VIDHIGYA CLAT

CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

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Magazine

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SPECIAL FEATURES
TOPPER'S TALK WITH AMAN PATIDAR

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CHECK YOUR QUIZDOM

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Iran-Israel Tensions
- Katchatheevu Island Controversy
- EVM-VVPAT Case
- India's Trade Reliance on China and EU Rising: UNCTAD
- Review of India's Human Rights Accreditation status

IRAN & ISRAEL TENSION

VIDHIGYA
LAW PUN

A man who had been caught embezzling millions from his employer went to a lawyer seeking defense. He didn't want to go to jail. But his lawyer told him, "Don't worry. You'll never have to go to jail with all that money." And the lawyer was right. When the man was sent to prison, he didn't even have a penny..

Be
LAWgical

VIDHIGYA
TOPPER'S TALK
WITH
CLAT TOPPER

Aman Patidar hailing from a small town called Maheshwar from Madhya Pradesh has achieved this feat and made it large. He has secured admission to National Law School of India University - (NLSIU) Bengaluru, also known as 'Harvard of East'.

Know the success secrets, habits and the prep strategy he adopted that fetched him this success in CLAT 2020.

Vidhigya Correspondent: Hi Aman, Many Congratulations on achieving this feat. Tell us something about yourself.

Aman: I completed my higher secondary education from the St. Paul's Higher Secondary School, Indore with science stream. I had PCM with Computer Science as my subjects. I come from the beautiful city of Maheshwar, some 90-odd kilometres from Indore. I gave CLAT 2020, alongside my class 12th. I studied at Vidhigya for my CLAT preparation and I would be indebted forever to them.

Vidhigya Correspondent: There are different

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RANK
MP & CG STATE

CLAT 2020
AIR 14

AMAN PATIDAR
NLSIU, Bengaluru
St. Paul H.S. School, Indore

fields after 12th, what motivated you to make a career in law?

Aman: There are numerous career options after 12th, albeit no less than the number of career options I had in mind at different stages in my life. I chose law, despite belonging to the science background, which often seems weird to a lot of people. But I took science stream solely out of interest and to challenge myself. That interest, I always knew, came out of curiosity and fascination. I knew I can be a great student and observer of science but would not be able to contribute significantly as an actor. And, I am sure that I would continue to be fascinated by science and read about it for the rest of my life, indeed as an observer. Social science always got equal love as science, the difference being that I was ready to have a career in some field related to social science. I looked for options and filtered out Journalism and Law. After some consideration, law seemed to invoke greater interest in me and surprisingly, for the first time in my life, I

knew what I wanted to do. A few months into the law school, I see in myself a baby-like curiosity again. And here I am, ready to take baby-steps, again. I am particularly interested in the confluence of law with start-ups, technology and sports and expect to build myself in one of these domains.

Vidhigya Correspondent: During your CLAT preparation, did you ever think that you would end up being CLAT STATE TOPPER and achieve AIR – 14.

Aman: Not even once. To be honest, my 'serious' CLAT journey had an interesting start. It began with a challenge. A little background: my father has always been proud of me, even if I fail. At times, out of his pride, he ends up overestimating me and takes up challenges for me, without ever feeling the need to ask me if I am capable or ready for them. And one of those many instances, was when my father's friend told him that CLAT is a difficult exam and takes months and maybe years to crack. There he got an opportunity to take a challenge, on my behalf, being my legal guardian and best

friend. He told his friend that I would crack CLAT in my first attempt and with a great score. Reminding me constantly that a father's pride is a son's responsibility, he made sure I am on track throughout. And I began, my preparations, not just to get admission in an NLU, but to also uphold the value and respect my father's words hold. Cut to the day CLAT took place. I was confident that I had given my best and there was little that I could do better. I still remember it, the first thing I told my parents who were waiting for me outside the test centre was that this was the best I could do, and whatever comes my way I'll take it with open arms. I knew, I had little regrets, regarding my preparation or my examination and the result, even if not the absolute best, would be my best. I still recall, quite clearly, how surprised I was and how overjoyed my family was, after seeing my result. Indeed, I am grateful for how things have turned out.

Vidhigya Correspondent: Tell us about your CLAT preparation?

Aman: CLAT 2020 was my first attempt at this examination. There were multiple postponements. Lockdown meant that I was locked in my home during my entire preparation. I made sure that I make the maximum use of every postponement of CLAT. And with each postponement, I tried to target some specific area and became a better version of myself, as an aspirant.

Vidhigya Correspondent: How did you prepare for the FIVE sections of the paper? Can you elaborate on your preparation strategy for each section?

Aman: As we know, the question paper has five sections: English, General Knowledge (GK), Logical Reasoning (LR), Data Interpretation (DI) and Legal Reasoning. Just a glance of the paper lets you know that it is heavily based on reading skills, with English, Legal and good chunk of LR based solely on how fast you can read and how well you can comprehend passages.English and the Critical reasoning portion of LR require pretty much the same skills, which are s p e e d - r e a d i n g   a n d   d e c e n t

comprehension. Both of these, indeed are skills and not subjects or topics, which means they can not be learnt or memorised in a day or two, but are rather developed with time. Reading practice is a must, not just for these two sections, but for the entire question paper. And what better source than a newspaper, when the Consortium stresses so much on newspaper reading and has explicitly told that a lot of passages would come from prominent news sources? A good national daily would do the job, which was The Hindu for me. I also occasionally surfed a few online news portals.

Reading a newspaper, would of course prepare you for the GK section. But note-making is a must for GK, unless you are a super-computer capable of storing tonnes of data for very long. Effective note-making would allow you to generate connections between facts and topics, which would help you create a story, making it easier and more interesting to prepare for GK.

For DI, consistency over everything.

Start off with learning tables, squares, cubes, formulae and tricks. Then on a daily basis, solve 3-4 DI sets and apply everything that you have learnt. Daily practice increases your speed and ensures that you come across a variety of questions.

For Legal reasoning, if you are aware of a particular development in the legal field, your understanding of the issue is much clearer and the reading of the passage faster. To practice application, a mock will be your best friend.

Vidhigya Correspondent: Since the CLAT pattern has witnessed a paradigm shift in CLAT 2020 specially in Legal reasoning and Logical reasoning section, how did you manage these subjects?

Aman: To be very honest, the change in pattern came as a breather for me. It meant that now, the skills required are very different from the earlier pattern. Having passages, instead of one-liners meant that you have to have good reading speed and comprehension abilities, and passages in GK meant you no longer need to mug up random facts

but rather relevant information related to important topics. Talking specifically regarding legal and logical reasoning sections, the maximum practice for these came through mocks for me. Since the pattern-change was recent, there wasn't a lot of ancillary material available related to these sections. Although news articles and compilations help in being comfortable with the developments in the legal field, true practice of application can be done only when you have questions based on them. I would highlight here that although the required skills like speedreading and comprehension remain the same, the approach required for Legal reasoning section is a little different from that used in English or Critical reasoning section. Legal reasoning demands, and deserves, more time than English or CR, both in reading and in questions. You have to carefully read every line of the passage in Legal reasoning section and have to

give enough time to questions to apply the rules correctly, because if you lose out on even a single detail the question

can go wrong; and as we say: ignorance of law is no excuse. The logical reasoning section on the other hand can be divided to two parts: critical reasoning (the passages) and analytical reasoning (statement-based questions, puzzles, direction sense, etc.). I found little difference in the critical reasoning part and English sections, as the approach and the skills required are nearly same for both. I practiced passages from the modules and the mocks provided from Vidhigya. For analytical reasoning portion, mocks of other entrance exams like SLAT and AILET, and the modules helped a lot.

Vidhigya Correspondent: COVID pandemic was a very big disruption as perceived by many, how did you manage your study during the lockdown?

Aman: I am saddened by the kind of loss that the world has suffered due to pandemic. My memory of getting into NLS, would remain secondary and way less significant than the lessons that the pandemic has taught me. It would be insensitive to be thankful to a pandemic

for postponements, god had certain plans, for us as individuals and as a society.

My family, as always, was the biggest support system for me during my preparations. They made sure that I remain on track and did their best to support me throughout. Being in constant touch with the mentors at Vidhigya, ensured that I have an active and seamless available route for feedbacks, solutions and plans.

Vidhigya Correspondent: What was your study routine and best practices for CLAT?

Aman: This is one aspect of my preparation, which I regret. I could not have a very healthy routine during my preparation. I sometimes slept at 10 P.M., sometimes at 3 A.M. I would suggest everyone to simply not do this at all. Please, have a healthy routine and try to set your body clock. Your body supports your mind, only when both of them are fresh and active. Try sleeping early, and waking up early for maximum efficiency, something that I am trying to do these days.

I reiterate that it's never about the numbers of hours you put in, but the intensity. When you sit down to work, have a target to achieve in terms of tasks and not in terms of hours and complete all of them with focus. Cut off all distractions while you work. Take breaks between work and don't work between breaks. Worship work and it will protect you.

Vidhigya Correspondent: Did you take mock tests; how many did you take? Are they useful?

Aman: I can't stress enough the importance of mocks in preparation for CLAT. As we know, CLAT, unlike other entrance tests like the JEE or NEET, is not a syllabus-based examination. And hence, the closest parameter you have to gauge your preparation is a mock test. I took around 60 mocks during my preparation and made sure that I make maximum use of it. Mock analysis helped me gauge my strength and weaknesses: both in terms of concepts and speed. With each mock, I knew exactly where to work on and how

much, a luxury which won't have been available otherwise.

Vidhigya Correspondent: There are certain times when you don't score good in your Mock Tests and you feel low about it. Did it happen to you? If yes, how did you cope with such feelings?

Aman: It may very well happen that you don't score well in your mocks at all times. And that's completely fine, as long as you know the exact reasons for why the scores weren't high.

Scores went down for me, in three cases: due to some fault from my end, difficult mock or some of my random experiments. In case of my fault, I analysed closely where do I lack and is there a way to fix it. That gave me exact roadmap, as to what to do in the coming days or which type of questions to refrain from attempting. In case of a difficult mock, I used to be thankful, for I encountered difficult questions during my preparation itself and not in the actual CLAT. This gave me the confidence that no matter what would be the difficulty of the CLAT, I have already seen

decent difficulty levels. In case of a failure of my experiment, either with section order or anything else, I knew which strategy doesn't work for me and hence I dropped it right away, so that when I go into CLAT, I have a fool-proof strategy ready, specifically designed for me by me.

Vidhigya Correspondent: Though you are not at the campus for physical classes but your online classes have started. How does it feel to be at the best law school of this country?

Aman: NLSIU is magical. It is an absolute privilege to study alongside some of the smartest brains of the country and being taught by some of the most renowned faculty members. The senior-junior fabric at NLS is something which one would hardly find in any university. There exist several systems, like the informal Rank family system and the formal SBA Mentor system, which ensure that the juniors get constant support from seniors. The classes follow case study method and hence, are full of discourses, discussions, debates and

active class engagement. These discourses open up one's mind to several perspectives that may exist and introduces the subjectivity associated with a lot of things, which at face value may seem objective. The opportunities at NLS are immense, both within the university and from outside the university.

Students often find themselves in a situation where they have to give up an opportunity to grab another. The opportunities, the faculty and the student body, all together make NLS an exciting place to learn. Here's hoping that we get to go to the campus in the next trimester and would finally meet the people who we've 'met' only through the boxes on our screens.

Vidhigya Correspondent: Your message for the other CLAT Aspirants preparing for upcoming CLAT exams?

Aman: Make sure you have no regrets. Regret hurts more than incapability, because capability can be built with time, but an opportunity once missed can never be grabbed again. Therefore, regret remains and would haunt you forever, at least till humans develop a time machine, which I suppose is still far away. If you have done enough, and by enough I mean YOUR absolute best, you'll be happy with the results, and in the end that's the only thing that matters. Results are decided by how satisfied you are, and not by some numbers. Be sincere to yourself, work to the best of your abilities and then whatever comes your way, accept with open arms. Do not go very hard on yourself. Make sure you take good care of your and your family's mental and physical health. And of course, 'Just Chill' (Mustafa, 2020). If this comes from the President of the Consortium of NLUs himself, it must hold some credibility.

Khud se nahi haarna. Give YOUR best and I'll pray that all of you get what you've worked for. All the best.

Vidhigya Correspondent: Wish you success in all your academic and professional pursuits. Stay Blessed and Stay LAWgical !!!

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THE BIG NEWS

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BIG NEWS

Iran Israel Tension

The conflict between Israel and Iran has created a situation of turmoil affecting the security of the **large Indian diaspora based in the Gulf region.**

- Iran has launched significant attacks on Israel, **deploying over 300 projectiles**, including drones, **cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles.** This action was widely seen as retaliation for a deadly strike on **Iran's consulate in Damascus, Syria.**
- This has created the additional risk of piracy and hostage-taking in the **Gulf region.**

Reasons for the Iran-Israel Conflict

- **Historical Context:** Iran and Israel have had a tumultuous relationship since the **Iranian Revolution of 1979,** which transformed Iran from a close ally of Israel under the rule of the Shah to an **Islamic Republic openly hostile towards Israel.**
- **Religious and Ideological Differences:** Iran is an Islamic republic governed by **Shia Islam**, while Israel is a predominantly **Jewish state.**
  - The religious and ideological differences between the two countries have contributed to **mutual suspicion and animosity.**
- **Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:** Iran has been a staunch supporter of Palestinian causes, including backing militant groups like **Hamas and Hezbollah,** which are considered terrorist organisations by Israel.
  - Iran's support for these groups and its calls for the destruction of Israel have heightened tensions.
- **Geopolitical Rivalry:** Iran and Israel are regional rivals vying for influence in the **Middle East.** They have conflicting interests in various regional conflicts, including the **civil wars in Syria and Yemen.**

- Where Iran supports the **Assad regime and Houthi rebels,** respectively, while Israel opposes Iranian influence in these countries.
- ➲ **Nuclear Program:** Israel views Iran's nuclear program with great concern, fearing that Iran may develop nuclear weapons that could pose an existential threat to Israel's security.
  - Israel has been a vocal critic of the **Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)** and has taken measures, including covert operations, to **disrupt Iran's nuclear activities.**
- ➲ **Proxy Conflicts:** Iran and Israel have engaged in proxy conflicts through their support for opposing factions in neighbouring countries.
  - **For example,** Iran's support for **Hezbollah in Lebanon** and for Shia militias in Iraq has been perceived as a threat by Israel.
- ➲ **Regional Power Dynamics:** The balance of power in the Middle East is shaped by the competition between Iran and its allies on one side and Israel and its allies on the other.
  - This competition has contributed to a cycle of tensions and conflicts in the region.
- ➲ **Hamas Missile Attack:** In October 2023, Hamas, an Iran-backed group, launched a **missile attack on Israel,** prompting **Israeli airstrikes on Gaza** in response to perceived threats from Hamas operating in civilian areas.
- ➲ **Houthi Group's Red Sea Incident:** Since November 2023, the **Iran-backed Houthi group from Yemen** has targeted several ships related to **Israel and its allies in the Red Sea**, triggering the 'Red Sea Crisis' and causing disruptions to supply chains.
- ➲ **Airstrike on the Iranian Embassy and Iran's Retaliation:** Suspected Israeli airstrikes targeted the Iranian embassy compound in **Syria**, resulting in casualties and in retaliation Iran launched a missile attack on Israel in April 2024, marking a significant escalation in **direct hostilities between the two nations.**

India's Stand in Iran-Israel Tension

- ➲ India called for **de-escalation** in the aftermath of Iran's retaliatory strike against Israel.
- ➲ This approach is in contrast to India's instant expression of solidarity with Israel at the **highest political level immediately** after the October 7 terror attack by Hamas.

Significance of India's Approach on Recent Iran-Israel Tension

- ➲ **Difference between terrorism perpetrated by non-state actors and direct confrontation between two states**
  - India's call to show restraint in the region highlights the contrast between dealing with terrorism from a non-government group and **managing a conflict between two big countries** with a history of rivalry.
  - Delhi has a lot at stake in its relationships with both **Tehran and Tel Aviv,** and it's never been about picking one over the other.
  - If India was seen as taking Israel's side on October 7 (Hamas attack), its position today urging restraint will be viewed as **balanced and in favour of regional peace.**
- ➲ **Complexity of the region's politics**
  - India's call for **de-escalation between Israel and Iran** is about recognising the complexity of the region's politics.
  - Inter-state and intra-state conflicts in the **Middle East** are deep and pervasive.
  - India will have to forever balance its engagement with key regional actors — **Egypt, Iran, Israel, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.**

- Orientation and interests of these countries are different and often in conflict.

⮞ **Shift in India's approach towards this region**
- In the past, India's regional policy was framed in terms of contradictions between the **West and the Middle East.**
  - **E.g.,** India's steps to manage the fallout of US-Iran tensions.
- Today, Delhi pays attention to the region's internal contradictions.
  - **E.g.,** India's stand on Iran – Israel issue, Israel-Palestine issue etc.

⮞ **Religion & associated vote-bank politics can't be dominant factor in dealing with Middle East**
- India's response must be based on the merits of the issue at hand.

⮞ **India's expanding footprints in the Middle East**
- India's interests in the region are no longer limited to oil imports and labour exports.
- The **Gulf Arab states — especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE**—have emerged as major economic and political partners for India.
- Partnerships with Gulf Arab countries go beyond just two-way relationships and now have a **broader impact across the Indian Ocean region.**
- These partnerships are crucial for making the **India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC)** a reality, which is currently a top priority for India's trans-regional agenda.

Katchatheevu Island Controversy

The Katchatheevu Island has garnered attention for its role in the **India-Sri Lanka relationship** and the **contentious fishing rights issue,** showcasing the complexities of maritime boundary disputes and fishing rights in the area.

