

APRIL CURRENT AFFAIRS

GAMOSAS

Why in News?

A newly formed Bangla Sahitya Sabha Assam (BSSA) used a **hybrid creation** — an **Assamese gamosa** and a **Bengali gamcha**, each cut in half and sewn together — to felicitate guests at a function on Sunday (March 26), and this did not go down well with a section of Assamese society.

About Gamosa:

- The Gamosa or Gamusa is **an article of significance for the indigenous people of Assam, India.**
 - It is generally a **white rectangular piece of cloth with primarily a red border on three sides and red woven motifs on the fourth** (in addition to red, other colors are also used).
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- Although **cotton yarn** is the most common material for making/weaving gamosas, there are special occasion ones **made from Pat silk.**
 - The Gamosa is a **multipurpose cloth** that can be used as a towel, handkerchief, head covering, waistband, or even as a gift wrapper.
 - The Gamosa is also a **symbol of hospitality, friendship, and respect.** It is often presented as a gift to guests or used to honour important people.
 - The Assamese Gamosa was granted **Geographical Indication (GI) status in 2020.**

Bengali Gamcha:

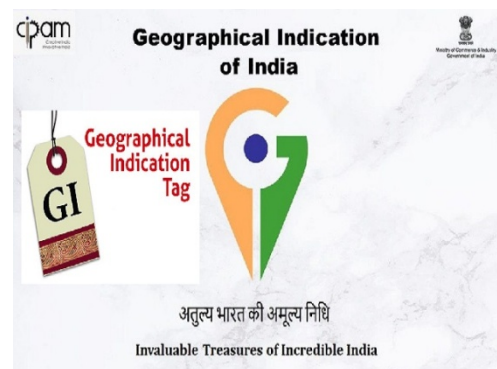
- Gamucha also known as Gamosa or Gamchha, is a sort of traditional thin, coarse cotton plaid or turban fabric, sometimes with a **checked design**
- It is **found in east India, Bangladesh, as well as in eastern Terai of Nepal.**
- It is often worn on one side of the shoulder.

- Its appearance varies from region to region, and it has been traditionally worn as a scarf by the Odia men and Bengali men.
- The gamucha is **most commonly found with check and striped patterns of red, orange or green.**



About GI (Geographical Indication) TAG:

- A geographical indication (GI) is a **name or sign used on products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin** (e.g., a town, region, or country).
- The use of a geographical indication, as an indication of the product's source, is **intended as a certification that the product possesses certain qualities, is made according to traditional methods, or enjoys a good reputation due to its geographical origin.**
- It is governed and directed by the **WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).**
- GI tags are issued as per the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.**
- This tag is **issued by the Geographical Indication Registry** under the **Department of Industry Promotion and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- It is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods).
- This tag is **valid for a period of 10 years** following which **it can be renewed.**
- Once a product gets this tag, any person or company cannot sell a similar item under that name.
- GI registration of a product provides it legal protection and prevention against unauthorised use by others.
- GI tag helps in promoting the exports of the product.
- It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.



- Some famous goods which carry this tag include Basmati rice, Darjeeling Tea, Chanderi Fabric, Mysore Silk, Kullu Shawl, Kangra Tea, Thanjavur Paintings, Allahabad Surkha, Farrukhabad Prints, Lucknow Zardozi, Kashmir Saffron and Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving.

GI TAG (PRODUCT)	STATE
Banarasi Pan	U.P.
Tandur Red Gram	Telangana
Gamochoa	Assam
Alibag White Onion	Maharashtra
Raktsey Karpo Apricot	Ladakh
Mithila Makhana	Bihar

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO WASTE

Why in News?

The first-ever International Day of Zero Waste was celebrated on March 30, 2023, to encourage people to prevent and minimize waste and promote a circular economy and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (11 and 12).

About International Day of Zero Waste:

- The **International Day of Zero Waste** aims to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns and raise awareness about how zero-waste initiatives contribute to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Humanity generates an estimated 2.24 billion tons of municipal solid waste annually, of which only 55 per cent is managed in



controlled facilities.

- The **waste sector is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in urban settings and biodiversity loss**. Around 931 million tons of food is wasted each year, and up to 37 million tons of plastic waste is expected to enter the ocean annually by 2040.
- The **United Nations General Assembly** on 14 December 2022 formally recognized the importance of zero-waste initiatives and **proclaimed 30 March as the International Day of Zero Waste, to be observed annually beginning in 2023**.
- **Established by:** The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)**
- **Objective:** To raise awareness about zero-waste initiatives and their importance in tackling the global waste crisis.
- As part of India's observance of the International Day of Zero Waste on 30th march 2023, the **Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs** organised the **"Swachhotsav - 2023: Rally for Trash Free Cities" in New Delhi**.
- Over 350 participants, including mayors, commissioners, mission directors, business and technology experts, women and youth leading the sanitation industry, technical institutions, and development partners, participated in the event, which featured discussions on best practices in circularity in garbage-free cities.

What is Zero Waste?

- Zero waste refers to waste prevention as opposed to end-of-pipe waste management.
- Zero waste is a set of principles focused on waste prevention that encourage redesigning resource life cycles so that all products are repurposed (i.e. “up-cycled”) and/or reused.
- The goal of the movement is to avoid sending trash to landfills, incinerators, the ocean, or any other part of the environment.

BASTILLE DAY PARADE

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit France on 14th of July to attend this year's Bastille Day Parade as Guest of Honour in Paris.

What is France's Bastille Day parade?

About Bastille Day Parade:

- The **National Day of France**, also **known as Bastille Day**, is celebrated on **July 14 every year**.
- **July 14 is the anniversary of the storming of the infamous Bastille prison in 1789 – a turning point for the success of the French Revolution.**
- The **Bastille was a fortress prison located in the heart of Paris**, which had become a symbol of royal tyranny and oppression.
- The **fall of the Bastille is widely considered the beginning of the French Revolution.**
- The event also marked the beginning of a period of intense violence and social upheaval in France.
- It is also **one of the oldest regular military parades in the world.**
- The **Bastille Day military parade**, also known as the 14 July military parade, is a French military parade that **has been held on the morning of 14 July each year in Paris since 1880.**
- One of the revolutionary days in Paris and now a national holiday, the July 14 ("Bastille Day") is **celebrated with a mixture of solemn military parades and easygoing dancing and fireworks.**
- The storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789 has been commemorated in France for more than a century.
- **Every Bastille Day, Paris' famous avenue des Champs-Élysées hosts a military parade - similar to India's Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path.**
- French heads of state have been the Republic Day guests of honour five times since 1951.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the 2nd Indian PM to be the guest of honour at Bastille Day, after Manmohan Singh in 2009.**
- French and Indian countries mark the 25th year of their strategic partnership.



- **French Revolution (1789 – 1799)** A significant period of social and political upheaval in France was characterized by the overthrow of the French monarchy, the establishment of a republic, and the execution of thousands of people, including King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette.
- The **fall of the Bastille symbolized the people's victory over the monarchy and the end of the old regime.**
- The event led to the abolition of feudalism, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, and the establishment of the First French Republic.

THIRA (NAGARAJA THIRA)

Why in News?

Recently, 'Nagaraja Thira' was celebrated at the Sree Muchilottu temple at Kuthiravattom in Kozhikode.

