cyclone?

- Cyclone is defined as a system of winds that are rotating **inwards** to an area of **low barometric pressure**, such that in the **Northern Hemisphere** it is **anticlockwise** and in the **Southern Hemisphere** it is **clockwise** circulation.
- The formation of cyclones takes place in **low-pressure areas.**
- Tropical cyclones originate and intensify over **warm tropical oceans.**
- The conditions favourable for the formation and intensification of tropical storms are:
  - ➤ Large sea surface with temperature higher than **27° C.**
  - ➤ Presence of the **Coriolis force** – It is the deflection of circulating air towards the **right in the northern hemisphere** and towards the **left in the southern hemisphere** which happens due to the rotation of the Earth on its axis.
  - ➤ Small variations in the vertical wind speed.
  - ➤ A pre-existing weak **low- pressure area** or low-level-cyclonic circulation.
  - ➤ **Upper divergence** above the sea level system.
- According to modern convention, a Cyclone that forms over the **Indian Ocean** is referred to as **Cyclone.**
- It is called **Hurricane** if it forms over the **Atlantic Ocean** and **Typhoon** if it forms over the **Pacific Ocean.**
- Cyclones are categorized according to wind speeds and the damage they cause.
  - ➤ Category 1: Wind speeds between **90 and 125 kilometres per hour**, some noticeable damage to houses and trees.
  - ➤ Category 2: Wind speeds between **125 and 164 kilometres per hour**, damage to houses and significant damage to crops and trees.

- Category 3: Wind speeds between **165-224 kilometres per hour,** structural damage to houses, extensive damage to crops and uprooted trees, upturned vehicles and destruction of buildings.
- Category 4: Wind speeds between **225 and 279 kilometres per hour**, power failure and much damage to cities and villages.
- Category 5: Wind speeds **over 280 kilometres per hour**, widespread damage.

Naming of Cyclones:

- A group of nations formed the **World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)** and the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP).**
- These groups comprise **India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Maldives, Pakistan, Oman, Thailand and Sri Lanka.**
- These countries started sending suggestions related to cyclone names in **2000.**
- **Qatar, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates** later joined in **2018**, forming a group of **13 countries.**
- The list of **169 cyclone** names released by IMD in **April 2020** were provided by these countries — **13 suggestions** from each of the **13 countries.**
- Cyclones in India are named by the **Regional Specialised Meteorological Centres (RSMCs)** and **Tropical Cyclone Warning Centres (TCWCs).**
- There are **5 TCWCs** and **6 RSMCs** in the world.
- As an **RSMC**, the **Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)** names the cyclones developing over the **north Indian Ocean**, including **the Bay of Bengal** and the **Arabian Sea.**
- It is also the advisory to **12 other countries** in the **Indian Ocean basin.** Together these 13 countries decide how cyclones are named.
- After consultations with the other **12 countries**, the India Meteorological Department, names tropical cyclones.
- While naming a cyclone, the key points considered are that:
  - The name should be neutral to politics, religious beliefs, cultures and gender.
  - The name must not offend any population group across the world.
  - The name must not be cruel or rude.
  - It must be of maximum eight letters and easy to pronounce.

> ➢ It must come with a specific pronunciation and voice recording and must be unique.

About Cyclone Ramal:

- Severe Cyclonic Storm Remal was a **moderately intense** and **deadly tropical cyclone** which affected **West Bengal and Bangladesh** in May 2024.
- It was the **first depression** and the **first cyclonic storm** of the 2024 North Indian Ocean cyclone season.
- The cyclone made **landfall** on **West Bengal's Sundarban Delta** at 8:30 pm on 26 May as a severe cyclonic storm.
- The storm's speed was between **90 and 120 kilometres per hour** during landfall in the coastal area.
- It killed a lot of people in India as well as Bangladesh.
- On 25 May, the India Meteorological Department issued an emergency warning for the states of **Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura** due to the expected effects of the cyclone.
- The name for the Cyclone Ramal comes from the country **Oman**. **'Remal'** is an **Arabic word** which means **'sand'.**

Challenge to Adani's Wind Energy Project

Recently: Adani Green Energy's wind energy project, coming up in Sri Lanka's northern **Mannar** and **Pooneryn** districts, has been challenged in the island's **apex court** on grounds of potential **environmental impact** and **"lack of transparency".**

- The **Wildlife and Nature Protection Society (WNPS),** filed a **Fundamental Rights petition** at the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, with the aim of "protecting the unique ecosystem of Mannar Island".
  - ➢ WNPS was established in **1894** and is the **third oldest** non-governmental conservation organisation in the world.
  - ➢ It was instrumental in setting up **Wilpattu National Park and Yala National Park.**

About the Project:

- It is a **$442-million** wind power project agreement in **northern Sri Lanka** which was originally inked in **March 2022.**
- Under the agreement, **Adani Green Energy** is to build a facility in **Mannar** that is slated to generate **250 megawatts (MW)** of electricity and another at **Pooneryn** to produce **100 MW.**
- The deal aimed at generating combined capacity of **500 MW**, at a cost of **$ 500 million.**
- The new project will generate **1500-2000** new employment opportunities.
- The project is envisaged to be completed till 2025.
- The project was turned into a **Government to Government (G2G)** arrangement wherein the government can directly collaborate with another government entity to implement these projects.
- Both projects are in the **Northern Province**, where India objected to a Chinese energy project last year, citing proximity to the Tamil Nadu coast.
- With approval from the Board of Investment (BOI), the Adani Group has now exceeded a total of **$1 billion** in investments in the island nation.
- They have also committed to providing **$700 million** for a **vital Colombo port terminal**, and construction on the **West Container Terminal** commenced in **November 2022.**

Why is the project challenged?