Dispute Related to Katchatheevu Island

- Katchatheevu is a **285-acre uninhabited island** in the **Palk Strait** between India and Sri Lanka.
- Located **northeast of Rameswaram,** approximately 33 km from the Indian coast, it sits about **62 km southwest of Jaffna, at the northern tip of Sri Lanka.**
- Katchatheevu is not suited for permanent human settlement as there is **no source of drinking water** on the island.
- The island's **sole structure is St. Anthony's church,** an early 20th-century Catholic shrine, where **Christian priests from India and Sri Lanka conduct an annual festival** service attended by devotees from both countries.

History of island:

- **Origin:** The Island was formed as a result of volcanic eruption in the **14th-century.**
- **Early Rulers:** The region was initially ruled by the **Jaffna kingdom of Sri Lanka** in the early medieval period, but control later shifted to the **Ramnad zamindari under Nayak dynasty of Madurai** in the 17th century.

Dispute:

- **India:** The ownership dispute over Katchatheevu between India and Sri Lanka, which had been part of the **Madras Presidency** during the British Raj, persisted until 1974, with both countries claiming the island as their own.
- **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka claimed sovereignty over Katchatheevu on the ground that the **Portuguese** who had occupied the island during 1505-1658 CE had exercised jurisdiction over the islet.
- **1974:** Under **Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Agreement** the island's transfer to Sri Lanka occurred.
- **1976:** An additional agreement was made that prevented both countries from fishing in each other's **Exclusive Economic Zones,** with Katchatheevu positioned at the boundary of these zones, **causing ambiguity over fishing rights.**
- **2009:** After **Sri Lanka's civil war ended in 2009,** tensions escalated over Indian fishermen entering Sri Lankan waters, leading to arrests, allegations of custodial torture, and renewed retrieval demands regarding Katchatheevu.

Contentious Issues:

- The **1974 agreement** permitted Indian fishermen to continue **accessing Katchatheevu.**

➲ Due to differing interpretation of the agreement by both sides, it failed to resolve the fishing rights issue, with Sri Lanka limiting **Indian fishermen's access to activities such as resting, drying nets, and visiting the Catholic shrine without visa.**

Tamil Nadu's Stand:

➲ In **1973**, then **Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu** had **urged centre to retain Katchatheevu**, stating it belonged to India and not just Tamil Nadu.

➲ In **1991**, the issue resurfaced when the then Chief Minister called for its retrieval later modifying her demand to a perpetual lease of the Island with both **Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition** approaching the Supreme Court.

Union Government's Stand:

Island of Katchatheevu

Geographical location
- It is an uninhabited area in the Palk Strait, between India and Sri Lanka. It is no more than 1.6 km in length and slightly over 300 m wide at its broadest point.
- It lies northeast of Rameswaram, about 33 km from the Indian coast.
- It is about 62 km southwest of Jaffna, at the northern tip of Sri Lanka, and 24 km away from the inhabited Delft Island, belonging to Sri Lanka.

History
- Being the product of a 14-century volcanic eruption, Katchatheevu is relatively new in the geological timescale.
- In the early mediaeval period, it was controlled by the Jaffna kingdom of Sri Lanka.
- In the 17th century, control passed to the Ramnad zamindari based out of Ramanathapuram, about 55 km northwest of Rameswaram.

Dispute
- The Island became part of the Madras Presidency during the British Raj.
- But in 1921, both India and Sri Lanka, at the time British colonies, claimed Katchatheevu in order to determine fishing boundaries.
- A survey marked Katchatheevu in Sri Lanka, but a British delegation from India challenged this, citing ownership of the island by the Ramnad kingdom.
- This dispute was not settled until 1974.

➲ **2013:** The Union government informed the Supreme Court that the issue of reclaiming Katchatheevu from Sri Lanka was irrelevant as **no Indian territory was relinquished,** citing historical disputes settled by **agreements in 1974 and 1976.**

➲ **2022:** However, the Union government, while referring to the two agreements, pointed out in its reply in the **Rajya Sabha that Katchatheevu "lies on the Sri Lankan side** of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line.

Agreement on Katchatheevu Island

➲ **Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime agreement of 1974**
- The then Indian govt under **Indira Gandhi** made attempts to settle the maritime border between India and Sri Lanka, once and for all.
- As a part of this settlement, known as the **'Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime agreement'**, Katchatheevu was ceded to Sri Lanka.
- At the time, she thought the island had little strategic value and that ceasing India's claim over the island would deepen its ties with its southern neighbour.

➲ **1974 Agreement and fishing rights of Indian fishermen**
- As per the agreement, **Indian fishermen were still allowed to access Katchatheevu.**
- Unfortunately, the issue of fishing rights was not ironed out by the agreement.
- Sri Lanka interpreted Indian fishermens' **right to access Katchatheevu** to be limited to rest, drying nets and **for visit to the Catholic shrine without visa.**

➲ **1976 agreement**
- Another agreement in 1976, during the period of **Emergency in India**, barred either country from fishing in the other's **Exclusive Economic Zone.**
- Again, Katchatheevu lay right at the edge of the EEZs of either country, **retaining a degree of uncertainty with regards to fishing rights.**

EVM VVPAT Case

The Supreme Court (SC) recently upheld the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) polling system and declined the petitioners demand of 100% cross-verification of votes cast on EVMs with the accompanying Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) paper slips.

Case

➲ **Petition and Demands:** Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) had filed a petition in 2023 before the **SC demanding 100 % crossverification of EVM votes with VVPAT paper slips** to ensure free and fair election process. ADR also suggested the use of barcodes on VVPAT slips to complete the process as fast as possible.

➲ **Allegations:** The petitioners highlighted that
- **ECI has failed to provide a foolproof procedure to verify that a voter's vote has been counted as recorded** which is an indispensable part of **voter verifiability.** This can be attributed to the existing practice of a voter not being provided with a copy of their VVPAT slips.
- There exists a risk of manipulation as both EVMS and VVPATs have a **"programmable chip"** and the EVMs are assembled by **two Public Sector Undertakings- the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL),** which have several members of the BJP as their directors.
  - The ECI has previously denied sharing the **"source code"** of EVMs stating that they constitute the intellectual property of the manufacturers.

➲ **Examples of Count Mismatch:** They cited an example of **2019 general elections**, when during mandatory verification of VVPAT paper slips of **five randomly selected polling stations**, the returning officer officially verified a **discrepancy of 14 votes in EVM and VVPAT** counts at a polling station of **Andhra Pradesh's Mydukur constituency.**

ECI's Response- ECI said that there are-

➲ **No Discrepancies:** It has matched EVM votes with **more than 4 crore VVPAT slips**, and no discrepancies have been recorded so far. It however attributed **"differences in count"-** to human errors like nondeletion of mock poll votes from the control unit of the EVM or the VVPAT.

➲ **Tampering with EVMs Impossible:** at any stage as EVM manufacturers have no information about which button would be allocated to which candidate, or the constituency to which the machine would be sent, and the images of symbols are **uploaded on the 4 MB flash memory** of the VVPAT machine seven days before the polls, in the presence of candidates or their representatives.

➲ **Opposed the Demand for 100% Cross-verification:** of EVM votes with VVPAT slips citing it as a cumbersome and **time-consuming task** as there exists lakhs of polling booths
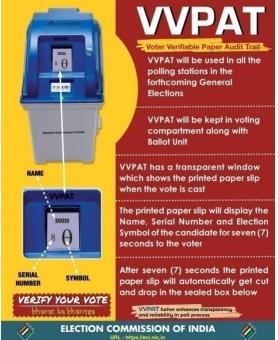
Key Takeaways

➲ **Validation of Current Polling System:** The court affirmed the integrity of the current polling system, especially with the introduction of **VVPATs (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail).** It referenced past rulings, like the **Subramanian Swamy case of 2013,** emphasizing the necessity of a paper trail for fair elections.

➲ **Dismissal of EVM Tampering Claims:** The court debunked claims of EVM tampering, highlighting the agnostic nature of EVM microcontrollers towards political entities and the robust **Unauthorized Access Detection Mechanism (UADM)** that permanently disables any tampered machines.

➲ **Feasibility of 100% Cross-verification:** While recognizing voters' rights for accurate vote recording, the court deemed **100% cross-verification impractical due to logistical challenges,** potential misuse, and increased time for result declaration.

➲ **Rejection of Paper-Ballot Proposal:** The court rejected suggestions to revert to paper ballots, citing the **advantages of EVMs in curbing malpractices**, reducing invalid votes, and expediting the counting process.

➲ **Caution against Baseless Doubts:** It cautioned against spreading baseless doubts about the electoral process, as it could erode trust and reduce citizens' participation in elections.

➲ **EVM-VVPAT Discrepancy:** Except for isolated cases, the court noted no significant discrepancies in physical counts of VVPAT slips.

➲ **Issuance of Directions for Post-poll Procedures:** The court issued directives for sealing and storing Symbol Loading Units (SLUs) along with **EVMs for 45 days post-results declaration**, allowed candidates to seek verification of burnt memory semi-controllers in EVMs, and suggested examining the possibility of machine counting VVPAT slips with barcoding.

EVM Timeline

➲ **Prototype, 1979-** Prototype was developed by Electronics Corporation of India Ltd. (ECILunder Department of Atomic Energy).

➲ **Demonstration on EVM, 1980:** ECI demonstrated EVMs. After consensus, the ECI issued directives under Article 324 for the use of EVMs.

➲ **First Use, 1982:** EVMs were used at 50 polling stations during elections in Kerala. The SC ruled against the legality of EVMs' use.

➲ **Amendment to RPA, 1988:** to add a new section 61A empowering the EC to use EVMs.

➲ **Technical Examination of EVM's, 1990:** An Electoral Reforms Committee under **Dinesh Goswami** recommended EVMs without any further loss of time, marking it technically sound, secure and transparent.

➲ **EVMs in Assembly Elections, 1998:** EVMs were used in 16 Assembly elections across Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and New Delhi.

➲ **Lok Sabha Elections, 2004:** only EVMs were used in all 543 Constituencies.

➲ **Introduction of VVPATs, 2013:** Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 were amended to introduce VVPAT machines.

➲ **Lok Sabha Elections, 2019:** For the first time, EVMs were used fully backed by VVPATs.

VVPAT Timeline

Idea of VVPAT first emerge - It happened in **2010,** when the ECI held a meeting with political parties to discuss how to make the **EVM-based polling process more transparent**. The idea was to allow for a physical verification of the electronically cast vote, so that both voters and political parties know that their vote is being recorded correctly.

First used in 2013 - It was used for the first time in all **21 polling stations of the Noksen Assembly constituency of Nagaland in 2013,** after which the EC decided to introduce VVPATs in a phased manner. By June 2017, there was 100% adoption of VVPATs.

2014 - The voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) system was introduced in **8 of 543 parliamentary constituencies** as a **pilot project in 2014 Indian general election**. VVPAT was implemented in Lucknow, Gandhinagar, Bangalore South, Chennai Central, Jadavpur, Raipur, Patna Sahib and Mizoram constituencies.

2017 - VVPAT -fitted EVMs was used in entire **Goa state in the 2017 assembly elections**, which was the first time that an entire state in India saw the implementation of VVPAT.

2019 - Introduced in all **543 Lok sabha constituencies** in **2019 Indian general election.**

Can the voter take VVPAT slips home? No, voters cannot take the VVPAT slip back home, as it is later used to verify votes cast in five randomly selected polling booths.

India's Trade Reliance on China and EU Rising: UNCTAD

India's trade reliance on China & European Union is rising as global trade is witnessing a marked shift along geopolitical lines, says a report by the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).**

Key Highlights of the UNCTAD Report

➲ **Observation with respect to global trade**
- The UNCTAD in its **Global Trade Report** has highlighted that after facing **declines over several quarters,** international trade is poised for a rebound in 2024.
- In 2023, global trade saw a **3% contraction, equalling roughly $1 trillion**, compared to the record **high of $32 trillion in 2022.**
- Available data for the **first quarter of 2024** suggests a continued improvement in global trade, especially considering moderating **global inflation and improving economic growth forecasts.**
- Additionally, rising demand for **environmental goods, particularly electric vehicles**, is expected to bolster trade this year.
- UNCTAD's estimates showed a major shift in trade **due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.**
  - While Russia's trade dependence on China surged by a **record 7.1 per cent**, its reliance on the EU slid **by 5.3 per cent.**
  - This was largely a result of **Russian oil shifting from the EU to China and India.**

➲ **Observations with respect to India:**
- It showed that India's dependence on China and the European Union (EU) grew by **1.2 per cent while its reliance on Saudi Arabia slid by 0.6 per cent.**
  - This came despite India's efforts to cut reliance on China by implementing its flagship **ProductionLinked Incentive (PLI) scheme and Quality Control Orders (QCOs)** largely to limit entry of cheap Chinese products.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE & DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD):

- It is a permanent inter-governmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- It is responsible for dealing with development issues, particularly international trade.
- Framing policies in various domains such as trade, technology, finance, aid, and transport are the most important priorities of UNCTAD.
- The Conference ordinarily meets once in four years.
  - The second UNCTAD Conference took place in New Delhi, India in 1968.
- Members: 195 countries; Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland

REPORTS PUBLISHED BY UNCTAD:
➡ Trade and Development Report
➡ Trade and Environment Review
➡ World Investment Report
➡ Least Developed Countries Report

Review of India's Human Rights Accreditation status

The **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** is preparing to defend its human rights processes at a meeting to be held in **Geneva.**

• In this meeting a decision on whether India's human rights body will retain its **"A status"** is expected to be made.

• The meeting of the **Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA)** of the **UN-recognised Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)** worldwide will be held on May 1.

Key Highlights

➲ **Observations made by the review committee in 2023**
  - According to a six-point submission by the SCA in March 2023, the NHRC has failed to create conditions required to be able to operate independent of government interference.
  - The committee had slammed India for the **involvement of police officers** in its investigative process, calling it a conflict of interest.
  - It also cited the lack of pluralism and gender representation, given the NHRC had only one woman in its top body, an institutional **ex-officio representative of the National Commission for Women.**
  - The SCA had also pointed out that the composition of the committee should reflect the diversity of the society it operated in.
    - It indicated the lack of any member representing **India's largest minority religions.**

Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)

  - It is an organisation affiliated to the **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.**
  - It is a global network of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) that works to promote and protect human rights.
    - GANHRI represents **120 NHRIs from around the world.**
  - GANHRI's mission is to unite, promote, and strengthen NHRIs to operate in line with the UN Paris Principles.
➲ **Accreditation by the GANHRI**
  - **Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA)** reviews NHRIs **every five years,** and there is an appeal process for NHRIs to ensure greater transparency and due process.
  - In a unique peer-review-based accreditation process, GANHRI ensures individual NHRIs' compliance with internationally recognised standards – **the Paris Principles** – to ensure their independence, pluralism and accountability.
    - The **Paris Principles** set out internationally agreed minimum standards that NHRIs must meet to be considered credible.

- The **six principles** require a **country's human rights agency** to be independent from the government in its structure, composition, decision-making and method of operation.
- **An NHRI is reviewed by the SCA when –**
  - It applies for initial accreditation
  - It applies for re-accreditation every five years
  - The circumstances of the NHRI change in any way that may affect its compliance with the Paris Principles.
- NHRIs that are assessed as complying with the Paris Principles are accredited with **'A status',** while those that partially comply are accredited with **'B status'.**
  - This accreditation status affects a country's ability to vote at the UN Human Rights Council and some UNGA bodies.
- **India's accreditation:** India's NHRC got 'A' status of accreditation for the first time in 1999, which it retained in 2006, 2011, and in 2017 after it was deferred for a year.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- **About:** It is a statutory body established under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.**
- **Composition of NHRC:** It is a multi-member body consisting of a **chairperson and five members.**
  - The chairperson should be a **retired chief justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court.**
  - Members should be a serving or retired judge of the Supreme Court, a serving or retired chief justice of a high court and three persons (out of which at least one should be a woman) having knowledge or practical experience with respect to human rights.
- **Appointment & Tenure**
  - The chairperson and members are appointed by the **President** on the recommendations of a sixmember committee consisting of:
    - **Prime Minister** as its head; **Speaker** of the Lok Sabha; **Deputy Chairman** of the Rajya Sabha; **Leaders of the Opposition** in both the Houses of Parliament; **Central Home Minister**
  - The chairperson and members are appointed for the term of **3 years or till the age of 70 years**, whichever is earlier.
  - The chairperson and members **are eligible for reappointment.**
- **Current Chairperson –** Arun Kumar Mishra

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- ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY
- ART AND CULTURE
- SPORTS

VIDHIGYA CONFACTUALS

ECONOMY

SCORES 2.0

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has upgraded its complaint redress system with SCORES 2.0 - **SEBI Complaint Redress System**, offering a more user-friendly experience.

Key points about SCORES 2.0:

➲ SCORES is a **centralized web-based grievance redress system** launched by SEBI in **2011,** covering issues under various acts and regulations such as the **Sebi Act, Securities Contract Regulation Act, Depositories Act, and rules of the Companies Act, 2013.**

➲ The new version, SCORES 2.0, introduces **efficiency improvements like auto-routing, auto-escalation, monitoring by designated bodies, and reduced timelines for complaint resolution.**

➲ Complaints on SCORES 2.0 will now have a **redressal timeline of 21 days** from receipt, down from the previous 30 days. Entities must submit action taken reports within this timeframe.

➲ **There are two levels of review:** first by the 'Designated Body' and, if needed, SEBI will conduct a second review if the investor remains dissatisfied.

➲ Auto-escalation of complaints will occur if regulated entities or designated bodies fail to adhere to prescribed timelines.

➲ SCORES 2.0 integrates with the **KYC Registration Agency database**, simplifying investor registration onto the platform.