About Thira :

- **Thirra or Theyyam thira** is a ritual dance performed in "Kaavu"(grove)& temples of the Malabar region in Kerala State, South India.
- This art form is performed **by the artists of malaya** (the artist who recognised for performing the art form called as a "perumalayan") community.
- This **art is performed during Utsavam** (annual temple festival).
- **Clan deities** such as **Bhagavathi, Shiva** are worshipped in these forms.
- Theyyam thira is **main sub division of Theyyam.**
- It is similar to the Theyyam dance performed in the same region, except that in Theyyam the performer is considered as the god he is representing, while in Thira the performer is considered as to be possessed by god.



- **Thira brings the gods to life.** Performers dress up with ceremonial facial paint and loud clothing and dance in front of the deity, the bhagavathi.
- These dancers are viewed as being possessed by the gods when they are in their act, with devotees queuing up to meet them to share woes and wishes
- Toddy plays a very significant role in the proceedings, it is an offering to the gods and almost all the performers dance under the influence.
- The **performers belong to the "Peruvannan" caste** of , who are given prime importance in Thira.
- Therefore in Kerala, both upper caste Brahmins, and lower caste tribals have an important place in worship.

VAIKOM SATYAGRAH

Why in News?

- The year 2024 marks the centenary of the Vaikom Satyagraha.
- Kerala Chief Minister and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister are to jointly inaugurate the centenary celebrations of Vaikom Satyagraha.

About Vaikom Satyagraha:

- Vaikom is a serene town in Kottayam, Kerala.
- Vaikom Satyagraha, from 30 March 1924 to 23 November 1925, was a **nonviolent agitation for access to the prohibited public environs of the Vaikom Temple in the Kingdom of Travancore.**
- Most of the great temples in the princely state of Travancore had for years forbidden lower castes (untouchables) not just from entering, but also from walking on the surrounding roads.
- It **marked the start of temple entry movements across India.**
- The campaign, led by Congress leaders **T. K. Madhavan**, **K. Kelappan** (also known as Kerala Gandhi) and **K. P. Kesava Menon** (then secretary of Kerala Congress),



was noted for the active support and participation offered by different communities and a variety of activists.

- **Periyar' E.V. Ramasamy** was requested to lead the campaign.
 - **Members of forward castes** marched from Travancore to the royal palace at Thiruvananthapuram, in a show of solidarity for the social reform
 - **Akalis (Sikhs) from Punjab** gave their support by **opening a community kitchen (langar)** for the volunteers
 - **Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru** gave support to the movement.
 - **Mahatma Gandhi arrived at Vaikom in March 1925** to arrive at a compromise and settle the issue once and for all.
- It demanded the **right of the Ezhavas and 'untouchables'** to use roads around the Vaikom Temple.
 - Oppressed castes were given the right to move on public roads in the vicinity of all temples in Travancore.
 - The movement paved the way for the historic **Temple Entry Proclamation (1936) by the Maharaja of Travancore**, which lifted the age-old ban on the entry of marginalized castes into Travancore temples.
 - It was one of the most non-violent struggles against caste oppression and discrimination.

ERAVIKULAM NATIONAL PARK

Why in News?

Eravikulam National Park (ENP), the natural habitat of Nilgiri tahr in Munnar, has a new attraction — a Fernarium set up inside the park.

What is Fernarium?

- A **fernarium is a type of botanical garden or greenhouse** that specializes in cultivating and displaying various species of ferns.

- Ferns are **part of the Epiphytic family**. They **grow naturally in a soilless condition**.
- The **plants obtain water and nutrients through leaching from trees**.
- Ferns are a diverse group of plants that do not produce flowers or seeds but instead reproduce through spores.



About Eravikulam National Park:

- Eravikulam National Park is a 97 km² national park located along the Western Ghats in the Idukki and Ernakulam districts of **Kerala in India**.
- It is **the first national park in Kerala**.
- It **was declared a Sanctuary in 1975** with the intention of protecting the indigenous population of Nilgiri Tahr (highly endangered mountain goat).
- **However, in 1978, it was declared as a National Park** considering its ecological, faunal, geomorphological and Zoological Significance.
- The **terrain consists of high altitude grasslands interspersed with sholas**.
- **Many perennial streams criss-cross the park**. They merge to form tributaries of the Periyar river in the west and of the Cauvery River in the east.
- **Lakkom Waterfalls** is in this region.
- Twenty six species of mammals have been recorded in the park including the largest surviving population of Nilgiri tahr.
- Three major types of plant communities are found in the Park – **grasslands, shrublands and forests**.
- **“Neelakurinji”, the flower** that blooms once in twelve years grows here.
- **Anamudi, 2,695 meters, the highest peak in South India is inside this park**.



NAGRI DUBRAJ RICE

Why in News?

The Geographical Indication Registry has granted **Chhattisgarh's** aromatic rice, Nagri Dubraj, a geographical indication (GI) tag facilitating the brand to get a unique identity and a wide market.

About NAGRI DUBRAJ RICE:

- Dubraj is a **variety of rice**.
- It is an **aromatic short to medium grain rice**.
- It is most common in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, mainly Bilaspur.
- It is produced by a women's self-help group "**Maa Durga Swasahayata Samuh**". The grain finds reference in Valmiki Ramayana.
- It is an indigenous variety and has small grains, is very soft to eat after cooking, and is known as the Basmati of Chhattisgarh because of its fragrance.
- Previously, **Jeeraphool rice (also from Chhattisgarh)** was granted a GI tag in 2019, Dubraj is the second brand to get the GI tag.



RACE TO PRESERVE 'ICE MEMORY'

Why in News?

Arctic scientists are set to start **drilling to save samples of ancient ice** for analysis before the frozen layers melt away due to climate change.

About :

- French, Italian and Norwegian researchers have set up camp in Norway's Svalbard archipelago to preserve crucial ice records for analyzing past environmental conditions.
- **They will extract ice in a series of tubes** from as far as 125 metres (137 yards) below the surface, **containing frozen geochemical traces dating back three centuries.**
- Analysis of chemicals in deep "ice cores" **provides scientists with valuable data about past environmental conditions.**
- Studies indicate that the **Arctic is warming between two and four times faster than the global average** and water from melting ice is altering the geochemical records preserved in ancient ice beneath.
- One set of ice tubes will be used for immediate analysis while a second set will be sent to Antarctica for storage in an "ice memory sanctuary" under the snow, where the samples will be preserved for future generations of scientists.
- The **Arctic amplification phenomenon** is responsible for warming the Arctic region much faster than the rest of the planet.
- Hence, **scientists are in a race against time to preserve crucial ice records before it disappears forever from the surface of the planet.**



UN WORLD WATER CONFERENCE

Why in News?

Recently, the **United Nations 2023 Water Conference** was held in New York.

About World Water Day:

- World Water Day is **an annual United Nations (UN) observance day held on 22 March** that highlights the importance of fresh water.



2023 Accelerating Change

- The day is used to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.
- The theme of each year focuses on topics relevant to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), which is in line with the targets of **Sustainable Development Goal 6**.
- The **UN World Water Development Report (WWDR)** is released each year around World Water Day by UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).