Environmental Impact:

- The petition argues that the project "poses a severe threat to the island's unique biodiversity and pristine landscapes," especially in **Mannar.**
- Mannar is the "**southernmost point** of the **Central Asian Flyway** used by innumerable migratory species", while also being home to several indigenous water bird and bat species.
- The island itself is home to several protected areas such as the **Adam's Bridge National Park, the Viduthalaithivu National Park and the Vankalai Sanctuary.**
  - ➢ The former two were declared **RAMSAR wetlands** only a few months ago.
- The island's diverse ecosystems, including **mangroves, coral reefs, and wetlands,** play a crucial role in maintaining the region's environmental balance.
- The proposed Adani project will potentially raise the number of **turbines** on Mannar island to **82.**
  - ➢ This will supplement the **30 turbines** already existing as part of the **Thambapawani project** which has already caused staggering numbers of bird deaths.
- The petition contends that Sri Lankan authorities' decision approving the project disregarded Mannar's "singular positioning as a biodiversity hub".

Lack of Transparency:

- The petition also notes that while the project has been portrayed as a "Government-to-Government initiative with India", no details of contributions, grants, or loans from the Indian government have been disclosed.
- Further, the petition questioned the credibility of the Environmental Impact Assessment carried out by the **Sustainable Energy Authority of Sri Lanka (SEASL)** before the project was cleared.
- It also questioned the pricing formula finalised for the sale of power from the project.
  - ➢ Sri Lanka recently agreed to purchase power at **$0.0826, or 8.26 cents per kWh** from **Adani Green Energy.**

Agnibaan

Recently: India's private space industry, **Agnikul Cosmos** made history on May 30, 2024, by safely launching **"Agnibaan – SOrTeD,"** the world's first rocket powered by a **fully 3D-printed engine**.

- The mission, which lasted approximately **two minutes**, marked a major achievement for the company and the country in the development of indigenous space technology.
- ISRO congratulated the **Chennai-based** space start-up, terming the launch "a major milestone".
- This was not the first time that an Indian private company had flown a rocket from Indian soil.
  - In November 2022, **Skyroot Aerospace**, a young space start-up just like Agnikul, successfully launched a rocket which it has named **Vikram,** after Vikram Sarabhai.

About the SOrTeD mission:

- Agniban SOrTed (Suborbital Technological Demonstrator) is the country's **first semi-cryogenic engine flight.**
  - It's important to note that ISRO, India's space agency, has never flown a semi-cryogenic engine.

- It is developing a **2000 kN** thrust semi-cryogenic engine and the first ignition trial was conducted successfully on 2 May.
- It is also the **world's first single piece 3D printed engine** designed and built indigenously.
- The space vehicle was launched from **India's first private launchpad**, **Dhanush**, at **Sriharikota** which was also developed by Agnikul Cosmos.
- The Agnibaan Sub Orbital Technology Demonstrator (SOrTeD) rocket weighs 575 kg and is **6.2-metre long.**
- The company describes Agnibaan as a customisable, **two-stage launch vehicle** that can carry up to **300 kg** of payload to orbits nearly **700 km** in altitude.
- It said it could be compared to **SpaceX's Falcon Heavy** that can carry **63,500 kg** to low Earth orbit.
- Another speciality of Agnibaan is patented engine — the **Agnilet.**
  - It is an entirely 3D-printed, single-piece, **6 kN semi-cryogenic engine.**
  - The Agnilet uses **sub-cooled oxygen** as fuel.
- The successful launch of the Agnibaan rocket comes after the company **aborted four earlier launch plans** due to technical glitches.
  - The first attempt to launch the rocket had been made on **22 March** and was abandoned during countdown.
  - The last attempt was made on **7 April** and was called off less than a minute before lift-off.

Agnikul Cosmos:

- AgniKul Cosmos Private Limited is an Indian aerospace manufacturer based in **National Centre for Combustion R&D (NCCRD)** of **IIT Madras, Chennai.**
- It was founded in **2017** by **Srinath Ravichandran, Moin SPM, Satyanaryan Chakravarthy and Janardhana Raju.**
- It is headquartered in **Chennai.**

Exercise Shakti

Recently: The **7th edition** of India- France Joint Military Exercise SHAKTI was conducted between **13th to 26th May**, at **Umroi**, in a fully developed and modern Foreign Training Node in **Meghalaya.**

- The Opening Ceremony of the joint exercise was attended by **H.E. Thierry Mathou**, Ambassador of France to India **and Major General Prasanna Sudhakar Joshi**, General Officer Commanding 51 Sub Area.

What is Exercise Shakti?

- Exercise SHAKTI is a **biennial training** event conducted *alternatively* in India and France.
- **Last edition** was conducted in France in **November 2021.**
- Other than Exercise Shakti, India and France conduct a joint naval Exercise – **Exercise Varuna** and a joint air exercise – **Exercise Garuda.**

<u>**Contingents:**</u>

- Indian contingent comprising **90 personnel** was represented primarily by a **Battalion of the RAJPUT Regiment** besides personnel from other arms and services.
- Observers from the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force also formed a part of the exercise.
- The French contingent comprising **90 personnel** will be represented mainly by personnel from the **13th Foreign Legion Half- Brigade (13th DBLE).**

<u>**Aim:**</u>

- Aim of Exercise SHAKTI is to **enhance joint military capability** of both sides to undertake multi-domain operations in a Sub Conventional scenario under **Chapter VII** of the **United Nations Mandate**.
- The joint exercise was focused on operations in the **semi-urban** and **mountainous terrain.**

<u>**How was the Exercise Conduced?**</u>

- Tactical drills practiced during the Exercise included response to a terrorist action of capturing a defined territory, establishment of a Joint Command Post, establishment of an Intelligence & Surveillance Centre, securing of a helipad/ landing site, Small Team Insertion & Extraction, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon & Search Operations besides employment of drones and counter drone systems among others.