Hurun Global Rich List

The 2024 Hurun Global Rich List by the **Hurun Research Institute** provides insights into global and Indian billionaire trends:

Indian Scenario:

➲ India witnessed a **substantial increase of 94 billionaires**, second only to the USA, reaching a **total of 271 ultra-high-net-worth individuals.**

➲ Mumbai experienced the fastest growth in billionaire numbers, **adding 26,** securing **third place globally and leading in Asia. New Delhi** entered the **Top 10** for the first time.

Hurun Rich List 2024 Global Top 10

Rank	Name	Wealth ($bn)	Change YOY	Main Company	Age	Country of Residence
1	Elon Musk	231	47%	Tesla	52	USA
2	Jeff Bezos	185	57%	Amazon	60	USA
3	Bernard Arnault	175	-13%	LVMH	74	France
4	Mark Zuckerberg	158	132%	Meta	39	USA
5	Larry Ellison	144	44%	Oracle	79	USA
6	Warren Buffett	144	24%	Berkshire Hathaway	93	USA
7	Steve Ballmer	143	41%	Microsoft	67	USA
8	Bill Gates	138	26%	Microsoft	68	USA
9	Larry Page	123	64%	Alphabet	50	USA
10	Mukesh Ambani	115	40%	Reliance Industries	66	India

➲ The pharmaceutical sector leads in contributing to **India's billionaire count** with **39 billionaires**, followed by the automobile and auto components industry with 27, and the chemicals sector with **24 billionaires.**

➲ Indian billionaires collectively hold a wealth of **$1 trillion**, representing 7% of global billionaire wealth, highlighting India's significant economic influence.

Global Overview:

➲ **China** maintains its lead with **814 billionaires despite a decrease of 155 billionaires.**
➲ The **USA** follows closely with **800 billionaires, adding 109.**
➲ Together, **China and the US** represent **49% of the global billionaire population, down by 4%.**
➲ **Brazil, Indonesia, and Japan** have seen positive growth compared to China's decline.
➲ **New York leads globally as the city with the most billionaires, followed by London.**

India Gains Access of Sittwe Port

India has gained access to operate its **second overseas port at Sittwe in Myanmar**, in addition to the **Chabahar Port in Iran.**

➲ The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** has approved a proposal for **India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL)** to manage the operations of the entire port located on the **Kaladan River in Sittwe, Myanmar.**
➲ IPGL is a joint venture between **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) and Deendayal Port Trust** (formerly Kandla Port Trust), wholly owned by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways.**

➲ It was established in **2015 under the Companies Act, 2013**, as directed by the Ministry of Shipping to develop ports overseas.
➲ IPGL's current task includes equipping and operating container/**multi-purpose terminals at Chabahar Port in Iran,** showcasing India's expanding presence in managing strategic ports beyond its borders.

CDP-SURAKSHA

➲ The government has come up with a new platform CDPSURAKSHA to **disburse subsidies to horticulture farmers** under the Cluster Development Programme (CDP) — the Centre's initiative **to promote horticulture crops.**
➲ The move seeks to push the growth of India's horticulture sector, which contributes nearly **one-third to the agriculture gross value addition (GVA).**

CDP-SURAKSHA (System for Unified Resource Allocation, Knowledge, and Secure Horticulture Assistance)

➲ This digital platform will allow an instant disbursal of subsidies to farmers in their bank account by utilizing the e-RUPI voucher from the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).**

➲ CDP-SURAKSHA has features like database integration with **PM-KISAN**, cloud-based server space from **NIC, UIDAI validation, eRUPI integration, local government directory (LGD),** content management system, geotagging, and geo-fencing.

➲ The platform allows access to farmers, vendors, **implementing agencies (IA), and cluster development agencies (CDAs),** and officials of the **National Horticulture Board (NHB).**

KABIL – CSIR-IMMT MoU

Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) has entered into a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT)** focusing on critical minerals.

Key points of the MoU:

➲ KABIL will leverage the technical expertise and services of CSIR-IMMT for various projects, including **designing and analyzing metallurgical test** work-plans, and selecting process technologies for mineral processing and metal extraction.

➲ The agreement also involves joint research efforts and the exchange of scientific information between **KABIL and CSIR-IMMT.**

➲ This collaboration is significant for **advancing scientific research and technological development** in the mineral and metallurgical sectors, crucial for the growth and sustainability of India's mining industry.

➲ Ultimately, this partnership aims to **play a pivotal role in ensuring the mineral security** of the nation by harnessing cutting-edge research and technology.

Securities Appellate Tribunal

➲ The Centre recently appointed **justice PS Dinesh Kumar** as the presiding officer of the **Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT).**

➲ SAT is a statutory body established under the provisions of **Section 15K** of the **Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.**

➲ SAT hears and disposes of appeals against orders passed by **SEBI, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).**

➲ The jurisdiction of SAT extends to **whole of India.**

➲ SAT comprises a presiding officer who is a **retired judge** and **two members – one judicial and one technical.**

➲ The appointment of the presiding officer and the other members is done by a committee headed by the **Prime Minister of India.**

Foreign Investors Allowed to Invest in Sovereign Green Bonds

➲ RBI a recently allowed foreign investors operating within the **International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** to invest in **Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs).**

➲ IFSC located in **Gujarat,** serves as a special economic zone for financial services, providing a **conducive environment for foreign investors** to participate in India's financial market easily.

➲ **Sovereign Green Bonds** are a type of government bonds specifically designated to finance environmentally sustainable projects.

➲ Unlike traditional government bonds, where the funds raised may be allocated to general expenses or initiatives, SGrBs are exclusively dedicated to green causes.

➲ These projects typically include investments in renewable energy sources such as **solar and wind power,** sustainable infrastructure development and clean transportation initiatives.

Benefits

➲ RBI's decision will expand the pool of investors interested in these **green bonds.**

➲ Moreover, it will deepen the **Climate Bond Market**

➲ The money raised through SGrBs will provide much-needed capital for the govt. to invest in public sector projects that **aim to reduce the carbon footprint of Indian economy.**

➲ It will help to fund the country's ambitious **2070 net zero goals**, ensuring 50% of India's energy comes from non-fossil fuel-based sources and to reduce the carbon intensity of the nation's economy by 45% by 2030 from 2005 level, as pledged by India at **COP26 in Glasgow 2021.**

➲ The move promotes the growth of green finance in India and supports the **country's transition towards sustainability**

➲ The funds can be used for initiatives that contribute to India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Infrastructure Investment Trusts

➲ IndoSpace, which develops and manages industrial and logistics parks in India, will soon launch an **infrastructure investment trust (InvIT)** and raise around **$700-800 million.**

➲ InvIT will be the **third in the warehousing space** and will be the largest InvIT in India.

➲ **IndoSpace owns 52 industrial logistics parks in 11 cities** of India spread across 58 million sq ft (msf).

Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvIT)

➲ InvITs are institutions similar to **mutual funds.** Its objective is to **facilitate investment into the infrastructure sector in India.**

➲ InvITs collect investment from various categories of investors and invest them into completed and **revenue-generating infrastructure projects.**

➲ It thus enables investment of money from individual and **institutional investors in infrastructure projects** to earn a small portion of the income as return.
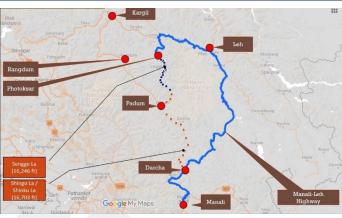
➱ InvITs are regulated by **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).** SEBI had notified the **SEBI (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014** for registration and regulation of InvITs in India.

Nimmu Padam Darcha Road

The **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** has achieved a significant milestone by completing the strategic Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road in **Ladakh.**

➱ The newly constructed **298-km road connects Manali to Leh** via Darcha and Nimmu on the Kargil-Leh Highway.
➱ This road becomes the **third axis linking Ladakh to the mainland**, in addition to the Manali-Leh and Srinagar-Leh routes.
➱ It holds strategic importance due to its shorter distance compared to the other routes and only crossing one pass, **Shinkun La, which stands at 16,558 feet.** Tunnel work on **Shinkun La** is set to commence soon under BRO's supervision.
➱ The completion of this road ensures all-weather connectivity to the Ladakh region, **enhancing defense preparedness and fostering economic development, particularly in the Zanskar valley.**

GOVERNANCE AND SCHEMES

SUVIDHA Portal

The SUVIDHA portal, developed by the **Election Commission of India (ECI),** has seen a significant influx of permission requests from **political parties and candidates,** especially since the announcement of **Lok Sabha elections.**

Purpose: The SUVIDHA platform serves as a **single window clearance system** for permissions related to campaigning activities during elections.

Features

- **Technology Solution:** Allows political parties and candidates to submit permission requests seamlessly, either online or offline.
- **Transparent Process:** Permission requests are processed transparently based on the **First in First Out (FIFO) principle.**
- **Role at RO Level:** Implemented at every Returning Officer (RO) level in each subdivision, enabling applying, processing, granting, and monitoring permissions.
- **Integration with ENCORE:** Permission requests are sent to concerned officers and nodal officers of different departments for approval through the ENCORE system, which is an in-house software designed by the ECI for candidate and election management.

Benefits

- **Efficient Processing:** Supported by a robust IT platform, leading to efficient processing of permission requests.
- **Real-time Status Tracking:** Applicants can track the status of their requests in real time through the SUVIDHA app, enhancing convenience and transparency.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Real-time tracking, status updates, timestamped submissions, and communication via SMS contribute to greater transparency and accountability in the electoral process.
- **Inclusivity:** Provides equal opportunity and inclusivity through offline request submission options, ensuring all stakeholders have access to necessary permissions and clearances.

Indelible Ink- Classic Symbol of Indian Polls

The indelible ink used in Indian elections is a classic symbol of the electoral process.

Purpose:

- The indelible ink is a crucial tool used during elections **to prevent voter fraud**, ensuring the integrity of the electoral process and **promoting free and fair elections.**
- It helps prevent individuals from attempting to **vote multiple times in different polling stations.**

Composition:

➲ The ink contains **silver nitrate**, which is a colorless compound that becomes visible under ultraviolet light, such as sunlight. The concentration of silver nitrate determines the quality of the ink.

➲ It also includes a solvent like **alcohol for faster drying, with premium ink drying in less than 40 seconds**. The ink remains resistant to soap, liquids, detergents, etc., for up to 72 hours after application.

History:

➲ The indelible ink was **first used during India's first general elections in 1951-52**, following the assent of then President Rajendra Prasad to the Representation of People Bill.

➲ Initially applied using a glass rod, it was later modified to be applied to the root of the nail **on the index finger** to prevent removal through rigorous rubbing.

Production:

➲ The ink was initially manufactured by the **Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR).** Subsequently, the manufacturing license was given to **Mysore Paints & Varnish Ltd. (MPVL),** formerly known as **Mysore Lac & Paint Works Ltd.**

➲ MPVL, founded in **1937** by **Krishna Raja Wadiyar IV, the Maharaja of Mysore**, has been the sole permitted company in India to **produce indelible ink since 1962.**

Special Olympics Bharat

Special Olympics Bharat (SOB), a **National Sports Federation of India** recently formed district units across Tamil Nadu through elections.

About Special Olympics Bharat (Logo- An Ability Rather Than a Disability)

➲ It is a **National Sports Federation** (recognized by Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports in Priority Category) registered under the **Indian Trust Act 1882 in 2001** and accredited by Special Olympics International to conduct Special Olympics Programs in India for development of Sports for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.

➲ It is the designated **Nodal Agency for all disabilities** and is a social inclusion movement using sports, health, education and leadership programs to empower people with intellectual disabilities.

➲ SOB aims to reach out to over **100,000 people** with intellectual disabilities in India every year.

Objectives

➲ Focus on **holistic development** (school and extra-curricular activities) and **training children with disabilities** to motivate them to join and remain in school;

➲ Train teachers to sensitize them to needs of special children and create a cadre of physical education teachers from among the disabled to work with schools and community centers;

➲ Ensure all **Special Olympics Bharat activities** (local, state, national and international) reflect the Olympic movement values, standards, ceremonies and events.

Powers of Election Commission in case of disruption in Voting

When the normal polling process is disrupted for various reasons, the Election Commission of India (ECI) takes specific actions to address the situation:

Intentional Destruction (Section 58A of RPA):

Situation: Unauthorized removal of EVMs, damage to EVMs, tampering, or mechanical failures during voting.

Action Taken by ECI: The Returning Officer (RO) reports to the EC and Chief Electoral Officer. EC can declare the poll void and schedule a new one. During a re-poll, voters' fingers are marked differently to distinguish from the original poll.

Booth Capturing (Section 135A of RPA):

Situation: Seizure of polling stations, preventing voters from voting, intimidating electors, affecting the counting of votes.

Action Taken by ECI: Presiding Officer closes EVM and informs the RO, who reports to EC. EC may declare the poll void and order a fresh poll or countermand the election if booth capturing occurs in many stations.

Natural Disasters (Section 57(1) of RPA):

Situation: Natural calamities, loss or damage to polling materials, riots, or violence, delay in starting polls due to EVM malfunction.

Action Taken by ECI: Presiding Officer adjourns the poll, seeks EC approval for a new date, and resumes voting from where it stopped. Only voters who haven't voted before the adjournment can vote.

Death of a Candidate (Section 52 of RPA):

Situation: Death of a recognized candidate.

Action Taken by ECI: Polls are adjourned. EC asks the party to nominate a new candidate within seven days.

SOCIAL ISSUES

An Overview of the PMAY-U Scheme

One of the **flagship programmes** of the current **Union Government was Housing for All (HfA) by 2022**, both in urban and rural areas, planned under the **PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) scheme in 2015.**

Housing Scarcity in India

- Currently, according to the government's estimates, there is a shortage of **around 20 million houses in rural areas and 3 million in urban centres.**
- According to a study by the **ICRIER,** urban housing **shortage increased by 54%, from 1.88 crore in 2012 to 2.9 crore in 2018.**

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY)

- Housing for All was launched in June 2015 and being implemented by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).**
- It will ensure all weather pucca houses to all eligible beneficiaries in the urban areas of the country through **States or UTs or Central Nodal Agencies by the year 2022,** when Nation completes **75 years of its independence.**
- The scheme covers the entire urban area of the country, i.e., all statutory towns **as per Census 2011** and towns notified subsequently, **including Notified Planning or Development Areas.**

Funding

- It is implemented as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** except for the component of credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS) which is implemented as a Central Sector Scheme.
- While the Government of India provides financial assistance, **State governments or UTs implement the scheme including selection of beneficiaries.**

Ayushman Bharat to All Senior Citizens

While releasing its election manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, a prominent political party promised to expand its **Ayushman Bharat Health Insurance scheme to cover senior citizens.**

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PMJAY)

- **About:** Launched in **September 2018**, the scheme covers over ~ **40% of the population** targeted towards poorest and the vulnerable.
  - It was launched as a second component of the **'Ayushman Bharat' scheme.**
  - It aimed to offer medical coverage of **Rs. 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care** hospitalisation to poor and vulnerable families.

➲ **Eligibility:** Earlier, the scheme targeted to cover **10.74 crore poor**, deprived rural families and identified occupational category of urban worker's families.
- However, states implementing **AB-PMJAY** have broadened their reach to encompass **13.44 crore families (65 crore people).**
- The beneficiaries are identified by latest **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data.**

➲ **Benefits:** It provides cashless access to Health Benefit Packages which covers **surgery, medical and day care treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.**

Ayushman Bharat for Senior Citizens – Need

➲ **Ageing population**
- India is reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend at present. However, the **declining fertility rate and increasing life expectancy mean that India's population is growing old.**
- Only **8.6% of the country's population** was over the **age of 60 years** at the time of the previous census in 2011. This proportion is expected to **increase to 19.5% by 2050.**
  - In terms of absolute numbers, the population over the **age of 60 years** will nearly triple from **103 million in 2011 to 319 million in 2050.**
- The aging population will mean increased expenditure on health and long-term care, **labour force shortages, public dissaving, and old-age income insecurity.**

➲ **Low insurance coverage**
- As per **India Ageing Report 2023,** just over **20% of people** over the age of 60 years are covered under health schemes such as **Central Government Health Scheme, Employees State Insurance Scheme etc.**
- Coverage is higher in **elderly men (19.7%) than elderly women (16.9%).** There is not much rural-urban divide in the coverage.
- The **India Ageing Report** found that the main reasons for a lack of coverage in elderly are **low awareness (52.9%) and non-affordability (21.6%).**

➲ **Diseases of the old:** The elderly are not only affected by chronic, non-communicable diseases and their complications, they are also more prone to infectious diseases.

➲ **Analysis of the expenditure incurred by the govt. under Ayushman Bharat**
- The government has incurred the most money for five key specialties under the scheme: **cardiology, general medicine, general surgery, orthopedics, and medical & radiation oncology.**
- This data show that the government already is incurring most of the money in providing treatment that is predominantly required for the **elderly population.**

Outlook on Women's Empowerment

ILO and the Institute of Human Development (IHD) have jointly published a report titled **"India Employment Report 2024".**

About India Employment Report 2024

➲ It is the third in the series of regular publications. The report examines the challenge of youth employment in the context of the **emerging economic, educational and skills scenarios in India** and the changes witnessed over the past two decades

➲ It highlights recent trends in the **Indian labour market,** which indicate improvements in some outcomes along with persisting and new challenges.