About UN World Water Conference:

- The UN 2023 Water Conference is formally known as the **2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028)**.
- The UN 2023 Water Conference's theme, "**Our watershed moment: uniting the world for water,**" aimed to support the achievement of water-related global goals and objectives, including those enumerated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- It was **co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands**.
- The last water conference was held in **1977 (in Mar Del Plata, Argentina)** and resulted in a global action plan to provide safe drinking water for everyone.
 - This plan helped reduce the number of people without access to safe drinking water in many developing countries.
 - It resulted in the first global 'Action Plan' recognizing that "all peoples have the right to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs".



INITIATIVES TAKEN AT THE CONFERENCE:

- **Water Action Agenda** : 700 voluntary commitments to form the Water Action Agenda.
- **Climate resilient water and sanitation infrastructure** - USA announced a commitment of up to \$49 billion in investments to support climate resilient water and sanitation infrastructure and services
- **Quality Infrastructure** - Japan announced that it will contribute 500 billion yen to the solution of water-related social issues faced by the Asia-Pacific region by developing quality Infrastructure
- **River basins management and clean running water** –Vietnam pledged to develop policies for major river basins management by 2025 and clean running water by 2030
- **Africa’s water investments gap** - The African Union Commission and Continental Africa Investment Programme (AIP) aims to close Africa’s water investments gap by mobilising at least \$30 billion per year by 2030.
- **European Union (EU)** - The EU aims to support 70 million individuals to an improved drinking water source and sanitation facility by 2030.
- **Water Convention and transboundary cooperation** – Switzerland submitted 5 commitments in the areas of Water Convention and transboundary cooperation.
- The commitments are **non-binding** in nature.
- The conference **failed to address the violence and threats faced by communities trying to protect dwindling water sources.**

RECOGNITION OF POLITICAL PARTY AS A ‘NATIONAL PARTY’ OR ‘STATE PARTY’

Why in News?

Ahead of upcoming Karnataka Elections, the Arvind Kejriwal led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is accorded with the status of a National Party by Election Commission of India (ECI).



About:

- Election Commission of India (ECI) has granted Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) 'National Party' Status ahead of Karnataka Elections.
- The Commission suspended the national party status of the All India Trinamool Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and the Communist Party of India (CPI).
- Revoked the state party status granted to RLD in UP, while recognising NCP and Trinamool Congress as state parties in Nagaland and Meghalaya respectively.
- Granted "recognised state political party" status to the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) in Nagaland.

About Political System of India:

- India has a multi-party system.
- The Election Commission of India (ECI) accords recognition to the national level and the state level political parties based upon objective criteria.
- A recognised political party enjoys privileges like a reserved party symbol, free broadcast time on state-run television and radio, consultation in the setting of election dates, and giving input in setting electoral rules and regulations.
- Other political parties that wish to contest local, state or national elections are required to be registered by the Election Commission of India.
- Registered Parties are upgraded as recognised National Party or State Party by the ECI if they meet the relevant criteria after a Lok Sabha or State legislative assembly election.
- The Recognised Party status is reviewed periodically by the ECI.

NATIONAL PARTY:

A registered party is recognised as a **national party** only if it fulfils any one of the three conditions listed below:

- 1) The party win **2% of seats in the Lok Sabha** from **at least three different states**.
- 2) **At a general election** to Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly, the **party polls 6% of votes in any four or more states** and **in addition it wins four Lok Sabha seats**.
- 3) The **party gets recognition as a state party in four states**.

STATE PARTY:

A registered party is recognised as a **state party** only if it fulfils **any one of the five conditions** listed below:

- 1) A party **should secure at least 6% of valid votes polled in an election to the state legislative assembly and win at least 2 seats in that state assembly**.
- 2) A party **should secure at least 6% of valid votes polled in an election to Lok Sabha and win at least 1 seat in Lok Sabha**.
- 3) A party **should win at least 3% of the total number of seats or a minimum of three seats in the Legislative Assembly, whichever is higher**.
- 4) A party **should win at least one seat in the Lok Sabha for every 25 seats or any fraction thereof allotted to that State**.
- 5) Under the liberalised criteria, one more clause that it will be eligible for recognition as state party **if it secures 8% or more of the total valid votes polled in the state**.

BANDIPUR TIGER RESERVE

Why in News?

Bandipur Tiger Reserve, located in Karnataka, completed 50 years as a Project Tiger Reserve on April 1, 2023.

Recently, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka.

About Bandipur Tiger Reserve:

- Bandipur National Park is a national park covering 868.63 km² in Chamarajnagar district in the **Indian state of Karnataka.**
- It **was established as a tiger reserve under Project Tiger in 1973.**
- It is **part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve since 1986.**
- Project Tiger allowed for its establishment in 1973. **In 1985, it was expanded and given the name Bandipur National Park by incorporating surrounding sections of Venugopala Wildlife Park.**
- It is situated in two contiguous districts (Mysore and Chamarajanagar) of Karnataka and is **located at the tri-junction area of the States Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.**
- The park is located **between the Kabini river in the north and the Moyar river in the south.** The **Nugu river runs through the park.**
- The **highest point in the park** is on a hill called **Himavad Gopalaswamy Betta.**
- Other Tiger Reserves in Karnataka:
 - Bhadra Tiger Reserve
 - Narahole Tiger Reserve
 - Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve
 - Biligiriranganatha Swamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve,
 - Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary has been proposed to be made a tiger reserve.
- Bandipur National Park **harbours the Asian elephant, gaur, Bengal tiger, sloth bear, four-horned antelope, golden jackal and dhole.**
- **The National Highways NH-181 and NH-766 pass through Bandipur national park**



MAHAVIR JAYANTI

Why in News?

Mahavira Jayanti, the birthday of the founder of Jainism, was celebrated across the country by Jain Community.

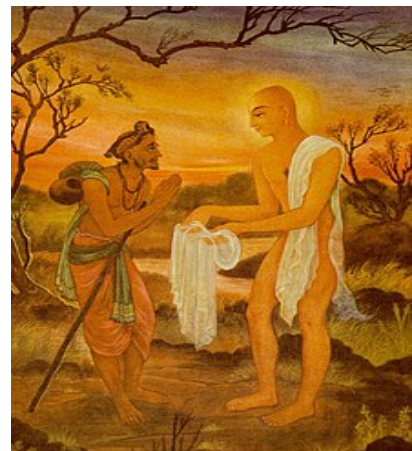
About Mahavir Jayanti:

- Mahavir Jayanti is one of the **most auspicious festivals in the Jain community.**
- This day **marks the birth of Vardhamana Mahavira**, who was the 24th and the last Tirthankara who succeeded the 23rd Tirthankara, Parshvanatha.
- According to Jain texts, **Lord Mahavira was born on the 13th day of the bright half of the moon in the month of Chaitra.**
- As per the Gregorian calendar, Mahavir Jayanti is usually celebrated during the month of March or April.
- A procession is called with the idol of Lord Mahavira called the **Rath Yatra.**
- Reciting stavans or Jain prayers, statues of the lord are given a ceremonial bath called abhisheka



About Mahavira:

- Mahavira also known as Vardhaman, **was the 24th tirthankara** (supreme preacher) of Jainism.
- He **was the spiritual successor of the 23rd tirthankara Parshvanatha.**
- Mahavira **was born in the early part of the 6th century BCE** into a **royal Kshatriya Jain family in ancient India.**
- **His mother's name was Trishala** and his **father's name was Siddhartha.**
- **Mahavira abandoned all worldly possessions at**



the age of about 30 and left home in pursuit of spiritual awakening, becoming an ascetic.