The Rafale M Deal

Recently: India and France began contract negotiations on May 30 for the over **Rs 50,000-crore deal** for **26 Rafale Marine (Rafale M) fighter jets.**

- This followed the arrival of a high-level French team.
- The French team included officials from their defence ministry and industry including original equipment **manufacturers Dassault Aviation** and **Thales.**

Rafale-M fighter jets:

- **Dassault Aviation's Rafale M** is a versatile **single-seat aircraft** designed for a range of missions.
- It is capable of quick reaction alerts, air defence, air policing, nuclear deterrence, power projection, external missions, deep strike operations, air support for ground forces, reconnaissance, and pilot training sorties.
- Dassault Aviation categorizes the Rafale as an "**omnirole aircraft**" capable of performing multiple tasks simultaneously, including firing **air-to-air missiles** during low-altitude penetration phases.

- The design makes it relevant against both traditional and asymmetrical threats.
- The Rafale M has a wingspan of **10.90 meters**, a **length of 15.30 meters,** and a **height of 5.30 meters**.
- Classified in the **10-tonne class**, it has a maximum take-off weight of **24.5 tons** and can carry an external load of **9.5 tons**.
- The service ceiling, or maximum altitude it can reach under standard air conditions, is **50,000 feet.**
- The Rafale M can conduct **air-to-ground** and **air-to-air attacks** in a single mission.
- It has a speed range from less than **120 knots (222.24 km per hour)** during an approach to a **maximum speed of 750 knots (1,389 kmph).**
- The Rafale has been a key component of the **French military** since its introduction in **2004**. Initially, the **Standard F1 model** was focused on **air-to-air** combat.
- With expanding operational capabilities, the **Standard F3 variant** was introduced in **2008**, capable of performing a variety of air-to-ground missions.
- Since early **2023**, the French military has been acquiring the latest Rafale fighters in the **Standard F4 version**, demonstrating continual improvements in their performance.

The Rafale Missions:

- Earlier in **2002**, during **India-Pakistan** military tensions, French Rafale Marines, along with **US Navy jets**, created a buffer between the two nations to de-escalate the situation.
- The Rafale M undertook combat air patrol from the aircraft carrier **Charles de Gaulle.**
- With their mighty presence, the Rafale Marine fighters deterred Indian and Pakistani warplanes from using the sea route to attack each other.
- Armed with lethal air-to-air missiles, the Rafales worked closely with **F14s and F18s** of the **US Navy** to bring peace and exert dominance in the region.
- Meanwhile, in **2010**, the French Defence Ministry said that its Rafale M aircraft had crashed into the sea.
  - ➢ The naval warplane was operating from Charles de Gaulle and was deployed in the **Arabian Sea** to support operations in **Afghanistan**.

Can the Rafale M operate from Indian carriers?

- Originally, the Rafale M was designed to operate from **CATOBAR—equipped** aircraft carriers.
  - ➢ CATOBAR stands for **catapult-assisted take-off, barrier-arrested recovery**.
  - ➢ Such a system uses **catapults** to launch aircraft from the carrier and arrestor wires during their landing.
- France operates the Rafale M from its only aircraft carrier, the **Charles de Gaulle**, which is equipped with the CATOBAR system.
- However, the Indian Navy operates two **45,000-tonne aircraft carriers**, the **INS Vikramaditya and the INS Vikrant**.
- Both are conventionally-powered carriers that use **ski-jump ramps** to assist aircraft takeoffs.
- This challenge has been overcome in **2022**, with the Rafale M having successfully demonstrated its ability to carry out a ski-jump from the **shore-based test facility (SBTF) at INS Hansa, in Goa**.
- If and when completed, the Rafale M deal will see the Indian Navy operate these aircraft from its **two aircraft carriers -- INS Vikrant (locally-built)** and **INS Vikramaditya (from Russia).**

Rafale in-comparison with other Fighter jets:

- The Navy currently has **40 out of the 45 Russian Mikoyan MiG-29K/KUB jets** it bought from **Russia** for **$2 billion** since **2009.**
- Rafale-M has superior air power as compared to the present MIG-29K.
- Rafale-M was found to be more suitable compared to the **Boeing-manufactured F/A-18 Super hornet of US**.
- Additionally, the MiG-29K/KUB fleet has had significant maintenance issues, with many jets needing repairs after each deck landing due to damage to their on-board components.
- The INS Vikramaditya can hold up to **20 MiG-29K fighters**. The INS Vikrant can accommodate **18 MiG-29K fighters.**

The current deal:

- While a formal offer was presented by the French side in **December**, the current round of negotiations will finalise the price, maintenance terms and delivery timelines.
- The acquisition of Rafale Marine fighter jets was cleared by the Defence Procurement Board in **July last year**, days ahead of the visit of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Paris.**

- The jets will be manufactured to India-specific standards and will have several indigenous systems as well, including weapons and communication.
- The Indian Navy will get **22 single-seated Rafale Marine aircraft** along with **four twin-seat trainer aircraft.**
- **36 Rafale jets** are already in service with the Indian Air Force.
- The French side has stated that if required, it can increase the rate of production to **30 aircraft per year** from the existing **18 per year.**
- The Rafale-M was chosen partly due to its many similarities with the **36 Rafale fighters** already used by the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- The Rafale and Rafale-M jets, both manufactured in France, share over **80% of their parts**, though the maritime version features a longer, reinforced nose and a strengthened undercarriage.

A temporary solution?