Key Highlights of the Report from Women Empowerment Perspective

➲ Female **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** is very low compared to the male counterparts. In 2023, the **male LFPR was pegged at 78.5 and the women LFPR was 37.**
  - The **world women LFPR rate is 49,** according to the World Bank figures.
➲ The female LFPR had been steadily **declining since 2000** and **touched 24.5 in 2019**, before inching up. The increase in labour force participation has come mostly in rural areas and mostly in self-employment & largely unpaid family work.
  - The share of regular work, which steadily **increased after 2000, started declining after 2018.**

Reasons for Low Female LFPR

➲ There are both supply and demand side reasons for the decline in women's LFPR. The supply factors such as:
  - **Social norms:** Women responsible for all care-giving duties plus cooking and cleaning,
  - **Patriarchal mindsets**
  - **Safety issues & lack of transport.**
➲ On the labour demand side, India's growth pattern has not been job intensive.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

New National Defence Strategy (NDS) 2024 of Australia

- ➲ Australia has released its new National Defence Strategy (NDS) 2024. In this document, the country has stated that **India is a top-tier security partner for Australia.**
- ➲ It states that through the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with India**, the govt. is continuing to prioritize practical and tangible cooperation that directly contributes to Indo-Pacific stability.
- ➲ Under this, Australia will support India's role in the region and seek to drive **practical bilateral and multilateral cooperation, defence industry opportunities** and information sharing.
  - Defence and strategic cooperation between India and Australia has been transformative in recent years with **series of exchanges, high-level visits and exercises**, both bilateral and multilateral.
  - India and Australia signed a **mutual logistics support agreement in 2020** and the two Navies had signed the '**Joint Guidance for Navy to Navy Relationship**' document in August 2021.

Germany Lifts Curbs on Sale of Small Arms to India

- ➲ Germany has recently lifted restrictions on the sale of **small arms to India** as an exception to the country **reflecting the growing strategic and military ties** between the two countries.
- ➲ Germany had earlier put restrictions over the **sale of small arms to non-NATO countries.**
- ➲ It is **Heckler & Koch,** the **German firm,** that makes the MP5 submachine guns that are currently in use by **the NSG and Indian Navy's marine commandos (MARCOS).**

India – Mauritius Revise Tax Treaty

- ➲ India has signed a protocol amending its tax treaty with Mauritius with an **aim to fill the loopholes in the treaty which were being abused for tax evasion and avoidance.**
- ➲ However, the text of the amended treaty has raised concerns of greater scrutiny on investments. This has led to a sell-off in **stock markets by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs).**

Amended Tax Treaty between India and Mauritius

- ➲ India and Mauritius in March 2024 had signed an **amendment to the DTAA.** The amendments allow the authorities to move beyond the residency certificate and **assess the principal purpose of an arrangement or transaction.**
- ➲ **Introduction of principal purpose test (PPT)**
  - The PPT aims to curtail tax avoidance by **ensuring that treaty benefits** are only granted for transactions with a bona fide purpose.
  - PPT states that tax benefits from a treaty will not apply if it's proven that the main reason for a transaction or arrangement was to get those tax benefits.
- ➲ **Introduction of Article 27B**
  - In the updated protocol, a new Article 27B has been added to the treaty, explaining who qualifies for benefits.
  - **According to the PPT,** if it's clear that getting treaty benefits, **like lower withholding tax on interest, royalties, and dividends,** is one of the main reasons for a party in a transaction, those benefits can be denied.

➲ **Changes in the Preamble**
- This revision also amended the preamble of the treaty to incorporate the thrust on tax avoidance and evasion.

Key Features of the DTAA between India and Mauritius

➲ **Residency Based Taxation:**
- A resident of Mauritius is not subject to tax in India on income from sources in India.
- Similarly, a resident of India is not subject to tax in Mauritius on income from sources in Mauritius.

➲ **Capital Gains Tax:**
- One of the **significant benefits of the DTAA** is the exemption or reduction of capital gains tax on investments made by **residents of one country in the other country.**
- For instance, capital gains arising from the sale of shares of an Indian company by a Mauritian resident may be taxed only in **Mauritius, subject to certain conditions.**

➲ **Interest, Royalties, and Fees for Technical Services:**
- The DTAA provides for reduced withholding tax rates on **interest, royalties, and fees** for technical services paid by residents of one country to residents of the other country.

➲ **Permanent Establishment:**
- The agreement contains provisions to determine the **existence of a permanent establishment**, which is a fixed place of business through which the business of an enterprise is wholly or partly carried on.
- This is important for determining the tax liability of a **foreign enterprise in the source country.**

➲ **Exchange of Information:**
- The DTAA includes provisions for the **exchange of information between the tax authorities of India and Mauritius** to prevent tax evasion and ensure compliance with the tax laws of both

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UK Passes Bill To Deport Asylum Seekers to Rwanda

➲ The UK parliament has finally passed a bill that will allow the government to **send asylum seekers to Rwanda** for their claims to be considered by the **East African nation.**

➲ **UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak** had often emphasised the need for stopping the inflow of **small boats coming to the country.**
- These boats carry migrants who attempt to escape violence, persecution and instability in a range of countries.

Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill

• **Need**

➲ The **number of migrants arriving in Britain on small boats** soared to 45,774 in 2022 from just 299 four years earlier. This is because as people seeking refuge pay criminal gangs thousands of pounds (dollars) to ferry them across the channel.

• **About**

➲ The **House of Lords**, which is the upper house of parliament, passed the **Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill.**

➲ It essentially says that Rwanda is a safe **third country** for the purposes of removing its individuals to Rwanda.

➲ Under the new law, any asylum seekers **who arrive illegally in Britain will be sent to Rwanda.**

• **Bill is an attempt to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling**

➲ This bill is an attempt to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling by designating Rwanda as a safe destination. In its ruling last year, Supreme Court of UK said that Rwanda couldn't be relied upon to not mistreat asylum-seekers.

➲ The court cited **Rwanda's abysmal human rights record**, including enforced disappearances and torture.

➲ In response to this argument, the Safety of Rwanda Bill was passed after the UK government signed a new treaty with **Rwanda to beef up protections for migrants in December 2023.**

EU Eases Schengen Visa Rules for Indians

➲ The European Union will now offer **multiple entry Schengen visas with longer validity to Indian travellers.**

➲ As EU eases the visa norms, frequent Indian travellers will now be able to apply for **five-year multiple entry visas,** which puts them at par with visa-free nationals.

➲ This regime enables Indians to obtain **two-year multi-entry Schengen visas after using two visas within three years.**

Schengen Area
✓ It is a border-free area in Europe that allows the free movement for **EU citizens and non-EU nationals** who are legally present in the EU.
✓ The Schengen Area includes **29 European countries, including 25 of the 27 EU member states**, as well as **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.**
• The Schengen Area **does not include Cyprus and Ireland.**
✓ The Schengen Agreement, signed in **1985,** near the town of **Schengen, Luxembourg**, led to the creation of the Schengen Area.

New Trade Fight between the US-China

The US-China trade landscape is heating up again, this time focusing on China's substantial presence in industries like **electric vehicles (EVs), solar panels, batteries, and steel.**

Chinese Dominance in EVs: China's extensive subsidization of its automakers has resulted in a robust car industry, particularly in the electric vehicle sector, where it commands **60% of global sales.**

Overcapacity Driving Overseas Sales: Chinese companies are producing significantly more EVs than **domestic demand, leading them to seek markets abroad.** This trend extends to other industries like solar panels, batteries, and traditional sectors such as steel.

Market Expansion Strategies: With surplus capacity, Chinese industries are aggressively targeting international markets, posing challenges for competitors in other countries. For instance, leading automaker BYD's introduction of a **low-priced electric SUV is seen as a threat to US carmakers.**

Tariff Dynamics: The **US currently imposes a 25% tariff on cars from China**, hindering their entry into the US market. However, **Mexico enjoys a free trade agreement with the US**, potentially offering an alternative route for Chinese goods.

Growing Concerns: This new trade conflict mirrors past disputes but is amplified by concerns over overcapacity, especially in advanced sectors. The competitive pricing and quality of Chinese products are reshaping global market dynamics.

Russia Fired Hypersonic Missiles at Kyiv

- As per the Ukraine's military administration, Russia has used **five of its new hypersonic Zircon missiles to attack Kyiv** since the start of the year.
- Russia also fired **11 Kinzhal missiles**, another hypersonic weapon which travels at several times the speed of sound.

Hypersonic Weapon

- They are normally defined as fast, low-flying, and highly **manoeuvrable weapons** designed to be quick and agile for traditional missile defence systems to detect in time.
- Unlike ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons **don't follow a predetermined**, arched trajectory and can manoeuvre on the way to their destination.
- The term hypersonic describes any speed faster than five times that of sound, which is roughly **760 miles (1,220 km) per hour at sea level.**
  - On the other hand, a **supersonic missile travels at speed between Mach 1-5.**
- **At hypersonic speeds**, the air molecules around the flight vehicle start to change, breaking apart or gaining a charge in a process called **ionization.**

India and hypersonic weapon

- India is closing in on having such weapons in its arsenal.
- In 2020, India successfully tested its **hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (HSTDV),** powered by a **scramjet engine.**
  - Scramjet engine **uses the flow of air at supersonic speeds,** compressed by the forward motion of the missile, to drive it forward.
- The HSTDV will serve in the development of long-range hypersonic weapons, which will take another **four to five years to become a reality.**

Peru-based Top Potato Research Centre to Set up India Wing

- The **International Potato Center (CIP),** a Peru-based research-for-development organization, is set to establish a regional center in India to focus on **potato and sweet potato research.**
- The center is expected to be located in **Agra.**
- CIP is a research institution that focuses on roots and tubers to provide sustainable solutions to issues like **hunger, poverty, and natural resource degradation.**
- CIP was founded in **1971** and is headquartered in **Lima, Peru.** CIP has research activities in **more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.**

World Crafts Council International (WCCI)

- The World Crafts Council International (WCCI) has picked **Srinagar** for mapping its craft clusters before its final nomination as the **World Craft City (WCC) from India this year.**
- WCC is a **Kuwait-based organisation** working on the recognition and preservation of traditional crafts across the globe.
- It was founded by **Ms. Aileen Osborn Vanderbilt Webb, Ms. Margaret M. Patch, and Smt Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay** at the 1st World Crafts Council General Assembly in New York in June 1964.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

X- CLASS SOLAR FLARE

Recently Earth was hit by an **X-class solar flare** that was strong enough to **ionize part of the planet's atmosphere.**

About X-class Solar Flare

➲ An X-class solar flare is the most powerful explosion in our solar system, releasing tremendous energy in the **form of electromagnetic radiation and charged particles.**
- Solar flares are classified by their strength: **1) B-class: The smallest; 2) C-class; 3) M-class and 4) X-class:** The largest (Similar to the Richter scale, each step up on the ladder represents a **ten-time increase in energy output.)**
- Solar flares are sudden eruptions of energy on the Sun's surface that release vast amounts of electromagnetic radiation, including **X-rays and ultraviolet light and charged particles.**

Characteristics of X-Class Solar Flares and Their Impact on Earth

➲ **Highest Intensity & Communication Disruptions:** They can disrupt radio communications (Mainly High Frequency). This interference can affect aviation, maritime, and military communications.
➲ **Geomagnetic storms of X Flares & Power Grid Vulnerability:** They can induce electrical currents in power grids, potentially causing transformers to overload & lead to widespread blackouts.
➲ **X-Ray Emission & Satellite Damage:** The increased radiation from X-class flares can damage satellite electronics, affecting navigation systems, weather forecasting, and telecommunications.
➲ **Geomagnetic Storms & Auroras:** X-class solar flares often trigger geomagnetic storms when they interact with the Earth's magnetosphere which causes auroras (northern and southern lights.

Atomic clock for One Nation One Time

India will join an exclusive group of four other countries, **(US, UK, Japan, and South Korea)** which uses the **Rubidium Atomic Clock** in their own **GPS Satellites.**

About Atomic Clock

➲ Atomic clocks are advanced timekeeping devices that provide extremely accurate measurements of time by utilizing the natural oscillations or **vibrations of atoms.**
➲ Typically, **cesium (cesium-133: most common types)** or **rubidium-87 atoms (smaller & more compact than cesium clocks)** are used in atomic clocks due to their stable atomic properties.
➲ **Applications:** International Atomic Time (TAI); Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS); Scientific Research and Financial Transactions.

India & it's Atomic Clocks

➲ The project of Atomic Clock was initiated after the **Kargil war** when India was denied information on the **GPS location of Pakistani intruders.**

➲ India is deploying several atomic clocks across the country to ensure that all devices, such as **smartphones, digital watches, and laptops, are truly based on the Indian standard time (IST).**

➲ The installation of these atomic clocks is being carried out by the **National Physical Laboratory (NPL)** under the purview of the **Ministry of Science and Technology.**

- Presently, Atomic Clocks are located in **Faridabad and Ahmedabad.** Efforts are underway to install atomic clocks in **Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, and Hyderabad.**

PRATUSH: Radio Telescope

Astronomers are considering putting India's PRATUSH telescope around the **moon's far side.**

About PRATUSH telescope (Probing ReionizATion of the Universe using Signal from Hydrogen)

➲ Built by the **Raman Research Institute (RRI) in Bengaluru** with collaboration from the **ISRO.**

➲ Initially, ISRO will deploy **PRATUSH into orbit around the Earth.** Following some adjustments, the space agency will then **launch it towards the Moon.**

➲ It aims to detect signals from the **earliest stars and galaxies**, unveiling the cosmic dawn of the universe. This will address questions regarding when the first stars emerged, the characteristics of these initial stars, and the **nature of the light emitted by them.**

Kodaikanal Solar Observatory

Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KSO) has **successfully completed 125 years of operations.**

About KSO (Operated by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Established in 1899)

➲ It is located on the southern tip of the **Palani Hills Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu**

➲ Great Drought of 1875-1877 was the background behind its inception Research Areas

➲ **Solar Activity & Cycle:** The observatory monitors the solar cycle, which refers to the **11-year cycle of sunspot activity on the Sun's surface** & investigates its impact on space weather phenomena.

➲ **Atmospheric Studies:** Scientists also conduct atmospheric research, including the measurement of atmospheric ozone levels & the **study of cosmic rays** & their interaction with Earth's atmosphere.

Achievements

➲ Starting with chasing eclipses, **discovering Helium in 1868**, to understanding the plasma process in the Sun and the production of prominences and flares.

➲ The **first detection of the Evershed effect** (observing the flow of gases across sunspots) in 1909

➲ Observations of the **equatorial electrojet** due to the unique location of Kodaikanal.

➲ **Regular measurements** of ionospheric soundings, geomagnetic field, F region vertical drift, and surface observations.

TSAT-1A SATELLITE

Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) have successfully launched TSAT-1A satellite into space by **SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket.**

About Satellite TSAT-1A

➲ Launched into a **low-earth orbit (LEO)** to provide high-resolution (with sub-meter resolution) military-grade optical imagery by TASL, **a private Indian aerospace company.**
- This is the **first military grade** geospatial satellite manufactured in the Indian private sector.

Capabilities

➲ Multispectral and hyperspectral imaging for detailed **analysis of land, water & natural resources.**
➲ TSAT-1A has a **wider dynamic range** (the ability to capture detail in both very bright and very dark areas), and low-latency delivery of data.

TSAT-1A
- TSAT-1A - India's first private sector-built sub-metre resolution earth observation satellite by Tata Sons' Tata Advanced Systems (TASL)
- Launched from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, by SpaceX Falcon 9 along with 11 satellites

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Apple's Mercenary Spyware Alert

➥ Apple recently sent out **warnings to iPhone users in India and 91 other countries.** The company informed users saying that their iPhones might be under attack by a **type of spyware** called mercenary spyware, including one called Pegasus.

➥ In October 2023, they sent **similar warnings to politicians from different parties in India**, suggesting a possible state-sponsored spyware attack on their iPhones.
- However, **Apple later said they could not pinpoint any specific attacker.**

Mercenary Spyware Attacks

➥ **About:** Mercenary spyware attacks are highly complex, targeting specific individuals with exceptional resources, **surpassing regular cybercriminal activity and consumer malware.**
- They are difficult to detect and prevent due to their substantial investment and short lifespan.
- These attacks represent some of the most sophisticated digital threats globally, prompting Apple to abstain from assigning them to specific attackers or regions.

➥ **Aim:** Mercenary spyware is designed to **remotely infiltrate and compromise smartphones** and other devices without the knowledge or consent of the users.

Spyware and malware

Spyware & malware are types of harmful software designed to infiltrate & damage computers/ devices.

Spyware	Malware
Spyware & malware are types of harmful software designed to infiltrate & damage computers/ devices. It often aims to gather data for advertising purposes or identity theft.	short for malicious software, encompasses a broader range of harmful programs that can include viruses, worms, ransomware, and more. It typically aims to disrupt, damage, or gain unauthorized access to a computer system or network.

India 4th Largest Military Spender in 2023: SIPRI

➥ With **military expenditure worth $83.6 billion in 2023**, India was the **fourth largest** spender globally in 2023.
- This was a result of **growing personnel** and operations costs that comprised **about 80 per cent** of the total military budget.

➥ This has been revealed by the latest report by **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).**

➥ The latest data showed that the **United States, China and Russia** remained the top three military spenders globally **followed by India and Saudi Arabia.**

Army Inducts Indigenous Akashteer System

➥ The Army has started the induction of control and reporting msystems under **'Project Akashteer'** to bolster its air defence capabilities.

➥ The automated air defence control and reporting system has been prepared by **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).**

➥ It will enable the army to **monitor low-level airspace** over battle areas and effectively control the groundbased **air defence weapon systems.**

➥ It will enhance the operational efficiency and integration of the **army's air defence mechanisms by digitising the entire process.**

New Army Division with a Focus on Eastern Ladakh

➲ The govt is planning to create a new Army division for possible deployment of troops to **eastern Ladakh** this year. This is part of some changes being made for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the Ladakh area.