- Mahavira practiced intense meditation and severe austerities for twelve and a half years, after which he attained Kevala Jnana (omniscience).
- He preached for 30 years and attained Moksha (liberation) in the 6th century BCE, although the year varies by sect.
- Mahavira taught that observance of the vows of **ahimsa (non-violence)**, **satya (truth)**, **asteya (non-stealing)**, **brahmacharya (chastity)**, and **aparigraha (non-attachment)** are necessary for spiritual liberation.
- He taught the principles of **Anekantavada** (many-sided reality): **syadvada** and **nayavada**.

WORLD ENERGY TRANSITIONS OUTLOOK REPORT

Why in News?

Recently, the **International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)** released the **World Energy Transitions Outlook** report.

Highlights of the Report:

- The **global energy transition is still “off-track”** and falls short of the 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway.
- To keep 1.5°C alive, deployment levels must grow from some 3,000 gigawatts (GW) at present to over 10,000 GW in 2030, an average of 1,000 GW annually”.
- Public sector intervention is required to channel investments towards countries more equitably.
- Global investment in energy transition technologies reached a new record of \$1.3 trillion in 2022, yearly investments must more than quadruple to over \$5 trillion to stay on the 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway.
- By 2030, cumulative investments must amount to USD 44 trillion, with transition technologies representing 80 per cent of the total, or \$35 trillion, “prioritising efficiency, electrification, grid expansion and flexibility”.
- Current pledges and plans fall well short of IRENA’s 1.5°C pathway and will result in an emissions gap of 16 gigatonnes (Gt) in 2050.

About IRENA:

- The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is an **intergovernmental organization** mandated to facilitate cooperation, advance knowledge, and promote the adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy.
- It is **the first international organisation to focus exclusively on renewable energy, addressing needs in both industrialised and developing countries.**
- It was **officially founded in Bonn, Germany, on 26 January 2009 and its statute entered into force on 8 July 2010.**
- The agency is **headquartered in Masdar City, Abu Dhabi.**
- Its membership comprises **167 countries** and the **European Union.**
- **In 2009, India has become the 77th Founding Member of this organization.**
- **IRENA is an official United Nations observer.**



INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

Why in News?

To commemorate **50 years of Project Tiger**, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) for conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma** harbouring our planet.

The PM also released the summary report of **All India Tiger Estimation (5th cycle)**. He also released a commemorative coin on the completion of 50 years of Project Tiger.

About INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE (IBCA):

- **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** is a mega global alliance launched by India in April 2023 during the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger.
- The alliance aim at conservation of world's seven principal big cats, which include the tiger, lion, snow leopard, leopard, jaguar, puma, and cheetah.
- Through the alliance, the member nations will exchange experiences, provide faster assistance to their neighbours, and place a strong emphasis on capacity building.
- The Intergovernmental body will have 97 countries with many Asian and African countries becoming a part of the alliance. Standard operating procedures will be created by the alliance and used by all members as a guide.
- There will be also a list of dos and don'ts that will instruct nations on how to stop illegal wildlife trading and poaching. The idea holds that once illegal wildlife trade is reduced, poaching will eventually come to an end.
- The IBCA is anticipated to be self-sustaining after the first five years, which will be supported by India's "total grant assistance" of \$100 million, through membership fees, contributions from bilateral and multilateral organisations, and the private sector.
- A general assembly would consist of all member countries. A secretariat and a council with a minimum of seven but a maximum of fifteen member nations would be chosen by the general assembly for a five-year term.
- The IBCA secretary general will be appointed by the general assembly for a defined period on the advice of the council.
- The Alliance will strengthen global efforts and partnerships on big cat conservation, while evolving a platform for convergence of knowledge and best practices, supporting existing species specific inter-governmental platforms, while also providing direct support to recovery efforts in potential range habitats.
- Conserving big cats and their habitats can secure some of the most important natural ecosystems on Earth leading to natural climate change adaptation, water, and food security for millions of people, and provide livelihood and sustenance to forest communities.
- The alliance also aims to facilitate collaborations between governments, NGOs, and the private sector to create sustainable solutions for conservation.



- Through IBCA, India hopes to share knowledge, expertise, and best practices in conserving these species with other countries that have significant big cat populations, such as Indonesia, Brazil, and South Africa.

5TH CYCLE OF ALL INDIA TIGER ESTIMATION

Prime Minister recently released the summary report of the 5th cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 5TH CYCLE OF ALL INDIA TIGER ESTIMATION:

- India since 2006 has been conducting scientific tiger population estimation once every four years.
- The estimation was done in five landscapes.
- Of the four other landscapes, the report said the population increase is substantial in Shivalik and Gangetic floodplain, which is followed by central India, northeastern hills and Brahmaputra flood plains and Sundarbans.
- The report identified Himachal, Suhelwa in Uttar Pradesh and Valmiki in Bihar as new potential tiger areas.
- The **fifth cycle revealed** that **tiger numbers** have once again increased in the country and now stands at **3,167 in the wild as of 2022**.
- **75 per cent of the world's tiger population can now be found in India** and tiger reserves in the country span 75,000 square kilometres.
- **India has only 2.4 percent of the world's land area but it contributes toward 8 percent to known global biodiversity**.
- The Prime Minister emphasized that India has not only saved the tiger population from declining but also provided an ecosystem where tigers can flourish.
- According to the data, the tiger population was 1,411 in 2006, 1,706 in 2010, 2,226 in 2014, 2,967 in 2018 and 3,167 in 2022.
- The number of tigers has almost doubled in the last two decades in the country.



- The **Western Ghats**, which are home to the largest tiger population in the world, have **shown a significant fall in the occupancy of tigers.**
- **Tiger occupancy has also declined in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana.**
- The **north-western states such as Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh now have more tigers outside reserves,** requiring officials to step up habitat conservation.
- Recalling the importance of tigers in the history of India, the Prime Minister mentioned that the **Bharia community from Central India and Worli community from Maharashtra among others worship the tiger.**
- The Prime Minister reiterated that the **success of Project Tiger has many dimensions** and it has led to an **increase in tourist activity, awareness programs** and a **reduction in Man-Animal conflicts in Tiger Reserves.**
- The **presence of big cats has made a positive impact on the lives and ecology of the local people everywhere.**

NATO

Why in News?

Recently **Finland joined NATO.**

Finland has officially joined NATO after its application was ratified in record time. This move was supported by the majority of NATO members, who believed that Finland's membership would enhance the alliance's strength in the Baltic area.

However, Sweden's path to NATO membership remains blocked by Turkey and Hungary.

About NATO:

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also called the North Atlantic Alliance, is **an intergovernmental military alliance between 31 member states.**
- **Also called the Washington Treaty.**
- **Established in the aftermath of World War II**, the organization implemented the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington, D.C., on 4 April 1949.



- NATO is a collective security system: its independent member states agree to defend each other against attacks by third parties.
- During the Cold War, NATO operated as a check on the threat posed by the Soviet Union.
- The alliance remained in place after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and **has been involved in military operations in the Balkans, the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.**
- **NATO's main headquarters** are located in **Brussels, Belgium**, while **NATO's military headquarters are near Mons, Belgium.**
- **Article 5:** Article 5 of the NATO treaty is a key provision that **states that an attack on one member is an attack on all members.**
- This provision has **only been invoked once, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks** in the United States.
- However, **NATO's protection does not extend to members' civil wars or internal coups.**
- The alliance has targeted its NATO Response Force deployments in Eastern Europe, and the combined militaries of all NATO members include around 3.5 million soldiers and personnel.