- Senior Indian Navy officials have stated that the Rafale-M jets are being brought in as a temporary solution.
- Over time, they will be supplemented and eventually replaced by the new, **locally-developed twin-engine deck-based fighter (TEDBF)**, also called the **light combat aircraft (Navy).**
- The Indian Navy is hopeful that the prototype of the TEDBF, being developed by the **Aeronautical Development Agency** and **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited**, will be ready by **2026**.
- They expect mass production to start by **2032**. However, delays are common in such ambitious domestic projects.

The China challenge:

- India has been gearing up to meet the challenges posed by **China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy** in the **Indo-Pacific region.**
- China is now conducting trials of its **third aircraft carrier**, the over **80,000-tonne Fujian.**
- It had earlier inducted the **60,000-tonne Liaoning** and the **66,000-tonne Shandong,** and is building more such warships.

- Once operational, the Fujian will be able to deploy up to **70 aircraft, including J-15 fighter aircraft.**
- Unlike its predecessors, the 80,000 tonne-class Fujian is equipped with **three electromagnetic catapults** to launch aircraft.
- The Indian government has yet to approve the long-pending case for a **third 45,000-tonne aircraft carrier**, let alone a more potent 65,000-tonne one, which would take at least a decade to build.
- While its spy vessels frequently sail close to India, China has not yet sailed an aircraft carrier into the Indian Ocean but is expected to do so within the next few years.
- It already has other vessels operating regularly in the region and has established its **first overseas base** in the **Horn of Africa country of Djibouti**, which gives it easy access to the Indian Ocean.

The original deal and the controversy:

- The Rafale was chosen in **2012** over rival offers from the United States, Europe and Russia.
- The original plan was that India would buy **18 off-the-shelf jets,** with **108 others** being assembled in India by the state-run **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited or HAL in Bengaluru**.
- The Modi-led BJP government retreated from the commitment made by the previous UPA government to purchase **126 Rafales**, citing the **twin-engined planes** as too costly.
- The UPA deal collapsed after nearly a decade of negotiations between India and France.
- However, faced with pressing need to upgrade the Indian Air Force, PM Modi decided to buy **36 "ready-to-fly"** fighters instead of trying to acquire technology from **Dassault**.
- Soon after the deal was declared, the Congress accused the ruling BJP of **non-transparency** and called it "one of the biggest failures" of the **'Make-in-India'** programme.
- In **January 2016**, India confirmed an order for **36 Rafale jets** in a defense deal with France.
- As part of this agreement, **Dassault** and its main partners, **Safran and Thales**, agreed to share technology with **DRDO** and select private sector companies, along with **HAL**, under the offsets clause.
    - Offsets are kind of a quid pro quo between countries and defence companies.
- Nearly one-and-a-half years after PM Modi announced the proposal during a visit to Paris, India finally signed an inter-governmental agreement with France in **September 2016.**

- Dubbed as the "Rafale deal," India agreed to pay about **₹58,000 crore or 7.8 billion Euros** for 36 off-the-shelf Dassault Rafale twin-engine fighters.
- About **15 per cent** of this cost is being paid in advance. India also got spares and weaponry, including the **Meteor missile**, considered among the most advanced in the world.
- The Congress alleged that the cost of each aircraft is **three times more** than what the previous UPA had negotiated with France in 2012.
- The claims were rebutted by **Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Anil Ambani-led Reliance Defence Limited**.
- The deal went through and the **36 Rafale jets** were delivered between 2019 to 2022.
- Dassault has also established a maintenance and training facility in **Ambala**.
  - This facility can support the navy's new Rafale-M jets, helping to lower costs and speed up their deployment

Sports

Olympics 2024

Recently: The **Olympic torch** arrived in **France's Marseilles**, marking an important ceremonial moment in the run-up to the **summer Games** in **Paris**.

- After the Olympic torch reached **Vieux Port of Marseille's** - Paris 2024 invited Marseille's people to celebrate the start of the Torch Relay in the city centre.

About Olympics:

- The Olympic Games are an international competition where individuals and teams compete for their home country.

Ancient Olympics:

- The Olympic Games are said to be around **3,000 years old**, beginning as sports contests in **Olympia.**
- The first written evidence of the official Games dates from **776 BC,** when the **Greeks** began measuring time in Olympiads, or the duration between each edition of the Olympic Games.
- The first Olympic Games were held every **four years** in honour of the god **Zeus** (the god of **thunder**).
- Through a **9th century BC treaty**, the **tradition of Olympic Truce or Ekecheiria** was established.
- **Kings Iphitos of Elis, Cleosthenes of Pisa,** and **Lycurgus of Sparta** signed a treaty allowing safe passage for athletes for their participation in the ancient Olympic Games.
- However, in **393 AD**, the **Roman Emperor Theodosius I** banned the Olympic Games for religious reasons, claiming that they encouraged **paganism**.
  - ➢ Paganism is the practice of a religion other than one of the main world religions, specifically a non- Christian or pre-Christian religion.
- They were not revived until the **modern era**.