➲ This is significant as India is commemorating the **40th year of Operation Meghdoot, under which it took control of the Siachen Glacier.**

Key Highlights: News Army Division

➲ **Creation of 72 Division**
- The Army is considering raising the **72 Division** for possible deployment in eastern Ladakh under the **Northern Command.**
  - The 72 Division was to originally function under the **17 Mountain Strike Corps (MSC)** based in **Panagarh (West Bengal).**
  - A division has **approximately 14,000 to 15,000 troops.**

➲ **Restructuring of Army corps in the backdrop of the military standoff with China**
- Currently, the Army has 4 strike corps:

Mathura based 1 Corps	Ambala based 2 Corps	Bhopal based 21 Corps	17 MSC in Panagarh

India Successfully Tests New-Gen N-Capable Agni-Prime Missile

➲ India successfully tested the new generation **nuclear capable Agni-Prime ballistic missile.**

➲ The **'Agni Prime' or 'Agni-P'** is an advanced variant of the Agni class of missiles. It is a **two-stage canisterised missile with a maximum range of 1,000 to 2,000 km.**

➲ Since the missile is canisterised, it can be transported by road and rail and stored for longer periods, significantly reducing the time required for preparation and launch.

➲ The **'Agni Prime' missile is lighter than all the earlier Agni series** of missiles.
- It weighs **at least 50% less than Agni 3 missile** & has new guidance & propulsion systems.

India's Defence Exports Crossed All-Time High

➲ Defence exports have touched a record **Rs 21,083 crore (approx. US$ 2.63 Billion) in the Financial Year (FY) 2023-24, a growth of 32.5%** over the last fiscal when the figure was Rs 15,920 crore.

➲ The defence Industry, including the private sector and **Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs),** have made tremendous efforts in achieving the highest-ever defence exports.

➲ The private sector and the DPSUs have contributed **about 60% and 40% respectively.**

➲ The remarkable growth has been achieved due to the policy reforms and **'Ease of Doing Business' initiatives** brought in by the Government, in addition to the **end-to-end digital solution** provided to the Indian industries for promoting defence exports.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Afar Triangle

Geologists have found that the **African continent's rift in the Afar Triangle** could lead to the formation of a new ocean in **5 to 10 million years.**

Geographical Location

➲ Spans across parts of **Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti**, with its lowest point lying below sea level. It is situated where **three tectonic plates (Nubian, Somali, and Arabian) meet**, forming part of the **Great Rift Valley system that stretches across East Africa.**

Geological Significance

➲ The convergence of three tectonic plates results in significant tectonic activity, including **volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and the formation of new crust.** This junction is vital for understanding the dynamics of plate tectonics and continental drift.

➲ The Afar Triangle holds a rich paleontological history, disclosing fossil specimens of some of the earliest hominins. Radiometric dating of underlying volcanic rocks placed **Lucy's age at 3.2 million years old.** One of the few places on Earth where a mid-ocean ridge **can be studied on land, Iceland being the other.**

Link with Formation of New Ocean

➲ **Over millions of years (estimates range from 5 to 10 million),** this ongoing rifting and seafloor spreading are expected to widen the gap between the plates significantly.

➲ Eventually, the **Red Sea will breach the land barrier** and flood the Afar Depression, **creating a new ocean basin potentially as large as the Red Sea.**

➲ This new body of water would effectively **split the Horn of Africa from the rest of the continent.**

INTERACT

INTERACT research stations in the Arctic observed that **more than 1,000 billion Tonnes of ice** have been lost in the **past four decades.**

INTERACT (International Network for Terrestrial Research and Monitoring in the Arctic)

➲ INTERACT is an infrastructure project under the auspices of **SCANNET,** an **arctic network of 74 terrestrial field bases** in **northern Europe, Russia, US, Canada, Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Scotland** as well as stations in northern alpine areas.

➲ It is a crucial network for studying **environmental changes in the Arctic.**

➲ INTERACT is pan-Arctic, multidisciplinary **(Glaciology, Climate change, Ecology & Biogeochemical cycling)** and crosses all domains by linking to **forest, coastal, marine & atmospheric communities.**

Green Credit Programme (GCP)

Amid concerns that the GCP may encourage tree planting for financial gains, the **MoEFCC** has issued guidelines that States must rely on to calculate what it would cost **to restore a degraded forest landscape.**

• The Ministry has changed the earlier requirement that there be a **minimum of 1,100 trees per hectare** to qualify as reforested landscape and **left it to States to specify them.**

What Is Green Credit Programme (GCP)

➲ Green Credit Initiative was launched by **Indian PM** on the side-lines of **COP 28 (held in 2023, Dubai, United Arab Emirates).**

➲ It is an initiative within the government's **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) movement.**

• The concept of LiFE was introduced by the **Indian PM at COP26 (Glasgow) in 2021,** to drive an international mass movement towards **"mindful and deliberate utilisation"** to protect and preserve the environment.

➲ GCP introduces a market-based approach to **incentivise 8 identified environmental activities.**

➲ The main objective was to establish a mechanism where participants could earn incentives in the form of **'Green Credits'.**

➲ The proposed GCP will be implemented in phases, with the initial phase **focusing on water management and afforestation.**

NICES PROGRAM

NICES program is **inviting Indian researchers to join in combating climate change.**

About NICES (National Information System for Climate and Environment Studies)

➲ NICES was **established in 2012** and operated by the **ISRO and the Department of Space (DoS)** along with other ministries and institutions under the framework of the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).**

➲ It has been functioning under the overall guidance of **NICES-Programme Management Council (PMC) under the Chairmanship of Director, NRSC (National Remote Sensing Center).**

➲ NICES has built an information base with more than **64 geophysical variables** pertaining to land, ocean and atmosphere; the information is being regularly disseminated through a **NICES portal developed over Bhuvan, a geo-portal of ISRO.**

➲ It was established with the active involvement of existing programmes of ISRO viz., **ISRO GeosphereBiosphere Programme (IGBP), EO (Earth Observation)** applications in environmental studies.

Objectives

➲ To create a national database on climate and environmental factors using information from Indian and international **Earth Observation (EO) satellites.**

➲ **Generation of spatial & temporal blended ECV products** based on Indian and foreign satellites and in situ observations through multi-institutional participation.

Honeycomb Clouds

Scientists have observed that honeycomb-shaped clouds are the reason for **having the cleanest air on Earth.**

About Honeycomb Clouds (or Altocumulus Clouds)

➲ They are a type of cloud formation characterized by a **distinctive pattern of small, regularly spaced, and interconnected cloud cells** resembling the hexagonal shape of a honeycomb.
➲ These clouds typically occur at **middle altitudes, ranging from 2,000 to 6,000 meters above sea level**, and are composed of water droplets or ice crystals.

Characteristics (Best observed from satellites)

➲ **Size:** ranging from **20 to 60 kilometers (12 to 37 miles)** in diameter.
➲ Can appear as open or closed cells. Open cells look like clear centers surrounded by **cloud edges**, while closed cells appear completely filled with clouds.
➲ Play a role in **regulating Earth's temperature.**
➲ Helps to understand air-sea interaction and **improve weather forecasting models.**

Sustainable Hydrogel
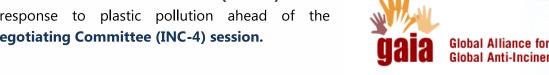
Researchers at the **Indian Institute of Science (IISc)** have designed a sustainable hydrogel that can **effectively remove microplastics from water.**

About Sustainable Hydrogel

➲ It's composed of **three different natural polymers** (renewable sources such as **cellulose, starch, chitosan**, or alginate.) that creates a **special intertwined network.** This network allows the hydrogel to bind to microplastics in the water.
➲ It can also degrade microplastics using **UV light irradiation.** After reaching their capacity for microplastic removal, they can be regenerated and used again.
➲ Sustainable hydrogel synthesis follows **green chemistry principles, minimizing the use of toxic solvents, reducing energy consumption**, and generating minimal waste.
➲ They can be employed for environmental remediation purposes, such as **soil stabilization, erosion control, and pollutant sequestration.**

Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Asia Pacific

The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Asia Pacific has called on the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** to take decisive action in response to plastic pollution ahead of the **Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) session.**

About GAIA

➲ GAIA is a worldwide **alliance of more than 1,000 grassroots** groups, non-governmental organizations, and individuals in over **90 countries.**

➲ It Works to prevent the construction of **new incinerators** and advocates for the closure of existing ones. It has **four primary points of intervention:** incineration, zero waste, plastic, and climate.

• **Incineration is a waste management process** that involves the **combustion of solid, liquid, or gaseous** waste materials at high temperatures. However, Incineration releases various pollutants into the atmosphere, including **particulate matter (PM), heavy metals, dioxins, and volatile organic compounds (VOC).**

➲ It Champions **zero waste strategies**, aim to eliminate waste generation through practices like **recycling, composting, and product reuse reducing reliance on incineration and landfills.**

ART AND CULTURE

Geographical Indication Tag

➲ Two items from **Tripura** recently received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag - **Matabari Pera and Pachra.**

➲ **Matabari Pera** is a dairy-based confectionary item traditionally served as **prasad at the Tripurasundari temple in Gomati district.**

➲ **Pachra** is a **handwoven cloth** used by the state's indigenous communities.

➲ The **GI tag** is expected to boost the declining **number of traditional weavers and provide an impetus to the rich art form.**

➲ A year earlier, **Tripura's iconic queen pineapple** had also **received a GI tag.**
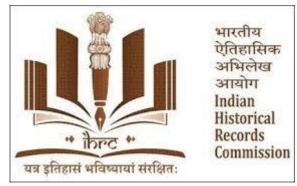
Sulthan Bathery

➲ Recently renaming of the Sulthan Bathery to **Ganapathyvattam** was in the news.

➲ Sulthan Bathery is a **municipal town in Wayanad.** It has a **stone temple** that was once known as Ganapathyvattam.

➲ The temple was built in the architectural style of the **Vijayanagar dynasty.** It was constructed by Jains who migrated to Wayanad from areas in present day **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in the 13th century.**

➲ The temple was partly destroyed during the invasions of **Tipu Sultan**, the **ruler of Mysuru** in the **second half of the 18th century.**

➲ During the invasion of **Malabar by Tipu Sultan**, the town was used by the Mysore army as the **storeroom or battery** for its ammunition and used the **Ganapathi Temple** located here as a battery.

➲ Thus, the town known as **Sultan's Battery in British records** later got to be called as Sultan Bathery.

Indian Historical Records Commission

➲ Recently, the **Indian Historical Records Commission (IHRC)** adopted a **new logo and motto.**

➲ In the logo, the **pages in the shape of lotus petals** represent IHRC as the nodal institution for maintaining historical records.

➲ The **Sarnath pillar in the middle represents India's glorious past.** Brown as the colour theme reinforces the organization's mission of preserving, studying and honouring India's historical records.

➲ The motto translates as **"Where history is preserved for the future."**

➲ The IHRC plays a vital role in **identifying, collecting, cataloguing and maintaining historical documents,** manuscripts other sources of historical information.

➲ By doing so the **Commission ensures that valuable historical knowledge** is conserved for future generations.

➲ The motto, therefore, reflects the **Commission's commitment** to ensuring the safeguarding of historical documents and making these accessible for the **benefit of present and future generations.**

SPORTS

D Gukesh wins 2024 FIDE Candidates Chess Tournament

D Gukesh, a 17-year-old Indian Grandmaster from **Chennai,** has made history by winning the 2024 **FIDE Candidates Chess Tournament in Toronto, Canada.** He has become the **youngest challenger** ever for the World Chess Championship, surpassing the record set by **Garry Kasparov in 1984.**

Gukesh is only the **second Indian, after Viswanathan Anand**, to win the Candidates Tournament and earn the right to challenge the reigning World Champion.

Gukesh's Performance in the Candidates Tournament

- Gukesh scored **9 out of a possible 14 points** in the double round-robin tournament featuring eight players.
- He clinched the title by drawing his final round game against **American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura.**
- The teenage prodigy had to wait for the result of the game between **Fabiano Caruana (USA) and Ian Nepomniachtchi (FIDE)** to confirm his outright victory.
- **Nakamura, Nepomniachtchi, and Caruana** tied for second place with 8.5 points each.

- **PLACES IN NEWS**
- **APPOINTMENTS**
- **DAYS & THEMES**

PLACES IN NEWS

S. No.	Place	Why in News?
		International Places in News
1.	Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant	• **Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine** was damaged by a drone attack, with **three hits targeting the main reactor** containment. • This plant is the largest nuclear facility in **Europe** and is situated in southeast **Ukraine,** along the banks of the Dnipro or **Dnieper River,** which flows into the **Black Sea.** • Presently, the plant is under the **control of Russian forces.**
2.	Sittwe Port	• India has acquired the **rights to manage the Sittwe port in Myanmar**, marking its **second international port venture after Chabahar.** • The port is a deepwater facility located at the estuary of the **Kaladan River in Myanmar's Rakhine State.**
3.	Syria	• The **Syrian Arab Republic**, located in **West Asia**, is officially known as Syria. • It is situated in the **Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant region.** • Syria is bordered by the **Mediterranean Sea to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east and southeast, Jordan to the south, and Israel and Lebanon to the southwest.** • **Damascus** serves as both the **capital and the largest city of Syria.**
4.	Taiwan	• Taiwan recently encountered its most powerful earthquake in **almost 25 years, measuring 7.2 magnitude.** • The country is prone to earthquakes because it sits along the **'Pacific Ring of Fire,'** a region characterized by numerous seismic faults **encircling the Pacific Ocean.** This area experiences a high frequency of earthquakes globally.
5.	Port of Baltimore	• A cargo ship departing from the Port of Baltimore **collided with the Francis Scott Key Bridge (I-695),** resulting in the bridge's collapse. • The Port of Baltimore is strategically situated in the **Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. East Coast.** • It ranks as one of the **busiest harbors** in the **United States.**
6.	Ural River	• Russia declared a **state of emergency** in the **Orenburg region near Kazakhstan** following the bursting of a dam embankment by the Ural River in the **city of Orsk.** • The Ural River, **Europe's third-longest river**, originates in the **southern Ural Mountains.** • It spans a distance of **2,428 kilometers**, ranking it as the **third-longest river in Europe after the Volga and the Danube.**

	National Place in News	
1.	Katchatheevu Island	• Prime Minister recently mentioned an **uninhabited island** in the **Palk Strait** during a public program. • In 1921, both **India and Sri Lanka claimed ownership** of the Katchatheevu island. • Under the **'Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime agreement' in 1974**, the Indian government, led by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, ceded the island to Sri Lanka.
2.	Paradip port	• **Paradip Port Authority (PPA)** is the top cargo-handling major port in India, surpassing **Deendayal Port, Kandla.** • Located in **Odisha**, it is a crucial deep-water port on the **East Coast of India**, at the confluence of the **Mahanadi River and the Bay of Bengal.** • It is the **first major port** on the **East Coast** established after independence.
3.	Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary	• The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has issued a draft notification delineating an **eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)** around the **Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary on the Haryana side.** • The sanctuary is located in the **Chandigarh Union Territory** and covers the Sukhna Lake catchment area in the **Shivalik Hills.**
4.	Khavda Solar Park	• Khavda Solar Park in **Gujarat's Kutch** is the **world's largest renewable energy park.** • It currently has **2 GW** of commissioned capacity and plans to add 4 GW in the current fiscal year, with a further **5 GW annually thereafter.** • Located near **Vighakot village** in Gujarat's Kutch district, it aims to generate **30 gigawatts of electricity** from **solar panels and wind turbines across 72,600 hectares** of land when fully operational. • The park is situated near the **Pakistan border.**
5.	Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary	• **Telangana** is facing forest fires in the **Tadvai region** of Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary in **Mulugu and Amrabad Tiger Reserve near Warangal.** • These areas are located on the **border of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh** and are crossed by the **rivers Dayyam Vagu and Godavari.** • The sanctuary and reserve are habitats for various flora, **including bamboo, maddi, dry deciduous teak, thiruman, and madhuca.**
6.	Moyar Valley	• The area mentioned is the **largest nesting colony** of **critically endangered Gyps vultures** in the wild. • Referred to as Maayar Valley, it extends **about 85 kilometers** from Gudalur through the core region of the **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve** within the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in Tamil Nadu.**

APPOINTMENTS

S. No.	Person		Designation
1.	Sanjay Nayar		President of ASSOCHAM
2.	Shrinivas Pallia		CEO of WIPRO
3.	Nalin Negi		CEO of Bharat Pe
4.	Dinesh Kumar Tripathi		Chief of Naval Staff
5.	Nalin Prabhat		Director General of NSG

6.	Narsingh Yadav		Chairman Of WFI Athletes Commission
7.	Yuvraj Singh		ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 Ambassador
8.	Krishna Ella		President of Indian Vaccine Manufacturers Association (IVMA)