BIOTECH KISAN SCHEME

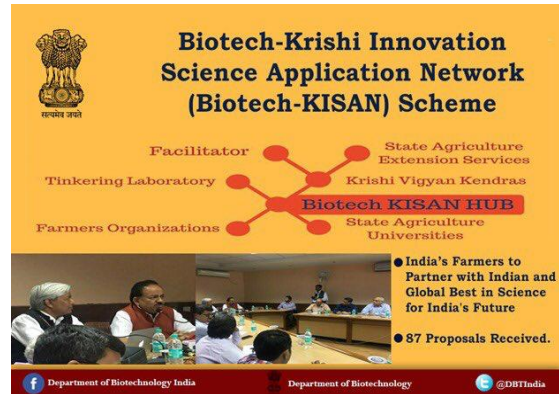
Why in News?

Biotech-KISAN was recently launched by the government. It is a Farmer centric scheme launched **by of the Department of Biotechnology.**

About Biotech-KISAN:

- **Biotech-Krishi Innovation Science Application Network (Biotech-KISAN)** is a Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology initiative that empowers farmers, especially women farmers.

- It aims to understand the problems of water, soil, seed and market faced by the farmers and provide simple solutions to them.
- The Scheme is for farmers, developed by and with farmers, it empowers women, impacts locally, connects globally.



- It is a **Pan-India program**, following a hub-and-spoke model and stimulates entrepreneurship and innovation in farmers and empowers women farmers.
- Biotech-Krishi Innovation Science Application Network (**Biotech-KISAN**) is being **implemented in 15 agro-climatic zones of India** in phased manner with the following objectives:
 - Linking available science and technology to the farm by first understanding the problem of the local farmer and provide solutions to those problems.
 - The **working together, in close conjunction, of scientists and farmers** is the only way to improve the working conditions of small and marginal farmers.
 - This **programme aims to work with small and marginal farmers especially the woman farmer for better agriculture productivity through scientific intervention and evolving best farming practices in the Indian context.**

INDIA ELECTED TO UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION

Why in News?

India has been elected to the highest statistical body of the United Nations for a four-year term beginning January 1, 2024.

About UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION:



- The **United Nations Statistical Commission (StatCom)** is a **Functional Commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, established in 1947.**
- It is the **highest decision-making body for international statistical activities, responsible for setting statistical standards and the development of concepts and methods,** including their implementation at the national and international levels.
- The Statistical Commission oversees the work of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).
- Its **24 member states** are **elected by the Economic and Social Council** on the basis of the following geographical distribution:
 - **African states (5 members),**
 - **Asian States (4 members)**
 - **Eastern European States (4 members),**
 - **Latin American and Caribbean States (4 members),**
 - **Western European and other States (7 members).**
- Since July 1999 the **Commission meets every year.**
- As set forth by the Economic and Social Council, in the terms of reference, the Commission shall assist the Council:
 - "In promoting the development of national statistics and the improvement of their comparability;"
 - "In the coordination of the statistical work of specialized agencies;"
 - "In the development of the central statistical services of the Secretariat;"
 - "In advising the organs of the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical information;"
 - "In promoting the improvement of statistics and statistical methods generally."
- The **term of office of members** is **four years.**
- **India was a member of the Statistical Commission last in 2004** and the country is returning to the UN agency after a gap of two decades.

FIRST EVER ANTI-SPYWARE DECLARATION

Why in News?

The US and 10 other nations issued the first-ever significant anti-spyware declaration.

About Anti-Spyware Declaration:

- The declaration outlined their commitment to taking specific measures to counter the marketability of spyware.
- **Nations involved:** The declaration involved a group of countries including **Australia, Denmark, France, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.**
- As part of the declaration, the nations committed to adhering to their own legal, regulatory, and policy measures, as well as current export control systems, to obstruct the dissemination of software, technology, and equipment to individuals who could exploit them for malicious cyber operations such as unauthorized penetration of information systems.
- The declaration seeks to realize the importance of stringent domestic and international controls on the proliferation and use of this technology.
- A recent US think tank report claimed that Israeli spyware (including multiple groups) has conquered a significant majority of the global spyware market.
- **Need for this declaration:** Threat posed by the misuse of commercial spyware e.g., Israeli software Pegasus, Hermit spyware.
- **Spyware is software with malicious behaviour that aims to gather information about a person or organization and send it to another entity in a way that harms the user.**
- India is not a part of this declaration.



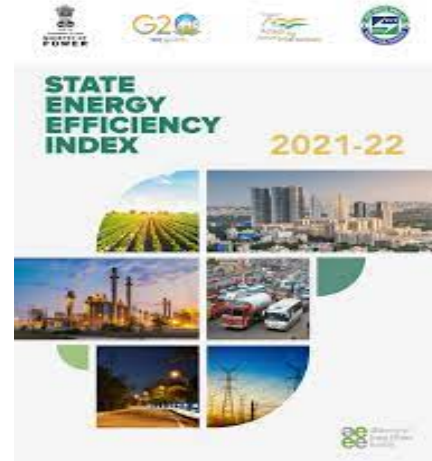
STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INDEX (SEEI) (2021-2022)

Why in News?

Recently, the State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI) 2021-22 has been released by the Union Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy.

About State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI) (2021-2022)

- The index is **developed by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, a statutory body **under the Ministry of Power**, in association with Alliance for an Energy-Efficient Economy (AEEE).
- **It assesses the annual progress of states and UTs in energy efficiency** (energy savings and reduction in emission intensity).
- **SEEI 2021-22 has an updated framework of 50 indicators aligned with national priorities.** Programme-specific indicators have been included this year to track outcomes and impacts of state-level energy efficiency initiatives.
- Based on the progress and accomplishments of states in energy efficiency implementation, they have been **classified into four categories: Front Runner, Achiever, Contender, and Aspirant.**
- **5 states – Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan and Telangana** – are in the **Front Runner category** (>60 points)
- **4 states – Assam, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Punjab** – are in the **Achiever category** (50-60 points).
- Further, **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Chandigarh** are the top-performing states in their respective state groups.
- Telangana and Andhra Pradesh showed the most improvement since the last index.



About BEE: BUREAU OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY:

- The Bureau of Energy Efficiency is an agency of the Government of India, **under the Ministry of Power** created in March 2002 under the provisions of the Energy Conservation Act 2001.

- The mission of Bureau of Energy Efficiency is to "institutionalise" energy efficiency services, enable delivery mechanisms in the country and provide leadership to energy efficiency in all sectors of the country.
- Its objective is to assist in developing policies and strategies for energy efficiency with the primary objective of reducing the energy intensity of the Indian economy.
- The agency's function is to develop programs which will increase the conservation and efficient use of energy in India.
- The government has proposed to make it mandatory for certain appliances in India to have ratings by the BEE starting in January 2010.



UN DEMOCRACY FUND

Why in News?

India, a founding member of UNDEF, has no objections to the Fund giving grants to NGOs funded by George Soros, while he is put on the watchlist in India underlines a contradiction that's not new.

India has put George Soros's NGO on watchlist in 2016.