Modern Olympics:

- The Olympic Games were revived at **the first Olympic Congress**, organised by **French educator Baron Pierre de Coubertin.**

- It was held at the **Grand Amphitheatre** at the **Sorbonne University, France** from **16 to 23 June 1894**.
- As the congress came to an end on 23 June, the Olympic Games were reborn and the **International Olympic Committee** was created.
- The first Olympic Games of the modern era took place in **Athens**, **Greece**, in **April 1896**.
- **Paris** hosted the second Games in **1900**. The Paris 1900 Olympic Games saw **women compete for the first time**.
- The **1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis (Missouri)** were the first to distribute **gold, silver** and **bronze medals**.
  - It also included the first known **disabled athlete** to compete in the Olympic Games, **George Eyser**.
- The Olympic Games in **Stockholm, Sweden in 1912** were the first to include competitors from all **five continents** represented by the **Olympic Rings.**
  - The Olympic symbol consists of five interlocking rings of different colours (**blue, yellow, black, green, and red**) on a **white background** which represent the five continents of the world.
- The new Olympic motto now reads in **Latin** "**Citius, Altius, Fortius – Communiter**" and "**Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together**" in **English**.
- The **Winter Olympics** were introduced in **1924**, and the Paralympic Games for athletes with disabilities began in the mid-20th century.
- From **1924 to 1992**, the **Summer** and **Winter Games** were each held in the same year, every **four years**. This four years period is called "**Olympiad**".
- Since **1992**, the Summer and Winter Games are each still held every **four years** but the Summer Games are celebrated during the **first year** of an **Olympiad** and the Winter Games held in the **third year.**
- The Olympic Games have frequently been impacted by worldwide occurrences and political factors.
  - Olympics were halted during both **World War I and World War II**.
  - Additionally, the **2020 Games** scheduled for Tokyo were postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Games have also been the stage for **political protests** and **boycotts,** with notable incidents occurring during the **1968 Mexico City Olympics** and the **1980 and 1984 Olympics.**

Hosts of the Olympics:

- In the older system of electing host cities, through their respective national Olympic committees, they would submit a letter of interest to the **IOC** to start a multi-year, multi-step process.
- The bidding cities would complete a series of questionnaires, evaluated by the IOC.
- The second step of the process involved scrutiny from the IOC Evaluation Commission and a series of inspections of all venues before the final bids are put to vote at an IOC session.
- This process ends with a host being decided **seven years** in advance as per the Olympic Charter.
- It often led to excessive spending among the bidders, to secure rights, often ending in huge debts, corruptions and scandals.
- However, after **Thomas Bach** took over as the **IOC president** in **2013**, he put in place the **Olympic Agenda 2020**, as a roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement, approved by the **2014 IOC session.**
- The seven-year rule was done away with and there has been greater flexibility in deciding the hosts — the IOC has said that the **2036 edition** could be decided even as late as after **2030.**
- There is now a two-stage process — a **continuous dialogue** and a **targeted dialogue** — without any fixed deadlines, to assess, discuss and guide potential hosts.
- The continuous dialogue is a non-committal stage not specific to any particular edition.
  - It is basically a discussion between the IOC's **Future Hosts Commission (FHC)** and interested parties about the hosts' vision for the Games, its purpose and long-term legacy.
- Once seriousness to progress is established, it enters the **'targeted dialogue'** phase with the preferred hosts.
- Previously, rejection discouraged further bidding, but now other interested parties can maintain ongoing dialogue for future events.
- In a targeted dialogue, the bids become more determined. While there is again no time-frame for a targeted dialogue, it is anticipated to not exceed **12 months**.
  - It explores the proposals to host a specific edition of the Olympic Games and brings the **IOC's executive board** into the picture for detailed discussions.
- The FHC prepares an advisory report for the executive board, which can recommend a single host or shortlist multiple hosts for **IOC member elections.**

India's bid:

- PM Modi publicly declared India's intention to host the Olympic Games, preferably in **2036**, during the opening ceremony of the **141st IOC session in Mumbai** on October 14.
- Only **three Asian countries** have ever hosted the Olympics — **China**, **South Korea** and **Japan**, with **Japan** hosting the games twice in **1964** and **2020**.
- India joins **five confirmed countries** vying to host the **2036** Games, with **nine others** reportedly in discussions with the IOC.
- Besides India, the other confirmed nations interested are **Mexico**, **Indonesia, Turkey** and **Poland.**
- Other potential bidders include Egypt, Seoul, China, Qatar, Hungary, Italy, Denmark, Canada and Germany.
- If India does manage to outbid the competition, it will be the first big-ticket multi-discipline sporting event in the country since the controversy-marred **Commonwealth Games (CWG)** in **2010**.

Paris as 2024 host:

- The Olympic Games Paris 2024 will officially be held from **26 July until 11 August 2024**, while the Paralympic Games will take place from **28 August until 8 September**.
- The Olympic competitions for **football** and **rugby** at Paris 2024 will begin on 24 July, two days before the Opening Ceremony.
- The Olympic Games Paris 2024 take place exactly **100 years** since **Paris** hosted the Olympics back in **1924**.
- Paris will join London as the only cities to host the **Olympics three times.**
  - ➢ The Games were in Paris in **1900**, **1924** and now in **2024**, while London hosted the Games in **1908, 1948** and **2012.**
- The Paris 2024 Opening Ceremony will not be held in a stadium for the **first time ever**. Instead, it will be done on the **Seine**, the **river** that crosses the centre of Paris.
- The name of the Paris 2024 mascot is **Olympic Phryge**, based on the traditional small Phrygian hats that the mascots are shaped after.
  - ➢ The name and design were chosen as symbols of freedom and to represent allegorical figures of **the French republic**.

- The Olympic Phryge is decked out in **blue, white and red** - the colours of France's famed tricolor flag - with the golden Paris 2024 logo emblazoned across its chest.
- There will be **32 sports** played during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and **329 medal events** in total.
- The sport with the **most medals** being awarded will be **aquatics** with **49 events** across the disciplines of swimming, marathon swimming, diving, water polo, and artistic swimming.
  - ➤ **Athletics** follows closely with **48**.
- There will be **one new sport** for the Paris 2024 edition of the Olympics: **breaking.**
- Competition in the **dance** sport will comprise **two events – one for men and one for women** – where 16 B-Boys and 16 B-Girls will go face to face in solo battles.
- There will be a total of **35 Olympic venues** at Paris 2024, with fourteen sites hosting **24 Olympic sports** located within **10km** of the **Olympic Village (housing complex for delegations).**
- For the first time ever, the 2024 Games will also take place in the French territory of **Tahiti.**
  - ➤ The **surfing competition** will be held on the Pacific island's legendary **Teahupoo wave**, located about 15,000 km from Paris.
- Paris 2024 will include an **IOC Refugee Olympic Team**. The first refugee team took part in the **Rio 2016 Games**.
- In canoe, there will be a new event introduced at Paris 2024: **Extreme slalom.**
  - ➤ Four athletes tip off a ramp at the same time and whoever gets to the bottom of the course first is the winner.
  - ➤ There will be one event for men and one event for women.