DAYS AND THEMES

S. No.	Date	Event
1.	5th April	**National Maritime Day** On 5th April every year in India National Maritime day is observed because on this date in 1919 navigation history was created SS Loyalty, the first ship of The Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd journeyed to the United Kingdom. It was a red-letter day in the account of Indian navigation. **Theme: Navigating the Future: Safety First!**
2.	7th April	**World Health Day** World Health Day is celebrated worldwide every year on the 7th of April. Various programs and arrangements are managed by the World Health Organisation. It was the first time celebrated in 1950. **Theme: My health, my right**
3.	13th April	**Jallianwala Bagh Massacre** It took place on 13 April 1919 at Amritsar and is also known as the Amritsar massacre. On this day, British troops under the Command of Gen Dyer fired on a large crowd of unarmed Indians in Amritsar in Punjab of India. Several hundred people were killed and many hundreds were wounded.
4.	14th april	**B. R. Ambedkar Remembrance Day** B.R. Ambedkar Remembrance Day is also known as Ambedkar Jayanti or Bhim Jayanti which is observed on 14 April to commemorate the memory of B.R. Ambedkar. This day celebrates the birthday of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, an Indian politician, and social rights activist. **Theme: social justice and equality**
5.	18th April	**World Heritage Day** This day is observed every year on 18 April to preserve the human heritage and recognize the efforts of all the relevant organizations in the field. This day was announced by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1982 and was approved by the General Assembly of UNESCO in 1983. **Theme: Discover and Experience Diversity**
6.	21st April	**National Civil Service Day** Every year on 21 April Civil Service Day is celebrated to rededicate and recommit themselves to the cause of the people. On this day Civil servants from various parts of the country come together, share their experiences and also learn about others'

|		experiences of working in the public sector. *Theme: Public service in a changing world*
7.	22nd April	**World Earth Day** This day is observed every year on 22 April to mark the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. In the Universe Earth is the only planet where life is possible and so it is necessary to maintain this natural asset. World Earth Day is celebrated to increase awareness about the importance of the planet. *Theme: Planet vs. Plastics*
8.	24th April	**National Panchayati Raj Day** On this day Constitution came into force with effect on 24 April 1993. In 2010 the first National Panchayati Raj Day was celebrated. A new part in the Constitution Part IX was added bypassing the 73rd Amendment Act from Article 243 to 243 (O) titled "The Panchayats" and a new Eleventh Schedule consisting of 29 subjects within the functions of Panchayats was also added.
9.	25th April	**World Malaria Day** World Malaria Day is celebrated every year on 25 April to raise awareness about the disease malaria, how to control it, and how to eradicate it completely. In 2008, the first Malaria Day was celebrated, which was developed from Africa Malaria Day, which was an event observed since 2001 by the African governments. At the 60th session of the World Health Assembly in 2007, it was proposed that Africa Malaria Day be changed to World Malaria Day. *Theme: Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world*
10.	26th April	**World Intellectual Property Day** This day is celebrated every year on 26 April and was established by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in 2000 to raise awareness of how patents, copyright, trademarks, and designs impact daily life. And also it plays an important role that intellectual property rights play in encouraging innovation and creativity. *Theme: IP and the SDGs: Building Our Common Future with Innovation and Creativity*

CLAT CAM
SNIPPETS

SNIPPETS
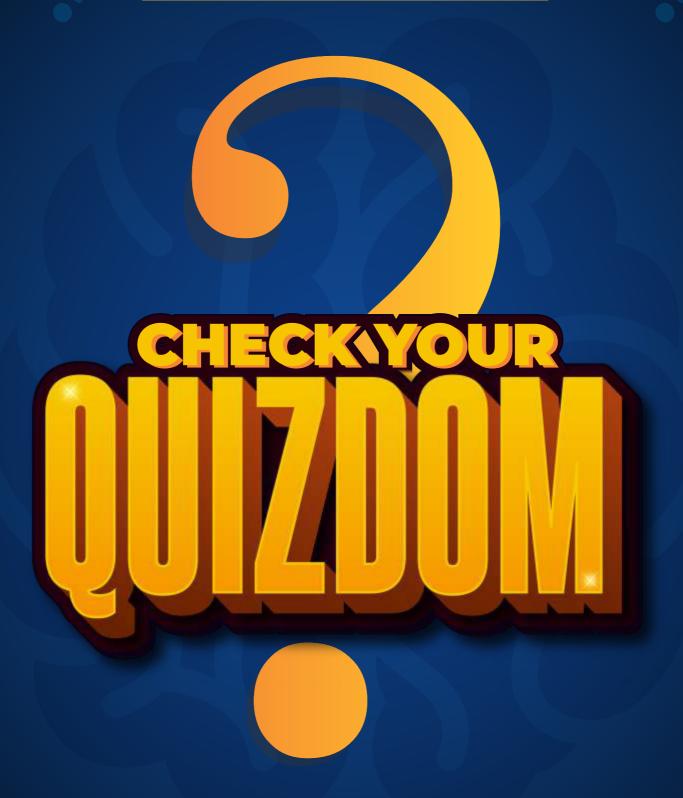
- The **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023** aims to broaden the horizons of the Act. This is in line with India's efforts towards increasing green cover for the creation of a carbon sink of **additional 2.5-3.0 billion tons of CO2 equivalent** by the end of this decade.

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a loan program **worth $15.6 billion** for **Ukraine** as part of a larger **$115 billion** package to aid its war-torn economy. With **one-third of Ukraine's population** displaced, the IMF's support comes as a crucial aid in reconstructing the country's economy.

- India's stock market capitalization is currently the **fifth largest globally at $4.5 trillion**, according to a report titled '**Recap 2024. Crystal Gaze 2025**' by financial conglomerate Pantomath Group.

- **South Korea** has successfully launched its second domestically developed military spy satellite into orbit. The satellite, carried by a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket**, was launched from an American space centre. This achievement follows the successful launch of **South Korea's first military spy satellite** in December 2022, which was also carried by **a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.**

- According to a report on **Global Trade Outlook** and **Statistics released by the World Trade Organization (WTO),** India has now become the fourth largest exporter of digitally delivered services.

- **HDFC Bank** has become the **first private sector bank** to establish a branch in Kavaratti Island, part of the **Union Territory of Lakshadweep.** The bank aims to improve banking infrastructure in the region by offering a variety of services, with a focus on **personal and digital banking.**

- **Chandrayaan-3** was the first to land on the uncharted **South Pole region of the Moon.** In recognition of this groundbreaking accomplishment, the Chandrayaan-3 team has been honored with the prestigious 2024 **John L. 'Jack' Swigert Jr. Award for Space Exploration.**

- **Justice Aniruddha Bose,** known for his intellectual brilliance and sartorial elegance, retired from the Supreme Court after a five-year tenure. Praised by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud and other legal luminaries for his sense of justice, compassion, and gentlemanly demeanour, Justice Bose has been appointed to **head the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal.**

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and the Indian Army have successfully conducted trials of the **Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM)** Weapon System at PFFR in Rajasthan.

- Bollywood megastar **Amitabh Bachchan** will be honoured with the **Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar award** on April 24, 2024.

- **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has launched the **Saksham app**, a mobile application designed to facilitate voter registration and electoral services for **Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).**

- **Meta Platforms**, the parent company of **Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp**, has announced the launch of its new **artificial intelligence (AI) assistant, Meta AI.** Powered by the company's latest AI model, **Llama 3,** Meta AI is integrated into Meta's popular social media and messaging platforms, aiming to provide users with a highly intelligent and **free-to-use AI experience.**

- India will deliver the **first batch of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles** to the **Philippines** soon. The delivery is part of a USD 375 million deal signed between the two nations in 2022, marking India's first major defence export.

- Indian Army is progressing two projects worth over **Rs 6,800 crore to develop indigenous Very Short Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) systems.** These shoulder-fired missile systems are being developed to

counter aerial threats along the **borders with China and Pakistan.** The Army plans to procure over **500 launchers and around 3,000 missiles** through these indigenous routes.

➲ **Bhutan** is hosting the **Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscapes Conference on Earth Day 2024** to mobilize $1 billion in new funding over the next decade for the preservation of tiger landscapes across Asia.

➲ On April 24, 2024, NASA has launched the **Advanced Composite Solar Sail System (ACS3),** marking an important moment in the utilization of solar power for space propulsion. A solar-powered spacecraft was deployed aboard **Rocket Lab's Electron rocket from New Zealand.** This spacecraft, powered by sunlight, aims to test the efficacy and potential of solar sails in space transportation.

➲ The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** unveiled its **Climate Strategy 2030** document on Earth Day to address India's growing need for green financing. The strategy aims to mobilize resources for **climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience projects** in the country.

➲ The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** is set to achieve another milestone in its prestigious **Gaganyaan mission,** India's first human spaceflight program.

➲ Recently, China launched the **Shenzhou-18 spacecraft** carrying a three-member crew to its orbiting **Tiangong space station.** The mission is part of China's ambitious space program, which aims to put **astronauts on the moon by 2030.**

➲ A groundbreaking personalised **mRNA vaccine** for melanoma, the deadliest form of **skin cancer,** is currently undergoing Phase III clinical trials in the United Kingdom. The vaccine, developed by **Moderna and Merck Sharp and Dohme (MSD),** is designed to help a patient's immune system recognise and eliminate remaining cancerous cells after **surgical removal of the tumour.**

➲ **Sunita Williams, a veteran Indian American astronaut,** is preparing for her third space mission aboard the **International Space Station (ISS).**

➲ Recently, **Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, the ruler of Dubai and Prime Minister of the **United Arab Emirates (UAE),** announced the approval of a new passenger terminal at **Al Maktoum International Airport.**

➲ The **Tamil Nadu** government is conducting a three-day synchronised survey of the **Nilgiri Tahr (Nilgiritragus hylocrius), the State animal.** The survey aims to estimate the population of the endangered species, which once roamed the Anamalai and Nilgiris landscape. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) representative will be an observer in the exercise.

➲ The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has approved the immediate release of the final **$1.1 billion** tranche of a $3 billion bailout to Pakistan. This decision comes as Pakistan struggles to overcome one of the worst economic crises in its history, which had raised fears of a potential default on foreign debt payments.

CHECK YOUR QUIZDOM

QUIZ ZONE FOR CLAT ASPIRANTS

QUIZDOM

Passage 1

The year 2024 signifies a significant milestone in the realm of immunization programs, both on a global scale and within India. It commemorates the 50th anniversary since the establishment of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) by the esteemed World Health Organization (WHO). The inception of the EPI occurred at a pivotal juncture when the global health community was fervently striving towards the eradication of a highly contagious and debilitating virus. The primary impetus behind the initiation of the EPI stemmed from the imminent eradication of a specific virus, which at that time posed a significant threat to public health worldwide. Recognizing the urgency and necessity to leverage the existing infrastructure and well-trained workforce dedicated to immunization, the WHO laid the foundations for the EPI. This initiative aimed not only to combat the imminent threat posed by the virus in question but also to capitalize on the established immunization mechanisms for a broader and more impactful reach. The rationale behind the EPI's inception was multi-faceted. Firstly, it was a strategic response to the imminent eradication goals set forth by the global health community. By harnessing the existing infrastructure and human resources dedicated to immunization, the EPI sought to amplify the benefits of available vaccines and extend their reach to vulnerable populations. This approach was not only pragmatic but also rooted in the principle of maximizing the impact of public health interventions. Furthermore, the launch of the EPI triggered a domino effect across nations worldwide. Virtually every country, cognizant of the critical importance of immunization in safeguarding public health, embarked on developing and implementing their national immunization programs.

1. Why was the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) introduced?
(a) To eradicate smallpox virus
(b) To improve immunisation infrastructure
(c) To expand the benefits of available vaccines
(d) All of the Above

2. In which year did India launch its version of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI)?
(a) 1974   (b) 1978   (c) 1985   (d) 1990

3. Immunization Agenda 2030 sets an ambitious, overarching global vision and strategy for vaccines and immunization for the decade 2021–2030. What is the targeted coverage for essential childhood vaccines under IA2030?
(a) 50%   (b) 75%   (c) 90%   (d) 100%

4. When was polio eliminated as a major milestone of the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)?
(a) 2010   (b) 2012   (c) 2014   (d) 2016

5. On which date does India observe National Vaccination Day, also known as Immunization Day?
(a) March 16th (b) April 7th (c) May 1st (d) June 12th

Passage 2

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court Bar Association (MMBA) has achieved a significant milestone by reinstating its authority to adjudicate on a wide array of public interest litigation (PIL) cases, encompassing matters concerning the entire State, rather than being limited to the 13 districts within its territorial ambit. The esteemed First Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Sanjay V. Gangapurwala and Justice R. Hemalatha, rendered a pivotal decision by granting credence to a revision petition filed by MMBA. This action resulted in the retraction of a specific paragraph from a judicial order issued by the previous first Bench during the tenure of former Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee on March 4, 2021. The Division Bench, under the leadership of Chief Justice Gangapurwala, sided with senior counsel M. Ajmal Khan, who represented MMBA, in opining that it would be incongruous to stipulate that PILs addressing statewide issues must exclusively be heard at the principal seat of the High Court in Chennai, bypassing the jurisdiction of its Madurai Bench. In the context of

disposing of a PIL aimed at safeguarding the interests of temples throughout the State, former Chief Justice Banerjee articulated a view suggesting that while PILs relevant to the districts under the Madurai Bench are aptly instituted there, PILs concerning pan-State matters ought to be redirected to the principal seat. However, the Bench, led by Chief Justice Gangapurwala, deliberated upon the merits of MMBA's plea to rescind this observation. Ultimately, the Bench acknowledged that the presidential notification issued in 2004 for the establishment of the Madurai Bench did not impose any such limitation or directive. This pivotal legal development underscores the nuanced interplay between judicial discretion, institutional jurisdiction, and the pursuit of equitable and efficient legal remedies across varied territorial contexts.

6. Which part of the Indian Constitution contains Articles related to the High Courts?
(a) Part V   (b) Part VI   (c) Part VII   (d) Part VIII
7. Which Constitutional Amendment Act empowered Parliament to establish a common High Court for two or more States or for States and Union Territories?
(a) 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act   (b) 44th Constitutional Amendment Act
(c) 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act   (d) 7th Constitutional Amendment Act
8. How many High Courts are currently established in India?
(a) 20 High Courts   (b) 25 High Courts   (c) 30 High Courts   (d) 35 High Courts
9. Who appoints a High Court Judge in India?
(a) The Prime Minister of India   (b) The Chief Justice of India
(c) The President of India   (d) None of the Above
10. What is the minimum age requirement prescribed by the Indian Constitution for the appointment of a judge to a High Court?
(a) 35 years   (b) 45 years
(c) There is no minimum age requirement   (d) It varies based on the candidate's qualifications

Passage 3
For the second time, the scheduled launch of AgniKul's "Agnibaan SOrTeD" from Sriharikota was postponed, despite prior successful dry runs and rehearsals. The delay came about due to an unforeseen error that surfaced at T minus 1 minute and 32 seconds, leading mission control to halt the countdown. Following a tense two-minute evaluation period, the decision to cancel the launch was made public, eliciting disappointment among both the team and spectators. The setback stemmed from a communication issue between two of the onboard hardware components, which forced the Automated Launch Sequence (ALS) to terminate just a second into its initiation at T-129 seconds. Although such an interruption so close to liftoff is undeniably frustrating, Agnikul expressed gratitude for the ALS's effective functioning, assuring that they would diligently investigate the root cause and rectify it before rescheduling the launch. This incident underscores the intricate and meticulous nature of space missions, where even minor glitches can have significant ramifications. It also highlights the critical role of rigorous testing and preparation in ensuring the success and safety of such ambitious endeavours.

11. Where is AgniKul Cosmos, the space tech start-up, based?
(a) Mumbai   (b) Chennai   (c) Bangalore   (d) Delhi
12. Which organizations are supporting AgniKul Cosmos' journey?
(a) Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) and NASA
(b) Russian Space Agency and European Space Agency
(c) Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe)
(d) Chinese National Space Administration and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

13. What are the names of the two sections of the facility which was designed by Agnikul?
(a) Agnikul Launch Center (ALC) and National Space Launchpad (NSL)
(b) Agnikul Launchpad (ALP) and Agnikul Mission Control Center (AMCC)
(c) Indian Space Research Facility (ISRF) and Space Exploration Center (SEC)
(d) National Space Launchpad (NSL) and Space Operations Center (SOC)
14. What are the names of the engines used in Agnikul's vehicle?
(a) Agnite and Agnilet   (b) Agnilux and Agnilet   (c) Agnisol and Agnifire   (d) Agnisis and Agnilite
15. What is the payload capacity of Agnikul's Agnibaan launch vehicle?
(a) Up to 50 kg   (b) Up to 75 kg   (c) Up to 100 kg   (d) Up to 150 kg

Passage 4
In the wake of the Union Environment Ministry's recent announcement regarding the Green Credit Programme (GCP), ten states have swiftly identified parcels of degraded forest land totalling approximately 3,853 hectares. These lands are now designated for utilization by individuals, groups, and both public and private sector entities to accrue and potentially trade green credits. The GCP, unveiled on [1], is hailed as a pioneering market-based mechanism with the aim of incentivizing voluntary environmental initiatives across various sectors, encompassing individuals, communities, and industries from the private sector. The program gained significant traction after Prime Minister Modi highlighted its significance during his attendance at the [2] climate summit in Dubai last December. Despite the apparent merit in encouraging voluntary actions towards sustainable environmental practices through a payment system or tradable green credits, it is imperative to subject mass tree-plantation programs to thorough scrutiny regarding their operational methods and resultant impact. This scrutiny is especially crucial in light of concerns such as high mortality rates among plantations, sub-optimal allocation of financial resources, and the ambiguous benefits conferred upon local communities.

16. Which of the following will replace [1] in the passage?
(a) October 13, 2023   (b) November 12, 2022   (c) February 10, 2021   (d) December 9, 2020
17. Which of the following will replace [2] in the passage?
(a) COP-27   (b) COP-28   (c) COP-29   (d) COP-30
18. What is the Green Climate Initiative or programme associated with in the Indian government's initiatives?
(a) Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP)   (b) Nagar Van Scheme
(c) Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) movement   (d) Wildlife Conservation
19. Under which Act were the Green Credit Rules, 2023 notified?
(a) Environmental Protection Act 1996   (b) Wildlife Protection Act 1972
(c) Forest Conservation Act 1980   (d) Environment Protection Act 1986
20. Which of the following is NOT a key activity under the Green Credit program?
(a) Sustainable Agriculture   (b) Desertification Control
(c) Water Management   (d) Mangrove Conservation and Restoration

Passage 5
South Africa's recent decision to cease captive breeding of lions, as announced by Environment Minister Barbara Creecy in a press conference held in Cape Town on April 3, 2024, reflects a multifaceted approach aimed at addressing various concerns. These include the ethical implications of trophy hunting and the use of lion bones as substitutes in traditional Chinese medicine, particularly for tigers. Owners of farms involved in breeding lions for such purposes have been granted a two-year grace period to voluntarily transition out of this sector and restructure their business models before the ban officially takes effect. This strategic move underscores South Africa's commitment to wildlife conservation and responsible management of its natural resources. Shifting focus to India, recent data presented to the Lok Sabha in February 2024 revealed that 555 Asiatic lions have perished over the past five years. However, there has been no notable increase in their mortality rate. This information underscores the ongoing imperative to protect and preserve endangered

species. Over time, conservation experts have advocated for the translocation of lions within India, particularly due to the geographical isolation of the lion population in Gir. Establishing a secondary habitat would serve as a crucial safeguard against potential extinction risks stemming from epidemics, unforeseen declines in prey populations, or natural disasters.