About UNDEF : UN DEMOCRACY FUND

- The **United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)** was created by **UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan in 2005** as a United Nations General Trust Fund to support democratization efforts around the world.
- UNDEF supports projects that strengthen the



voice of civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes.

- The large majority of UNDEF funds go to local civil society organizations—both in the transition and consolidation phases of democratization.
- Grants ranging from US\$100,000 to US\$300,000 support initiatives in the areas of:
 - Support for Electoral Processes
 - Women's Empowerment
 - Media and Freedom of Information
 - Rule of Law and Human Rights
 - Strengthening Civil Society Interaction with Government
 - Youth Engagement
- In this way, UNDEF plays a novel and unique role in complementing the UN's other, more traditional work—the work with Governments—to strengthen democratic governance around the world.
- **UNDEF subsists entirely on voluntary contributions from Governments.**
- **India and the US were instrumental in the establishment of the UN Democracy Fund in 2005**, with India contributing \$5 million to the fund in its early years.
- India has contributed over USD 32 million since its inception (2005).
- Top three donors are US, Sweden, and Germany.
- In 2022, when India contributed USD 150,000 to the fund, it was the fourth highest among 45 donors
- **India has consistently supported UNDEF's mission** of promoting democratic governance worldwide through funding of projects carried out by local and international CSOs and NGOs

BHUAADHAR

Why in News?

By March 2024, India aims to digitise 100 per cent of its land records and the land registration process and give a unique 14-digit alpha-numeric identity, also called Bhuaadhaar.

About ULPIN : Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (Bhu- Aadhar)

- Being described as the Aadhaar for land, Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) is a **14-digits alphanumeric unique ID** for each and every land parcel in India.
- Ultimately ULPIN will be used as **single source of truth for land records in near future as it is designed to uniquely identify every surveyed land parcel in india** based on the Textual records of rights (RoR) along with its corresponding geo coordinates.
- It will cover **all land parcels rural as well as urban.**
- This **ULPIN project concept was taken from Bhudhaar project in Andhra Pradesh and announced in October 2020 with a plan to assign ULPIN to all land parcels in India by March 2022.**
- **Department of Land Resources (DoLR)** along with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the Department of Science and Technology and the National Remote Sensing Centre** came up with the **Unique Land Parcel Identification Number system.**
- Currently, the Records of Rights in each state and Union territory are maintained in local languages.



- The Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme will also process transliterating the Records of Rights to any of the 22 languages recognised by the Constitution.
- **For any given Property, the Bhudhaar Number will be assigned in Two Stages i.e Temporary and Permanent.** Firstly Temporary Bhudhaar number will be assigned Based on Textual data in records of rights (RoR) and then it will be converted into permanent bhudhaar number only by adding the Geo Coordinates of the corresponding land boundaries.
- Except Meghalaya, which has a tradition of community ownership of land parcels, it is currently under implementation in the remaining states and Union territories.
- This project, **being implemented by Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**, will be the world's largest database on land ownership.
- According to Access to Justice Survey by Daksh, the GDP loss to the country's economy is about 1.3% due to projects being stalled over litigation involving land disputes.
- **66% of all civil suits in India are related to land or property disputes**, and the average pendency of a land acquisition dispute is 20 years.
- Tenancy disputes are the most common type of litigation, closely followed by land acquisition related matters.
- **Disputes related to property records are 13.6% of immovable property litigation.**

EUROPE'S JUICE MISSION

Why in News?

Recently, the European Space Agency is set to launch the Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer (Juice) mission to explore Jupiter and its icy moons, namely Ganymede, Callisto, and Europa.

About Europe's JUICE (Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer)

- The **Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer (Juice, or formerly JUICE)** is an **interplanetary spacecraft that was launched on 14 April 2023** from Guiana Space Centre in the French Guiana **by the European Space Agency (ESA)** with Airbus Defence and Space as the main contractor.
- The **mission is planned to study Ganymede, Callisto, and Europa, three of Jupiter's Galilean moons.**
- They are thought to have significant bodies of liquid water beneath their icy surfaces which would make them potentially habitable environments.
- Scientists know that these three moons of Jupiter possess icy crusts, which they believe contain oceans of liquid water underneath, making them potentially habitable.
- **Juice mission will help probe these water bodies by creating detailed maps of the moons' surfaces and enable the scientists, for the first time, to look beneath them.**
- Another primary goal of the mission is to create a comprehensive picture of Jupiter by trying to understand its origin, history and evolution.
- Juice will also analyse the chemistry, structure, dynamics, weather, and climate of Jupiter and its ever-changing atmosphere.



KUTTAMPEROOR RIVER

Why in News?

The 7.2 Km Kuttamperoor River in Alappuzha, Kerala has been rejuvenated after over a 6-year effort through public participation and government intervention.

About:

- The **7.2 Km Kuttamperoor River in Alappuzha, Kerala** has **been rejuvenated after over a 6-year effort** through public participation and government intervention.
- Previously, the River died a slow death around 2005 due to years of waste dumping and encroachments.
- The Major Irrigation department removed encroachments, deepened the channel, and constructed bunds on both sides to revive the river.
- **Its revival is expected to boost tourism in the region and help control floods.**
- River rejuvenation is the process of reviving or restoring the natural flow and health of a river that has been damaged due to human activities such as waste dumping, encroachment, and pollution. The process involves removing pollutants, cleaning up riverbeds, and restoring the natural environment around the river.
- It can help to restore the natural habitats of plants and animals, promote biodiversity, and provide cleaner water for drinking and irrigation.
- Reviving rivers can also boost tourism in the region and improve the livelihoods of people who depend on the river for their livelihoods.
- **In 2022, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change released Rs. 19,000–crore Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) on rejuvenation of 13 major rivers through forestry interventions.**
- These **13 rivers** are **Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, Narmada, Godavari, Mahanadi, Krishna, Cauvery, and Luni.**

About Kuttamperoor River

- **Kuttamperoor River is a 12 km long revived river which acts as a tributary of both the Pamba and the Achankovil rivers in the Indian state of Kerala.**
- It forms a link between the two rivers. The river has its northern end in the Pamba and the southern end in the Achenkovil river.



- It flows through the towns of Parumala, Budhanoor and Ennakkad.
- When the water level at the Pamba is higher it flows from Pamba to Achankovil and when the Achenkovil river has a higher water level it flows from Achankovil to Pamba.

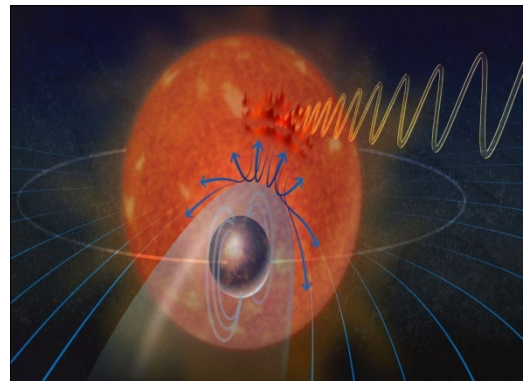
YZ CETI-B

Why in News?

Astronomers have discovered a repeating radio signal from YZ Ceti b, a rocky, Earth-sized exoplanet rotating around a small red dwarf star only 12 light-years away from Earth.