Indians in Olympic:

- Over the past few editions, the number of Indian athletes at the Summer Olympics has steadily increased.
- At Tokyo 2020, the Indian contingent was made up of **124 athletes**, the largest that the country had sent to the Games.
- India also won **seven medals (1 Gold · 2 Silver · 4 Bronze)** , their biggest haul in a single Olympics - including **Neeraj Chopra's historic gold medal** in the men's javelin throw.
- At the Paris 2024 Olympics, India will expect more athletes to qualify and of course, increase the Tokyo Olympics medal haul.
- Trap shooter **Bhowneesh Mendiratta**, who won India's first quota place at the ISSF world championships, was the first to make the Paris Olympics cut.

- As per now, there are **59 Indians** who are qualified for Olympic 2024.

<u>History of India in Olympics:</u>

- India has won **35 medals** at the Olympics since the **1900 edition** across 24 Olympic games.
- The current tally stands at **10 Gold, 9 Silver, and 16 Bronze medals.**
- India's first brush with the Olympics came at the **1900 Paris Olympics** - where **Norman Pritchard** was the country's **sole** representative.
- He won **two silver medals** - in the 200m sprint and 200m hurdles.
- The first multi-sport Olympic contingent for India came at the **Antwerp 1920 Olympics** - where **five athletes** (three in athletics and two wrestlers) took part.
- The **Amsterdam 1928 Olympics** marked the beginning of **Indian hockey's magnificent run.**
  - ➢ The Indian men's hockey team - led by the **legendary Dhyan Chand** - scored **29 goals** and conceded none as they won their first Olympic gold medal.
- The **London 1948 Olympics** were **India's first Summer Games** as an **independent nation**.
  - ➢ India then sent their largest contingent - **86 athletes across nine sports** - for the 1948 Olympics.
  - ➢ The Indian hockey team was the dominant force again, returning with its **fourth Olympic gold medal** and discovering a new star in **Balbir Singh Sr.**
- The Indian hockey team would repeat its feat at the **1952 and 1956 Olympics.**
- The **Helsinki 1952 Olympics** also saw another historic moment for India as wrestler **KD Jadhav** became the first Indian to win an **individual Olympic medal,** a **bronze**.
  - ➢ The Helsinki edition also saw **Nilima Ghose** emerge as the first woman from independent India to participate in the Olympics.
- The **Beijing 2008 Olympics** was a watershed moment in Indian Olympic history as shooter **Abhinav Bindra** claimed the nation's **first individual gold** in the 10m Air Rifle event.

Important Days

World Red Cross Day 2024

Recently: The **2024 edition** of the World Red Cross Day was observed on **May 8th.**

- The day serves as an opportunity to highlight the vital humanitarian values and activities of the **Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.**
- These organisations play a crucial role in providing aid and assistance to people affected by various natural disasters, armed conflicts, and other crises globally.

Theme for 2024:

- The theme announced for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day in 2024 is **"I give with joy, and the joy I give is a reward."**

- It highlights the inherent rewards and personal fulfilment that come from engaging in humanitarian work and supporting the Red Cross's mission.

History:

- World Red Cross Day traces its roots to **1859** after **Swiss businessman Henry Dunant** was deeply moved by the lack of treatment given to soldiers and civilians at the Battle of Solferino in Italy.
- A few years later, in **1863,** Dunant organised volunteer-supported relief societies that committed to providing non-partisan help to the wounded during wartime or conflict.
- The same year, Dunant and **five colleagues** established **the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded**, which evolved into the **International Committee of the Red Cross.**
- The aid organisation soon became popular as simply **Red Cross**, after its emblem which was inspired by the **Swiss National flag.**
- In **World War I** and **World War II**, the Red Cross played an important role in aiding injured civilians and prisoners of war.
- The **15th International Conference** in **Tokyo** in **1934** presented the **Red Cross Truce Report**, outlining principles to protect wounded soldiers during conflicts.
  - ➢ However, it was implemented during **World War II** in **1946.**
- In **1948,** the Board of Governors of the League of Red Cross Societies advocated commemorating **Henry Dunant's birth anniversary**.
- Since then, **World Red Cross Day** has been observed annually on **May 8.**
- The **Indian Red Cross Society** was established in **1920** as a part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and shares the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is based in **Geneva, Switzerland.**

Significance:

- Celebrating World Red Cross Day is an excellent way for individuals and communities to show their support for the Red Cross's crucial work in providing humanitarian assistance and promoting humanitarian values worldwide.

National Technology Day 2024

Recently: India observed the **2024 edition** of its National Technology on **May 11th.**

- It commemorates the successful **nuclear test at Pokhran** in **1998** and mark significant achievements in science and technology, emphasising its pivotal role in solidifying the nation's position as a global leader in technological innovation.

Foundation of India's Nuclear Programme:

- India's three stage nuclear power programme was formulated by **Homi Bhabha** in 1950s to secure India's long term energy independence through Uranium and Thorium reserves found in the monazite sands of the coastal regions of South India.