In essence, these developments highlight the global significance of concerted efforts toward wildlife conservation and the critical balance between human activities and the preservation of natural ecosystems.

21. African lion classified in which category of IUCN Red List?
(a) Endangered   (b) Critically Endangered   (c) Near Threatened   (d) Vulnerable
22. When is World Lion Day observed annually every Year?
(a) February 10   (b) April 10   (c) June 10   (d) August 10
23. Gir is commonly associated with which community that has a symbiotic relationship with lions?
(a) Maasai   (b) Maldharis   (c) Bedouins   (d) Himba
24. In which category does the Asiatic lion fall under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972?
(a) Schedule 1   (b) Schedule 2   (c) Schedule 3   (d) Schedule 4
25. According to the Lion@2047: A vision for Amrutkal" prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) what is the identified potential site for accommodating 40 adult and sub-adult lions?
(a) Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary   (b) Barda Wildlife Sanctuary
(c) Gaga Wildlife Sanctuary   (d) Purna Wildlife Sanctuary

Passage 6
In accordance with the Model Rules formulated by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, a notable revision has been introduced concerning the registration of births, necessitating parents to explicitly specify the religion of both the father and mother of the child. This procedural adjustment, delineated in the proposed "Form No.1-Birth Report," entails an expanded column prompting the inclusion of the "religion of father" and "religion of mother," alongside the existing requirement to indicate the child's religion through a tick mark selection. The adoption of these Model Rules mandates state governments to incorporate and officially announce them before enforcement. Correspondingly, analogous modifications have been instituted for parents registering the birth of an adopted child. This regulatory refinement aligns with the provisions outlined in the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act of 2023, which received parliamentary endorsement on August 11 of the preceding year. Central to these legislative changes is the establishment of a centralized birth and death database at the national level, poised to serve as a foundational resource for updating various interconnected databases. These encompass but are not limited to the NPR, electoral rolls, Aadhaar number, ration card details, passport records, driving licence documentation, property registration records, and any other databases as may be stipulated through official notification. Such synchronization underscores a concerted effort towards enhanced data coherence and administrative efficacy across diverse governmental platforms.

26. Under which list of the Indian Constitution does the registration of births and deaths fall?
(a) Union List   (b) State List   (c) Concurrent List   (d) None of the Above
27. The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023 seeks to amend which act?
(a) The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969   (b) The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1980
(c) Registration of Population Act,1987   (d) None of the Above
28. How is a "usual resident" defined in the context of NPR?
(a) Someone who owns property in the country
(b) A person who has resided in a place for at least one year
(c) Someone who has resided in a place for six months or more and intends to stay another six months or more
(d) A person who has a permanent job in the country

29. Consider the following statements about the National Population Register (NPR) and the Census:

Statement 1: The Census involves a detailed questionnaire with multiple items aimed at eliciting various particulars of individuals.

Statement 2: The NPR collects basic demographic data and biometric particulars.

Which statement is true?

(a) Statement 1   (b) Statement 2   (c) Both statements are true (d) Neither statement is true

30. The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023 seeks to standardize and streamline the registration of births and deaths nationwide. What is the time limit for registering births, stillbirths, and deaths as per the provisions?

(a) 7 days   (b) 14 days   (c) 21 days   (d) 30 days

V – 70s

31. Salim Durani, who passed away recently, was related to which field?

(a) Cricket   (b) Politics   (c) Journalism   (d) Science

32. Which country will receive electricity from the new power plant opened by Adani Power Ltd in Jharkhand?

(a) Russia   (b) France   (c) Bhutan   (d) Bangladesh

33. Where is the headquarters of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure located?

(a) New Delhi   (b) Thimphu   (c) London   (d) Dhaka

34. Buzi Bridge, which was inaugurated recently, was built by India in which country?

(a) Sri Lanka   (b) Bangladesh   (c) Mozambique   (d) Maldives

35. Who has been sworn in as the 22nd President of Bangladesh?

(a) Sheikh Russell   (b) Mohammad Shahabuddin Chuppu

(c) Sheikh Salahuddin Jewel   (d) Sheikh Hasina

36. Whom did NASA appoint to head its new Moon to Mars Program Office?

(a) Ashish Nain   (b) Amit Kshatriya   (c) Renu Malik   (d) Neha Vashishat

37. Which country has banned OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot, launching a probe over a suspected breach of data collection rules?

(a) Japan   (b) Italy   (c) Australia   (d) Iran

38. With which country India is participating in the SLINEX-2023 Maritime Exercise?

(a) Singapore   (b) Seychelles   (c) Bhutan   (d) Sri Lanka

39. To which space agency does the Proba-3 mission belong?

(a) ESA   (b) USA   (c) ISRO   (d) JASA

40. By which year is India expected to become the world's second-largest solar manufacturer?

(a) 2026   (b) 2028   (c) 2027   (d) 2029

41. Which Operation was launched to establish Indian control over Siachen Glacier in 1984?

(a) Meghdoot   (b) Vayudoot   (c) Vijaydoot   (d) Himdoot

42. Which country is hosting Exercise Dustlik from April 15 to 28, 2024 with Indian participation?

(a) Kazakhstan   (b) Uzbekistan   (c) Tajikistan   (d) Kyrgyzstan

43. Which country has rolled out its digital nomad visa, signalling a welcome to professionals from around the globe?

(a) Germany   (b) Italy   (c) France   (d) Spain

44. The International Day of Human Space Flight, celebrated on April 12, 2024, marks the space flight of Yuri Gagarin on 12 April, ____.

(a) 1966   (b) 1961   (c) 1959   (d) 1963

45. Who has been selected as the new CMD of SIDBI by the Financial Services Institutions Bureau?

(a) Ashok Awasthi   (b) Manoj Mittal   (c) Gagan Gupta   (d) Jatin Jain

46. Which is the first private sector bank to open a branch in Lakshadweep?
(a) Axis Bank   (b) HDFC Bank   (c) ICICI Bank   (d) IndusInd Bank
47. Who became the first human being to run the entire length of the African continent recently?
(a) Gordon Martin   (b) Daniel Higgins   (c) Russ Cook   (d) Simon Harris
48. Billie Jean King Cup is related to which sport?
(a) Tennis   (b) Table tennis   (c) Badminton   (d) Squash
49. Which is the first country to receive BrahMos missiles from India?
(a) Cambodia   (b) Vietnam   (c) Philippines   (d) Indonesia
50. Civil Services Day was observed in India on __, 2024.
(a) 19th April   (b) 21st April   (c) 20th April   (d) 18th April
51. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has released the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education 2024. This curriculum is titled:
(a) Aadharshila   (b) Aadharit   (c) Aadharasth   (d) Aadharik
52. Who has been appointed as the next Chief of the Indian Navy?
(a) Animesh Pradhan   (b) Sidharth Ramkumar   (c) Dinesh Tripathi   (d) Anant Reddy
53. Who has been appointed as the next Director-General of National Security Guard (NSG)?
(a) Manish Ranjan   (b) Bhaskar Chandran   (c) Nalin Prabhat   (d) Subhash Chaturvedi
54. Which country has announced the creation of two new major marine parks in the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea by the end of this year?
(a) Turkey   (b) Greece   (c) Italy   (d) Malta
55. Recently, Mount Ruang volcano erupted in which country?
(a) South Africa   (b) Indonesia   (c) United States   (d) Chile
56. Astronomers at which space agency have identified the biggest stellar black hole, named Gaia BH3, discovered in the Milky Way?
(a) Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)   (b) European Space Agency (ESA)
(c) China National Space Administration (CNSA)   (d) Russian Space Agency (RSA)
57. Which actor was announced as winner of Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar award recently?
(a) Amitabh Bachchan   (b) Akshay Kumar   (c) Rajkummar Rao   (d) Aamir Khan
58. What is the Indian economy's growth forecast for 2024-25 in IMF's World Economic Outlook (WEO)?
(a) 6.80%   (b) 8.80%   (c) 7.80%   (d) 5.80%
59. Zoran Milanovic is the President of which country?
(a) Bosnia & Herzegovina   (b) Slovenia   (c) Estonia   (d) Croatia
60. ____ Tirangi Barfi was granted Geographical Indication (GI) tag recently.
(a) Banaras   (b) Prayagraj   (c) Kanpur   (d) Bareilly
61. Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee have reported the discovery of fossils of one of the largest snakes that ever existed. These fossils were discovered in which state?
(a) Odisha   (b) Assam   (c) Gujarat   (d) Bihar
62. Where was the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure organised on April 24-25, 2024?
(a) Beijing   (b) Astana   (c) New Delhi   (d) Tashkent
63. Where was the annual meeting of the defence ministers of member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) held on April 25-26, 2024?
(a) New Delhi   (b) Astana   (c) Beijing   (d) Tashkent
64. World ___ Week is being celebrated from April 24 to 30, 2024 by the World Health Organization (WHO).
(a) Health   (b) Sanitisation   (c) Immunization   (d) Nutrition

65. The War Memorials of Neuve-Chapelle and Villers-Guislain are dedicated to Indian martyrs of the First World War. These memorials are in which country?
(a) France   (b) Germany   (c) Spain   (d) Italy

66. Which country hosted the 26th World Energy Congress from April 22 to 25, 2024?
(a) France   (b) Switzerland   (c) Spain   (d) The Netherlands

67. Asylum seekers who arrived illegally in the UK will be deported to which African country?
(a) Botswana   (b) Kenya   (c) Burundi   (d) Rwanda

68. Who is the Director General of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)?
(a) O. Periyakaruppan   (b) M. Regupathy   (c) N. Kalaiselvi   (d) P. Sakkarapani

69. Who is the Chairperson of Competition Commission of India (CCI)?
(a) Harjeet Kaur   (b) Ravneet Kaur   (c) Smriti Kaur   (d) Poonam Kaur

70. Which country tops the list of doping offenders in 2022 according to WADA anti-doping report?
(a) South Africa   (b) Jamaica   (c) India   (d) USA

71. Recently, the administration has imposed section 144 of CrPC in _____ following a call for a people's march towards the LAC.
(a) Leh   (b) Kargil   (c) Jammu   (d) Sikkim

72. NATO Foreign Ministers recently gathered at NATO Headquarters to mark 75 years since the signing of which treaty?
(a) New York Treaty   (b) Brussels Treaty   (c) London Treaty   (d) Washington Treaty

73. The members of the Monetary Policy Committee are appointed for how many years?
(a) 2   (b) 3   (c) 4   (d) 5

74. International Narcotics Control Board was established in which year?
(a) 1968   (b) 1972   (c) 1975   (d) 1976

75. According to Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2024, India in 2023 had how much unicorns?
(a) 67   (b) 86   (c) 107   (d) 119

76. Which country deployed its ship-mounted defence system, called the C-Dome?
(a) Russia   (b) Iran   (c) Israel   (d) USA

77. According to the Global Hepatitis Report 2024 which country accounted for highest number of cases of hepatitis B in the world?
(a) India   (b) China   (c) Russia   (d) Pakistan

78. Which type of hepatitis virus is primarily transmitted through contaminated food and water?
(a) Hepatitis A   (b) Hepatitis B   (c) Hepatitis C   (d) Hepatitis D

79. The 5th edition of the 'Dustlik' joint military exercise between India and which country will begins from April 15?
(a) Tajikistan   (b) Uzbekistan   (c) Kazakhstan   (d) Azerbaijan

80. Which country recently launches more than 300 drones and missiles in first direct attack on Israel?
(a) Egypt   (b) UAE   (c) Iraq   (d) Iran

81. Who has been appointed as the Joint Director of CBI?
(a) Avinash Kumar   (b) Anurag Kumar   (c) Ashwini Singh   (d) Sukhbir Sandhu

82. Recently India signed an amendment on Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with which Country?
(a) Mauritius   (b) Maldives   (c) Sri Lanka   (d) Bangladesh

83. What is the name of Space Rocket recently launched by Russia?
(a) Soyuz   (b) Angara – 5   (c) Sputnik   (d) Vostok

84. What is the Title of Salman Rushdie's memoir about his experience of being stabbed at a public event?
(a) Golden House   (b) Knife   (c) Sea of Stories   (d) Midnight's Children

85. Which State ranks first in implementing 'Green Credit Scheme'?
(a) Maharashtra   (b) Madhya Pradesh   (c) Telangana   (d) Tamil Nadu
86. Recently Lawrence Wong appointed as the Prime Minister of which Country?
(a) South Korea   (b) Singapore   (c) Taiwan   (d) Vietnam
87. Recently who has been re-appointed as the Managing Director of IMF?
(a) Saumya Swaminathan (b) David Malpass   (c) Gita Gopinathan   (d) Kristalina Georgieva
88. Which is the only Indian airport among the Top 10 busiest airports in the World?
(a) Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Mumbai
(b) Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi
(c) Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad
(d) Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru
89. Recently India announce a test of missile which has strike range of 130 Km. What is the name of that missile?
(a) Agni Prime   (b) Astra MK II   (c) Dhara   (d) Kaveri
90. Recently Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al Ahmed Al Saba became Prime Minister of which Company?
(a) Saudi Arabia   (b) Qatar   (c) Kuwait   (d) UAE
91. Who is the writer of the Book 'India – The Road to Renaissance'?
(a) Bhimeshwar Challa   (b) Arundhati Roy   (c) Arvind Adiga   (d) Salman Rushdie
92. Who has won the World Sportsman of the Year at the Laureus World Sports Awards 2024?
(a) Rafael Nadal   (b) Lebron James   (c) Novak Djokovic   (d) Lionel Messi
93. World Earth Day is celebrated every year on
(a) April 21   (b) April 22   (c) April 23   (d) April 24
94. Who has won the Sportswoman of the Year at the Laureus World Sports Awards 2024?
(a) Simone Biles   (b) Naomi Osaka   (c) Aitana Bonmatí   (d) Alexia Putellas
95. Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) was founded in which year?
(a) 1965   (b) 1989   (c) 1999   (d) 2004
96. National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated annually on
(a) 22 April   (b) 23 April   (c) 24 April   (d) 25 April
97. Village Panchayat is mentioned under which Article of constitution?
(a) Article 38   (b) Article 40   (c) Article 44   (d) Article 46
98. The Green Credit Program was introduced in which year?
(a) 2019   (b) 2020   (c) 2021   (d) 2023
99. For the first time members of the Shompen tribe, a PVTGs votes. Shompen tribe is found in
(a) Arunachal Pradesh   (b) Sikkim
(c) Andaman & Nicobar Island   (d)Lakshadweep Island
100. Survey of India is the oldest scientific department of the Govt of India is established in which year?
(a) 1767   (b) 1798   (c) 1818   (d) 1843

ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS

1. Ans. a
Exp. The EPI was introduced as the eradication of smallpox virus was on the horizon, and a need to leverage the then immunisation infrastructure and a trained workforce was recognised to expand the benefit of available vaccines.

2. Ans. b
Exp. The year 2024 commemorates 50 years since the launch of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1974. India launched the EPI in 1978, which was later renamed as the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) in 1985.

3. Ans. c
Exp. Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030) outlines an ambitious global strategy for vaccines and immunization spanning from 2021 to 2030. The objectives by the end of this period are: Decrease the number of children receiving zero vaccine doses by 50%, introduce 500 new or under-utilized vaccines in low- and middle-income countries, attain a 90% coverage rate for essential childhood vaccines.

4. Ans. a
Exp. The Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) achieved significant milestones with the eradication of polio in 2014 and the elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2015. These accomplishments marked pivotal moments in public health, signifying successful efforts to combat these diseases and protect vulnerable populations.

5. Ans. a
Exp. On March 16th every year, India observes National Vaccination Day, also known as Immunization Day. It was on this day in 1995 that the first dose of Oral Polio vaccine was given in India. The initiative to eradicate polio from the country came in the form of the Pulse Polio Campaign launched by the government.

6. Ans. b
Exp. Articles 214 to 231 in Part VI of the Indian Constitution deal with the provisions related to the High Courts. The constitutional provisions mentioned under these articles deal with the organization, independence, jurisdiction, powers, and procedures of the High Courts.

7. Ans. d
Exp. The Constitution of India provides for a High Court for each State. However, the 7th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1956 authorized the Parliament to establish a common High Court for two or more States or for two or more States and a Union Territory.

8. Ans. b
Exp. Currently, India has 25 High Courts established in different states of the country.It was in 1858 when on the recommendation of the Law Commission, the Parliament passed the Indian High Courts Act 1861 which suggested the establishment of High Courts in place of Supreme Court in three Presidencies: Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay.

9. Ans. c
Exp. A High Court Judge is appointed by the President of India. He is solely responsible for the appointment of any judge in a High Court. However, he may consult the Governor of the State, the acting Chief Justice of India and Chief Justice of that particular state's High Court.

10. Ans. c
Exp. A person to be appointed as a judge of a High Court should have the following qualifications: He/she should be a citizen of India, and He/she should have Held a judicial office in the territory of India for ten years. OR been an advocate of a High Court (or High Courts in succession) for ten years. There is no minimum age for appointment as a judge of a High Court prescribed by the Constitution.

11. Ans. b
Exp. The Chennai-based Agnikul Cosmos was to test-fire an Agnibaan rocket with 3D-printed engine, aiming for suborbital flight trajectory control.For the second time, the launch of AgniKul 'Agnibaan SOrTeD' has been postponed.

12. Ans. c
Exp. AgniKul Cosmos' journey, is executed in support with ISRO and IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center) has two sections. The IIT Madras incubated space start up, had earlier planned the launch on March 22, but deferred it.