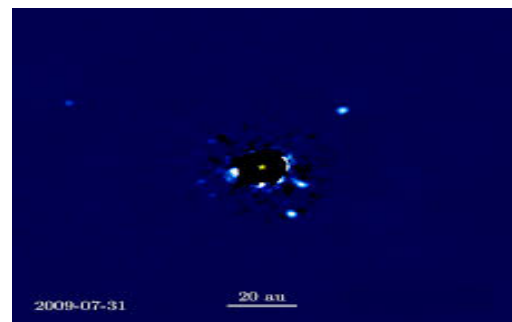
About YZ CETI B :

- YZ Ceti b is an **earth-sized exoplanet** (a planet that orbits a star other than our sun).
- It is **located barely 12 light-years from Earth**, and it **rotates around a small red dwarf star called YZ Ceti**.
- The astronomers determined that the planet takes just a couple of Earth days to circle its star.



About Exoplanets:

- An exoplanet or extrasolar planet is a **planet outside the Solar System**.
- The first possible evidence of an exoplanet was noted in 1917 but was not recognized as such.
- These are a **planetary body which is outside the solar system and that usually**



orbit a star other than the Sun.

- Exoplanets come in a wide variety of sizes, from gas giants larger than Jupiter to small, rocky planets about as big around as Earth or Mars.
- These are made up of elements similar to those of the planets in our solar system, but their mixes of those elements may differ.
- **Most exoplanets are found through indirect methods:** measuring the dimming of a star that happens to have a planet pass in front of it, called the transit method.

MIRCHA RICE

Why in News?

Mircha' rice of **Bihar's West Champaran** has been **awarded the GI tag recently.**

About MIRCHA RICE:

- The size and shape of the grain appear like that of black pepper, hence it is known as **Mircha or Marcha Rice.**
- It is also known as **Marchaiya, Maricha** etc locally.
- The grains and flakes of this rice **have a unique aroma** that makes it different.
- This rice is famous for its aroma, palatability and its aromatic chura (rice flakes) making qualities.
- **The cooked rice is fluffy, non sticky, sweet and easily digestible with a popcorn-like aroma.**
- **The major growing areas of Marcha rice include Mainatand, Gaunaha, Narkatiyaganj, Ramnagar and Chanpatiya blocks of West Champaran district.**
- An application for GI tag was submitted on behalf of Marcha Dhan Utpadak Pragatisheel Samuh, a registered organization of paddy cultivators.



CUMBUM GRAPES

Why in News?

Tamil Nadu's famous **Cumbum Panneer Thratchai**, also known as **Cumbum grapes**, has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

About Cumbum Grapes:

- The **Cumbum Valley** located at the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu is known as the '**Grapes City of South India**' and cultivates the **Panneer Thratchai**. This variety, also known as **Muscat Hamburg**, is popular for its quick growth and early maturity, ensuring that the crop is available in the market almost throughout the year.
- The Panneer grapes were first introduced in Tamil Nadu by a French priest in 1832.
- They are rich in vitamins, tartaric acid and antioxidants and reduce the risk of some chronic diseases.
- The grapes are medium to large in size, compact, and suitable for making wine, spirits, jams, canned grape juice, and raisins.
- They are also known for a superior taste apart from the purplish brown-colour.



DABBA TRADING

Why in News?

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) issued a string of notices naming entities involved in 'dabba trading'.

About Dabba Trading:

- Dabba (box) trading refers to informal trading that takes place outside the purview of the stock exchanges.
- Traders bet on stock price movements without incurring a real transaction to take physical ownership of a particular stock as is done in an exchange.
- In simple words, it is gambling centred around stock price movements.
- The **primary purpose of such trades is to stay outside the purview of the regulatory mechanism**, and thus, transactions are facilitated using cash and the mechanism is operated using unrecognised software terminals.
- Other than this, it could also be facilitated using informal or kaccha(rough) records, sauda (transaction) books, challans, DD receipts, cash receipts alongside bills/contract notes as proof of trading.
- Example : If an investor places a bet on a particular stock at a price point of Rs. 1000, and the stock price later rises to Rs. 1500, the investor would make a profit of Rs. 500. However, if the stock price falls to Rs. 900, the investor would have to pay the difference to the dabba broker.
- **'Dabba trading' is recognised as an offence under Section 23(1) of the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act (SCRA), 1956** and upon conviction, can invite imprisonment for a term extending up to 10 years or a fine up to 25 crore, or both.



Key pointers of Dabba Trading:

- It is an **unauthorized pseudo-stock market with its own set of rules.** It is illegal and not regulated by the market regulator.
- It is **carried out by persons not registered with SEBI** and **transactions are in cash.**
- It is active in the equity markets with shares linked to listed equity shares and commodity markets.

- The operator acts as the stockbroker and puts the order of the trade in his book as the stock exchange and collects money. The counterparty is liable to pay for profits.
- There is **no guarantee of settlement of transactions** and these carry a significant risk of losing money.

About NSE: National Stock Exchange

- National Stock Exchange of India Limited (NSE) is **one of the leading stock exchanges in India, based in Mumbai.**
- NSE is **under the ownership of various financial institutions such as banks and insurance companies.**
- It is the **world's largest derivatives exchange by number of contracts traded and the third largest in cash equities by number of trades**[b] for the calendar year **2022.**
- It is **one of the largest stock exchanges in the world** by market capitalization.
- **NSE's flagship index, the NIFTY 50, a 50 stock index is used extensively by investors in India and around the world as a barometer of the Indian capital market.**
- The **NIFTY 50 index was launched in 1996 by NSE.**



GOND PAINTING

Why in News?

The famed **Gond painting of Madhya Pradesh** has **received the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag.**

About Gond Painting:

- Gond painting is a **famous folk art of the Gond tribal community of Central India.**
- Gond painting is a **traditional art of Madhya Pradesh** and is **mainly done in Patangarh Village in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh.**
- It is done to preserve and communicate the culture of the Gond tribal community.
- **Gond tribal art includes folk dances, folk songs, and Gond paintings.**
- Gond art **has been passed down through generations, traditionally adorning the walls of each artist's home in Patangarh.**
- Gond paintings **showcase the beauty of nature, including trees, plants, animals, the moon, sun, river, drains, God, and Goddesses.**
- Gond Painting is **often described as an "On Line Work"** as **it is created out of meticulously drawn lines which convey a sense of movement to the still images.**
- Their work is **famous in the state and abroad for its unique style, theme, and motifs.**
- Another interesting feature of this art form is the **use of bright colours, such as yellow, red, white and blue.**
- The paintings **also portray daily life activities such as food, plough making, and even how the king used to fight.**
- The **Gond tribe is one of the largest tribal communities in India.**
- The **name Gond comes from "Kond" meaning green mountains.** Their main occupation is Agriculture or daily wages.



BIHU DANCE

Why in News?

- Assam's traditional dance, the Bihu, has entered the Guinness Book Of World Records. The largest Bihu performance at a single venue was staged at Sarusajai stadium on April 13.
- The performers attempted to create world records in two categories - the largest Bihu dance performance and the largest performance by folk musicians.



About Bihu Dance:

- The **Bihu dance is an indigenous folk dance from the Indian state of Assam related to the Bihu festival and an important part of Assamese culture.**
- **Performed in a group, the Bihu dancers are usually young men and women, and the dancing style is characterized by brisk steps, and rapid hand movements.**
- The **traditional costume of dancers is colorful and centered round the red color theme, signifying joy and vigour.**
- The origins of the dance form is unknown, however the folk dance tradition has always been very significant in the culture of Assam's diverse ethnic groups, such as Kaivarttas, Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Chutias, Boros, Misings, Rabhas, Moran and Borahis, among others.
- This marks a **significant moment for the traditional folk dance of Bihu**, which is popular across Assam and especially performed during Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu, the spring festival that heralds the Assamese New Year in mid-April.