- In 1945, Bhaba's successful lobbying led to the establishment of the **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research** in **Bombay**.
- TIFR was India's first research institution dedicated to the study of nuclear physics.
- Bhabha's repeated advocacy of the importance of nuclear energy led to the foundation of **the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)** in **1954,** with Bhabha as its director.

Causes of Pokhran- I Nuclear Test:

- **Sino- India war, 1962**- It started on **20 October 1962** with simultaneous Chinese offensives in Ladakh and along the **McMahon Line**.
  - The Himalayan border dispute was the chief pretext of the war. China claimed the **Aksai Chin** area in **Ladakh, Kashmir** and the **Tawang** area in **Arunachal Pradesh** as its own.
  - The war ended with a Chinese ceasefire a month later and a defeat for India.
  - The crushing defeat and China's subsequent nuclear bomb test at **Lop Nor** in **1964** concerned India which led to shift in the mood in the political establishment towards nuclear weapons.

- **Indo- Pak was, 1965-** The **Second Kashmir War** began following Pakistan's **Operation Gibraltar**, which was designed to infiltrate forces into Jammu and Kashmir to precipitate an insurgency against Indian rule.
  - Hostilities between the two countries ended after a ceasefire was declared through **UNSC Resolution 211**.
  - The ceasefire followed a diplomatic intervention by the Soviet Union and the United States, and the subsequent issuance of the **Tashkent Declaration in 1966**.
  - China supported Pakistan and India was surrounded by two unfriendly nations, and needed to take steps towards building self-sufficiency.

- **The discriminatory non- proliferation treaty-** The non- proliferation Treaty came into existence in **1968**.
  - The treaty defines nuclear-weapon states as those that have built and tested a nuclear explosive device before **January 1, 1967** – the **US, Russia** (formerly USSR), the **UK, France and China.**

- It effectively disallows any other state from acquiring nuclear weapons.
- India is one of the only **five countries** that either did not sign the NPT or signed but withdrew, thus becoming part of a list that includes **Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan.**
- India always considered the NPT as discriminatory and had refused to sign it.

Pokhran- I:

- Bhaba's successor at the DAE, **Vikram Sarabhai**, had worked to significantly broaden India's nuclear technology and India was now capable of conducting a nuclear bomb test.
- Indira Gandhi took over the country's reins from Shastri after his sudden death in **1966** in **Tashkent, Uzbekistan.**
- She led India through another testing war against **Pakistan in 1971** and winning an overwhelming mandate in the following elections.
- On **May 18, 1974**, with support from Indira, India carried out its **first nuclear test** at the **Pokhran test** site.
- Pokhran-I, codenamed Operation **Smiling Buddha**, would be billed as a "**peaceful nuclear explosion**", with "few military implications".
- It made India the **6th country** in the world to possess nuclear weapons after **US, Soviet Union, Britain, France and China.**
- There was near-universal condemnation and countries like the US and Canada imposed significant international sanctions on India.

Causes of Pokhran- II:

- The **Emergency of 1975** and the opposition of Morarji Desai towards nuclear weapons halted the nuclear programme for a while, which again picked up its pace as reports on **Pakistan's rapidly progressing nuclear capabilities** emerged.
- US President George Bush's refusal in **1990** to certify that Islamabad was trying to acquire nuclear weapons became a reason of India's concern.
- **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam** was put in charge of **India's missile programme** in **1983**.
- Early 1990s brought with them increased pressure to quickly develop nuclear weapons.

- With **the fall of the USSR in 1991**, India lost one of its biggest military allies, since the time Indira Gandhi had signed a **20-year security pact** with it in **1971.**
- **US** continued to provide **military aid to Pakistan** despite its own misgivings with its nuclear weapons programme.
- Discussions regarding a **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)** were also underway in the UN. It was finalised in **1996** but India did not sign it.
- Due to the Fast- closing window of opportunity, Prime Minister **PV Narasimha Rao** permitted the preparations for carrying out a nuclear test in **December 1995.**
- However, logistical and political reasons pushed back the tests further.

Pokhran II:

- In **1998,** the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP came to power under the leadership of **Atal Bihari Vajpayee.**
- One of the key promises in its manifesto was to "induct nuclear weapons" into India's arsenal.
- The Department of Atomic Energy chairman, **R. Chidambaram** and the DRDO head **APJ Abdul Kalam** was called by the newly-elected PM of India. PM Vajpayee gave the green signal to conduct the tests.
- On May 1 of the same year, nuclear devices were flown from **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Mumbai** to Jaisalmer Airport in **Rajasthan.**
- From Jaipur, 4 army trucks transported the devices and other equipment to a small city called Pokhran.
- The **58th Engineer Regiment of the Indian Army** was called for the task of maintaining the shafts in which nuclear devices, **six in total**, would be tested.
- The commander of the 58th Engineer's Regiment, **Colonel Gopal Kaushik** supervised the preparations and all the officers were ordered to maintain absolute secrecy.
- In March **1998**, Pakistan launched the **Ghauri missile** – built with assistance from China.
- Two months later, India responded with **Operation Shakti.**
- Consequently, the Indian Government declared itself as a **state possessing nuclear weapons** following Pokhran-II.
- In **2003**, India officially came out with its nuclear doctrine that elaborated on the **'no first use policy'**.

- **Nine** countries have nuclear weapons currently – the <u>US, Russia, France, China, the UK, Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea.</u>

National Technology Day:

- Former Prime **Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee** designated **May 11** as National Technology Day in India to commemorate the historic Pokhran nuclear test in **1998.**
- The following year, on **May 11, 1999**, the Council for Technology organised the inaugural celebration of National Technology Day.
- Since then, India has observed National Technology Day on May 11 every year.
- The theme for National Technology Day 2024 is **'From Schools to Startups: Igniting Young Minds to Innovate.'**
  - ➢ It emphasises nurturing schoolchildren to start their own start-ups and contribute to making India the hub of startups in the world.