13. Ans. b
Exp. The infrastructure, a collaborative effort between Agnikul, ISRO, and IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center), comprises two distinct sections: The Agnikul Launchpad (ALP) and The Agnikul Mission Control Center (AMCC). This sophisticated setup, meticulously designed by Agnikul and executed with support from esteemed partners, represents a significant advancement in space technology coordination and operational efficiency.

14. Ans. a
Exp. Agnikul's vehicle comprises two stages, with the first stage consisting of a cluster of engines known as 'Agnite', and the second stage comprising the 'Agnilet' engine. Both engines used by Agnikul are designed and developed by them in India and are single-piece, 3-D printed engines, said to be the first in the world.

15. Ans. c
Exp. Agnibaan is Agnikul's highly customizable, two-stage launch vehicle, capable of taking up to 100 kg payload to orbits around 700 km high (low Earth orbits) and enables plug-and-play configuration.

16. Ans. a
Exp. The Green Credit Programme (GCP), notified by the government of India on October 13, 2023, is an innovative market-based mechanism. Designed to incentivize voluntary environmental actions across diverse sectors, the GCP involves various stakeholders like individuals, farmers, communities, private sector industries, and companies.

17. Ans. b
Exp. The government of India consistently showcases its initiatives and commitments at each COP meeting to show India as a global leader. The Indian PM announced the launch of the Green Climate Initiative or Programme at the inaugural session of the COP-28 in Dubai.

18. Ans. c
Exp. Green Climate Initiative or programme in the government's Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) movement. The concept of LiFE was introduced by the Indian PM at COP26 (Glasgow) in 2021, to drive an international mass movement towards "mindful and deliberate utilisation" to protect and preserve the environment.

19. Ans. d
Exp. The Green Credit Rules, 2023, were officially notified on October 12th, 2023, under the purview of the Environment Protection Act of 1986. This legislative framework establishes a structured mechanism aimed at promoting voluntary environmental initiatives that contribute positively to ecological sustainability. The core objective of these rules is to incentivize and recognize individuals, groups, and entities engaging in such proactive environmental actions through the issuance of green credits.

20. Ans. b
Exp. The Green Credit program encompasses some of key types of activities aimed at enhancing environmental sustainability: Tree Plantation, Water Management, Sustainable Agriculture, Waste Management, Air Pollution Reduction, Mangrove conservation and Restoration.

21. Ans. d
Exp. There are around 23,000 African lions left in the wild, with the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List classifying them as 'vulnerable'.

22. Ans. d
Exp. World Lion Day is observed on August 10 each year. Established in 2013 by Big Cat Rescue, the world's largest accredited sanctuary dedicated to lions, World Lion Day was co-founded by Dereck and Beverly Joubert.

23. Ans. b
Exp. Gir is often linked with "Maldharis" who have survived through the ages by having symbiotic relationship with the lion. Maldharisare religious pastoral communities living in Gir. Their settlements are called "nesses".

24. Ans. a
Exp. The Asiatic lion is listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, providing it with a high level of legal protection in India. Additionally, it is classified under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), highlighting the need for strict regulations on international trade involving Asiatic lions.

25. Ans. b
Exp. The Project Lion document titled "Lion @ 47: Vision for Amrutkal" was launched by the Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Barda Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat, located near Porbandar, serves as a potential second home for Asiatic lions, just 100 kilometers from Gir National Park. Barda has been identified as a potential site where a population of 40 adult and sub-adult lions can be accommodated in the larger landscape of Barda-Alech hills and coastal forests.

26. Ans. c
Exp. The registration of births and deaths falls under the Concurrent List, giving powers to both Parliament and state legislatures to make laws on the subject.

27. Ans. a
Exp. The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill of 2023 aims to make revisions to the existing Registration of Births and Deaths Act from 1969. This foundational act outlines the framework for overseeing and recording births and deaths within the country.

28. Ans. c
Exp. A usual resident for the purposes of NPR is a person who has resided in a place for six months or more and intends to reside there for another six months or more. NPR objective is to have a comprehensive identity database of people residing in the country.

29. Ans. c
Exp. The census utilizes an extensive questionnaire, encompassing 29 items during the 2011 census, to gather comprehensive information about individuals. This includes details such as age, gender, marital status, children, occupation, birthplace, mother tongue, religion, disability status, and identification as part of Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. In contrast, the National Population Register (NPR) focuses on gathering fundamental demographic data along with biometric information.

30. Ans. c
Exp. Births, stillbirths, and deaths must be registered within 21 days of their occurrence as per the provisions. Failure to comply with this regulation is considered a punishable offense, resulting in a fine of Rs 5. Additionally, it is mandated that States and Union Territories maintain individual databases within the Civil Registration System. This system falls under the operational control of the Registrar General of India (RGI).

V – 70s

31. Ans. a
Exp. Former India cricketer Salim Durani passed away recently in Jamnagar, Gujarat. He was 88 years old. He played 29 Test matches for India and took 75 wickets. His best performance was 10 wickets for 177 runs. In the year 1962, he played the best innings of 104 runs against the West Indies. Durani made his Test debut in early 1960 against Australia at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai.

32. Ans. d
Exp. Adani Power Ltd has opened a new power plant in Jharkhand to supply electricity to Bangladesh.

33. Ans. a
Exp. The headquarters of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure is located in Delhi.

34. Ans. c
Exp. The Buzi Bridge was inaugurated by Union External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar. The Minister also had a meeting with President of Assembly Esperança Bias.
It was built as part of 132 km Tica-Buzi-Nova-Sofala Road project by India in Mozambique.

35. Ans. b
Exp. Mohammad Shahabuddin Chuppu was sworn in as the 22nd President of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Parliament Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury administered the oath of office to Shahabuddin. He was elected unopposed on February 13. Outgoing President Mohammad Abdul Hamid congratulated the newly-elected

President. Mohammad Shahabuddin was born in 1949 in the northwestern Pabna district. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh is Sheikh Hasina and the currency here is 'Bangladeshi Taka'.

36. Ans. b
Exp. NASA appointed Amit Kshatriya to head its new Moon to Mars Program Office.

37. Ans. b
Exp. Italy has banned OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot, launching a probe over a suspected breach of data collection rules.

38. Ans. d
Exp. The Indian Navy, along with the Sri Lanka Navy is conducting the 10th edition of bilateral maritime exercise SLINEX-2023 in Colombo from April 03, 2023. The Indian Navy is represented by INS Kiltan and INS Savitri, while the Sri Lankan Navy is represented by SLNS Vijayabahu and SLNS Samudura. In addition to this, Indian Navy's Chetak helicopters and Dornier maritime patrol aircraft and BEL 412 helicopters are also participating in it. The purpose of its organization is to strengthen cooperation in the maritime sector between India and Sri Lanka. It will conclude on April 08.

39. Ans. a
Exp. The European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 mission, consisting of two spacecraft, will demonstrate precision formation flying in space.

40. Ans. a
Exp. India is expected to become the world's second-largest solar manufacturer by 2026.

41. Ans. a
Exp. On April 13, 1984, the Indian Army mounted the secretly planned Operation Meghdoot, and took control of the Siachen Glacier.

42. Ans. a
Exp. The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 15th to 28th April 2024 at Termez, the Republic of Uzbekistan. Exercise DUSTLIK is a yearly event conducted alternatively in India and Uzbekistan.

43. Ans. b
Exp. Italy has rolled out its digital nomad visa, signaling a welcome to professionals from around the globe seeking to explore this European destination.

44. Ans. b
Exp. The world's first human being, Yuri Gagarin, travellled around space on April 12, 1961. This historical event paved the way for space exploration. To commemorate this, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 12 April as 'IDHSF' in 2011.

45. Ans. b
Exp. The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) has recommended Manoj Mittal as the Chairman and Managing Director of Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and Sanjay Shukla as the Managing Director of National Housing Bank (NHB).

46. Ans. b
Exp. HDFC Bank becomes the first private sector bank to establish a branch in Lakshadweep, setting a milestone in banking accessibility for the Union Territory.

47. Ans. c
Exp. British man Russ Cook becomes first person to run length of Africa.

48. Ans. a
Exp. The Billie Jean King Cup by Gainbridge, formerly known as the Fed Cup, is the World Cup of tennis.

49. Ans. c
Exp. Philippines concluded a $375-million deal with India for three batteries of shore-based, anti-ship variant of the BrahMos becoming the first export customer for the joint venture missile between India and Russia.

50. Ans. b
Exp. National Civil Service Day is celebrated annually on April 21st in India.

51. Ans. a
Exp. The release of the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education 2024, titled 'Aadharshila,' by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) marks a pivotal moment in preschool education in India.

52. Ans. c
Exp. Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi appointed as next chief of Indian Navy.

53. Ans. c
Exp. Senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Nalin Prabhat has been appointed as the Director-General of National Security Guard (NSG), the country's counter-terrorism and counter-hijack force.

54. Ans. b
Exp. Greece has announced the creation of two new major marine parks in the Ionian Sea and the Aegean Sea.

55. Ans. b
Exp. Mount Ruang volcano erupted in Indonesia.

56. Ans. b
Exp. The black hole, named Gaia BH3, was discovered "by chance" from data collected by the European Space Agency's Gaia mission, an astronomer from the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS).

57. Ans. a
Exp. Bollywood veteran Amitabh Bachchan will be honoured with the prestigious third Lata Dinanath Mangeshkar award for his remarkable dedication to the nation, its people, and society.

58. Ans. a
Exp. Indian economy's growth forecast for 2024-25 in IMF's World Economic Outlook (WEO) is 6.8%.

59. Ans. d
Exp. Zoran Milanovic is the President of Croatia.

60. Ans. a
Exp. Tirangi Barfi of Banaras was recently granted Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

61. Ans. c
Exp. Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee have reported the discovery of fossils of one of the largest snakes that ever existed. These fossils were discovered in Gujarat.

62. Ans. c
Exp. The 6th edition of the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (ICDRI) was held in New Delhi.

63. Ans. b
Exp. The Annual Meeting of the Defence Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was held in Astana, Kazakhstan from April 25-26.

64. Ans. c
Exp. World Immunization Week is being celebrated from April 24 to 30, 2024 by the World Health Organization (WHO).

65. Ans. a
Exp. The War Memorials of Neuve-Chapelle and Villers-Guislain are dedicated to Indian martyrs of the First World War. These memorials are located in France.

66. Ans. d
Exp. Netherlands hosted the 26th World Energy Congress from April 22 to 25, 2024.

67. Ans. d
Exp. Asylum seekers who arrived illegally in the UK will be deported to Rwanda.

68. Ans. c
Exp. N. Kalaiselvi is the present Director General of CSIR-cum-Secretary DSIR, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

69. Ans. b
Exp. Ravneet Kaur is the Chairperson of Competition Commission of India (CCI).

70. Ans. c
Exp. India tops the list of doping offenders in 2022 according to WADA anti-doping report.

71. Ans. a
Exp. Recently, the administration has imposed section 144 of CrPC in Leh following a call for a people's march towards the LAC.

72. Ans. d
Exp. NATO Foreign Ministers recently gathered at NATO Headquarters to mark 75 years since the signing of the Washington Treaty.

73. Ans. c
Exp. The members of the Monetary Policy Committee are appointed for four years.

74. Ans. a
Exp. International Narcotics Control Board was established in 1968.

75. Ans. a
Exp. India had 67 Unicorns in 2023 one less than previous year.

76. Ans. c
Exp. Israel deployed its ship-mounted defence system, called the C-Dome

77. Ans. b
Exp. China accounted for highest number of cases of hepatitis B in the world.

78. Ans. a
Exp. Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is present in the faeces of infected persons and is most often transmitted through consumption of contaminated water or food.

79. Ans. b
Exp. 5th edition of the 'Dustlik' joint military exercise between India and Uzbekistan begins on April 15 in Termez, Uzbekistan.

80. Ans. d
Exp. Iran launches more than 300 drones and missiles in first direct attack on Israel.

81. Ans. b
Exp. Anurag Kumar recently appointed as the Joint Director of CBI.

82. Ans. a
Exp. Recently India signed an amendment on Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Mauritius.

83. Ans. b
Exp. Russia test-launched its Angara-A5 space rocket for the first time from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Far East, successfully putting a test load in low orbit as part of an effort to develop a new post-Soviet launch vehicle.

84. Ans. b
Exp. British-American author Salman Rushdie has released his much-awaited memoir "Knife", recounting the harrowing experience of being stabbed at a public event in 2022 and how he overcame the near-fatal ordeal.

85. Ans. b
Exp. Madhya Pradesh excels in implementing the Green Credit Programme, facilitating tree plantation across 10 states. In the realm of environmental conservation, Madhya Pradesh emerges as a frontrunner in the effective execution of the Green Credit Programme (GCP) initiated by the central government.

86. Ans. b
Exp. Recently Lawrence Wong appointed as the Prime Minister of Singapore.

87. Ans. d
Exp. The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) executive board has re-appointed Kristalina Georgieva as its Managing Director for a second five-year term.

88. Ans. b
Exp. The IGI Airport in Delhi handled 72.2 million passengers in 2023. It ranks 10th among the busiest airports of India.

89. Ans. b
Exp. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is planning to test the new long-range Astra Mk-2 Air-to-Air (A2A) Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile in the next few months having strike range of 130 Km.

90. Ans. b
Exp. Kuwait's Emir has appointed Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah al-Ahmad al-Sabah as the new prime minister of Kuwait.

91. Ans. a
Exp. Retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer and former UN official Bhimeswara Challa on Monday unveiled his latest book India—the Road to Renaissance: A Vision and an Agenda at an event at the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), Bella Vista campus.

92. Ans. c
Exp. Novak Djokovic won the World Sportsman of the Year at the Laureus World Sports Awards.

93. Ans. b
Exp. Earth Day is an annual event on April 22 to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

94. Ans. c
Exp. Aitana Bonmatí has won the Sportswoman of the Year at the Laureus World Sports Awards 2024.

95. Ans. c
Exp. It is an autonomous and statutory body established under the IRDA Act 1999.

96. Ans. c
Exp. National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated annually on April 24th.

97. Ans. b
Exp. Village Panchayat is mentioned under Article 40.

98. Ans. d

Exp. The Green Credit Program, introduced on October 13, 2023.
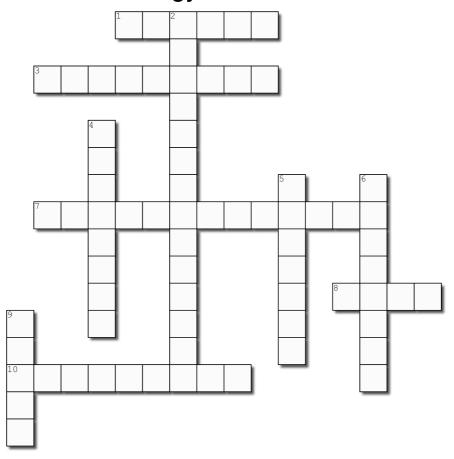
99. Ans. c

Exp. Shompen tribe found in Nicobar Island

100. Ans. a

Exp. Survey of India is the oldest scientific department of the Govt of India is established in 1767.
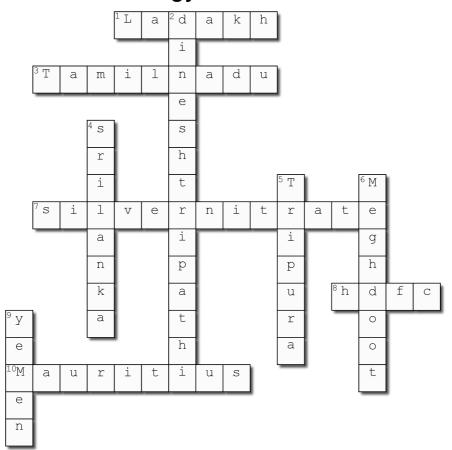
Vidhigya Crossword

Across
1. Nimmu-Padam-Darcha Road recently completed in which State/UT?
3. Indian Coast Guard inaugurates Aquatic Centre in which State?
7. Which chemical is used as the Election Ink?
8. Which is the first private sector bank to open a branch in Lakshadweep?
10. India signed an amendment on Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with which Country?

Down
2. Who is appointed as the chief of Naval Staff?
4. SLINEX Exercise took place between India and which Country?
5. Pachra of which state recently got GI Tag?
6. Which Operation was launched to establish Indian control over Siachen Glacier in 1984?
9. Houti rebels are active in which Country?

Vidhigya Crossword

¹L	a	²d	a	k	h

(Crossword grid)

Row 1: ¹L a ²d a k h
Row: i
Row 2: ³T a m i l n a d u
Row: e
Row: ⁴s / s
Row: r / h
Row: i / t / ⁵T / ⁶M
Row 3: ⁷s i l v e r n i t r a t e
Row: a / i / i / g
Row: n / p / p / h
Row: k / a / u / ⁸h d f c
Row: ⁹y / a / t / r / o
Row: e / h / a / o
Row 4: ¹⁰M a u r i t i u s / t
Row: e
Row: n

Across

1. Nimmu-Padam-Darcha Road recently completed in which State/UT? (**Ladakh**)

3. Indian Coast Guard inaugurates Aquatic Centre in which State? (**Tamilnadu**)

7. Which chemical is used as the Election Ink? (**Silver Nitrate**)

8. Which is the first private sector bank to open a branch in Lakshadweep? (**HDFC**)

10. India signed an amendment on Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with which Country? (**Mauritius**)

Down

2. Who is appointed as the chief of Naval Staff? (**Dinesh Tripathi**)

4. SLINEX Exercise took place between India and which Country? (**Srilanka**)

5. Pachra of which state recently got GI Tag? (**Tripura**)

6. Which Operation was launched to establish Indian control over Siachen Glacier in 1984? (**Meghdoot**)

9. Houti rebels are active in which Country? (**Yemen**)