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

Source- https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-

<u>Recently:</u> The **2024 edition** of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day was observed on **May 17th.**

- World Telecommunication and Information Society Day serves as an opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to promoting digital inclusion and harnessing the power of digital technologies for sustainable development.

<u>Theme:</u>

- This year's World Telecommunications and Information Society Day 2024 focuses on the theme, **_"Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development,"_** .
- It underlines how digital innovation may help link everyone and create sustainable prosperity for all.

<u>History:</u>

- The day marks the anniversary of the signing of the **first International Telegraph Convention** and the creation of the **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)** on **May 17, 1865.**
- In **1969, World Telecommunication Day** was instituted by the **Plenipotentiary Conference** in **Malaga-Torremolinos** to commemorate the founding of the ITU.
- Later, in **November 2005,** the **World Summit on the Information Society** called upon the UN General Assembly to declare May 17 as World **Information Society Day.**
- And then in **2006,** the **ITU Plenipotentiary Conference** in **Antalya, Turkey**, agreed to combine the two events as **World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.**
- The **General Assembly** adopted this resolution in **March 2006**, combining the observance of both events.

<u>International Telecommunication Union:</u>

- It is a **specialized agency** of the United Nations responsible for many matters related to information and communication technologies.
- It was established **on 17 May 1865** as the **International Telegraph Union**, significantly predating the UN and making it the **oldest UN agency.**
- It adopted its **current name** in **1932** to reflect its expanded responsibilities over radio and the telephone.
- On **15 November 1947**, the ITU entered into an agreement with the newly created United Nations to become a **specialized agency** within the UN system, which formally **entered into force** on **1 January 1949.**
- Membership of ITU is open to all member states of the United Nations.
- There are currently **193 member states** of the ITU, including all UN member states except the **Republic of Palau.**
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland.**
- **Doreen Bogdan-Martin** is the current Secretary-General of ITU, the **first woman** to serve as its head.

National Endangered Species Day 2024

Source- https://th.bing.com/th/id/OIP.TzV0HbwTy7I0TtKMkip3gAAAAA?rs=1&pid=ImgDetMain

Recently: the 2024 edition of the National Endangered Species Day was observed on **May 17th.**

- It is observed **annually** on the **third Friday of May** and serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need to safeguard endangered species and their habitats.

What are Endangered Species?

- Endangered species are the species that are at **risk of extinction** due to a sudden rapid decrease in their population or loss of their critical habitat.
- Species like plants or animals that were threatened with extinction could be called endangered species.
- Endangered species may be at risk due to factors such as **habitat loss, poaching, invasive species, and climate change.**
- The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List** lists the global conservation status of many species, and various other agencies assess the status of species within particular areas.
- The IUCN **Red List of Threatened Species** is the best-known worldwide conservation status listing and ranking system.
- According to IUCN, an endangered species is one that meets any one of the following criteria as given below:
  - A **50-70%** population decrease over **10 years.**
  - A total geographic area of less than **5,000 square kilometres** or a local population is less than **500 square kilometres.**
  - A population size of fewer than **2,500 adults.**
  - A restricted population of **250 adults** or a statistical prediction that it will go extinct within the next **20 years.**

Theme:

- This year, the day is celebrated under the theme of **'Celebrate Saving Species.'**
- It focuses on promoting the importance of saving endangered species, which might go extinct if the necessary steps are not taken in time.

History:

- The day was created and founded by **David Robinson** and the **Endangered Species Coalition** in **2006** and since then has continued to be celebrated.
- It is observed annually on the **third Friday in May**.
- In the same year, the Endangered Species Coalition submitted the day to the **US Senate**, which passed a unanimous resolution declaring Endangered Species Day to be observed annually on the third Friday of May.

International Day for Biological Diversity

Source- https://www.oliveboard.in/blog/international-day-for-biological-diversity/

Recently: The **2024 edition** of the International Day for Biological Diversity was observed on **May 22nd.**

- This global event, also referred to as **World Biodiversity Day**, revolves around acknowledging biodiversity's vital role in supporting our nourishment and well-being, and as a fundamental driver for enhancing food systems and human health.

What is Biodiversity?
- Biodiversity describes the richness and **variety of life on earth**. It is the most complex and important feature of our planet. Without biodiversity, life would not sustain.

- The term biodiversity was coined in **1985** by **Walter G. Rosen.**
- It is important in natural as well as artificial ecosystems.
- It deals with nature's variety, the **biosphere**. It refers to variabilities among plants, animals and microorganism species.
- Biodiversity is of **3 types**: Genetic Biodiversity, Species Biodiversity and Ecological Biodiversity.

Theme:

- The theme for 2024, *Be Part of the Plan*, emphasises the need for a collective and coordinated approach to address and reverse the loss of biodiversity and supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

History:

- **December 29th** was initially adopted as the International Biodiversity Day by the Second Committee of the **UN General Assembly** in **1993**.
- On December 20, **2000**, the date was shifted to commemorate the adoption of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** on **May 22, 1992,** at the **Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit** in Brazil**.**

Kunming- Montreal Biodiversity Framework:

- It was adopted at the **15th Conference of Parties (COP15)** in **2022,** which was held in **Montreal, Canada.**
- It sets out **four** goals for **2050**, and **23 targets** for **2030,** to save the existing biodiversity.
- The Global Biodiversity Framework aims to protect at least 30% of the planet by 2030 and reverse ecosystem degradation (**30*30 policy**).
- It replaces the **Aichi Biodiversity Targets** that were adopted at **COP 10** in **Nagoya, Japan.**