GLOBAL BUDDHIST SUMMIT

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Culture** in partnership with **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)** has organized the **1st Global Buddhist Summit 2023**, which aims to enhance cultural and diplomatic relations with other countries.

About Global Buddhist Summit 2023:

- This global Summit will mark the significance and importance of India in Buddhism, as Buddhism was born in India.
- Buddhist monks from various countries will visit India and take part in the Summit.
- **Theme : “Responses to Contemporary Challenges : Philosophy to Praxis”**.
- **Aim: To set up a forum for the lay Buddhist scholars and Dharma Masters.**
- The prime vision of the Summit is to look into the teachings of the Shakyamuni Buddha that have been continuously enriched over the centuries with the practice of Buddha Dhamma.
- **Eminent scholars, Sangha leaders and Dharma practitioners** from all over the world are attending the conference.
- There are **173 international participants** comprising 84 Sangha member and 151 Indian delegates comprising 46 Sangha members, 40 nuns and 65 laity from outside Delhi.
- The delegates will discuss today’s pressing global issues and look for answers in the Buddha Dhamma that is based on universal values.
- The discussions will fall under the following four themes:
 - 1) **Buddha Dhamma and Peace**
 - 2) **Buddha Dhamma: Environmental Crisis, Health and Sustainability**
 - 3) **Preservation of Nalanda Buddhist Tradition**
 - 4) **Buddha Dhamma Pilgrimage, Living heritage and Buddha Relics: a resilient foundation to India’s centuries-old cultural links to countries in South, Southeast and East Asia.**



- It will **also delve into Buddha's message for Peace, Compassion and Harmony** with the objective of working towards Universal Peace and Harmony, in accordance with the core values of Dharma and produce a document for further academic research, to study its viability for use as a tool for the conduct of international relations on the global stage.
- PM also offered monk robes (Chivar Dana) to nineteen eminent monks.
- The Prime Minister gave **the example of Mission LiFE**, an initiative by India which he said was influenced by the inspirations of Buddha.
- On the occasion, an exhibition, the **Panch Pradarshanwas was organised depicting the rich cultural legacy of Buddha** manifesting in the heritage of **Vadnagar city, Gujarat**, travel accounts of Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, work of Buddhist religious leader and master Atisa Dipankara Srijana, and Digital Restoration of Ajanta Paintings.
- The Gopal Buddhist Summit-2023 is a similar effort towards engaging the global Buddhist dhamma leadership and scholars on matters of Buddhist and universal concerns, and to come up with policy inputs to address them collectively.
- This summit will also be a medium to enhance the cultural and diplomatic relationships with other countries, especially with the countries which embrace the Buddhist Ethos.

TOQUE MACAQUES

Why in News?

Sri Lanka is planning to export 1,00,000 toque macaques to China.

About Toque Macaques:

- The toque macaque is a **reddish-brown-coloured Old World monkey** endemic to Sri Lanka.
- It is **locally known as the rilewa or rilawa.**
- **Scientific Name: Macaca sinica**



- **Distribution:** They are **native and endemic exclusively to Sri Lanka.**
- **Habitat:** They **generally occupy three types of habitat**; hence can be divided into three subspecies. These are
 1. **The Common toque macaque** (*Macaca sinica sinica*), occurring in dry habitat;
 2. **The Pale-fronted toque macaque** (*Macaca sinica aurifrons*), inhabiting wet areas;
 3. **The Hill-zone toque macaque** (*Macaca sinica opisthomelas*), found at high elevations;
- The **most characteristic feature of this primate is the toque-like swirl of hair on its head top.**
- **Males are physically larger than females.**
- They are fitted with exceptionally long, thin tails. They have the distinction of being the smallest species belonging to the genus *Macaca* with the longest tails relative to their body size.
- **Social status is highly structured in toque macaque troops** and dominance hierarchies occur among both males and females.
- **A troop may consist of eight to forty individuals.** When the troop becomes too large, social tension and aggression towards each other rises, causing some individuals to leave.
- The toque macaque is listed as **Endangered** by the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** due to habitat destruction and hunting, and also for the pet trade.

UTTARAMERUR INSCRIPTION

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India referred to the Uttaramerur inscription in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, while discussing India's democratic history.

About Uttaramerur Inscription:

- **Uthiramerur is a panchayat town in Kancheepuram district in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.**
- **It is noted for its temple inscriptions that describe a self-governance system existing around 7th to 9th century CE.**
- **It is known for its historic temples built during Pallava and Chola rule.**
- **The famous inscription from Parantaka I's reign is found on the walls of the Vaikunda Perumal Temple.**
- **They indicate that Uthiramerur had two village assemblies: Sabha and Ur.**
- **The Sabha an exclusively Brahmin (priestly class) assembly, while the Ur was made up of people belonging to all the classes.**
- **A Sabha was an assembly exclusively of Brahmans and had specialised committees tasked with different things.**
- **This gave details about how members were selected, the required qualifications, their roles and responsibilities, and even the circumstances in which they could be removed (disqualified).**



REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

- **It includes ownership of a certain amount of land, having a house, being between the age of 35 and 70 and “knowing mantras and Brahmanas” (from the Vedic corpus).**
- **An exception can be made on land ownership if the person has learnt at least “one Veda and four Bhashyas”. One must also be “well-versed in business” and “virtuous”.**
- **While Uttaramerur has multiple inscriptions spanning centuries, the most famous one – being referred to by Modi – is from the reign of Parantaka I (907-953 AD). These provide a detailed description about the village’s self-governance and have been cited by historians and political leaders alike as evidence of India’s history of democratic functioning.**

SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR THE SABHA:

- It says **there were 30 wards**. Everyone living in these 30 wards would assemble and select one representative for the village assembly.
- All those eligible and willing would write their names on palm leaf tickets following which, the representative would be chosen based on an elaborate draw of lots, conducted by priests in the inner hall of the building where the assembly meets.

DISQUALIFICATION:

The inscription lists several factors which disqualify someone and their family like:

- Not having submitted accounts while previously serving on a committee.
- Committing any of the first four of the five 'great sins' (killing a Brahman, drinking alcohol, theft and adultery).
- Being associated with outcastes, and eating 'forbidden' dishes.
- Being associated with outcasts, and
- Consuming 'forbidden' dishes.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The inscription outlines various important committees in the sabha, each with its specific duties. These include
- garden committee
- tank committee
- annual committee (which required prior experience and knowledge)
- the committee for the supervision of justice
- the gold committee (in charge of the village temple's gold)
- the five-fold committee (with an unclear role)
- Committee members served for 360 days before retiring.
- Any member implicated in wrongdoing or discrepancies in accounts would be immediately removed from the committee, including those who committed crimes such as forgery, or rode a donkey as punishment.

BARNAWAPARA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Why in News?

The Chhattisgarh forest department has carried out a successful translocation of four sub-adult wild buffaloes from Assam to Barnawapara wildlife sanctuary.

About Barnawapara Sanctuary:

- The **Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary** is located in **Mahasamund district of Chattisgarh**.
- The reserve is about 100 km from Raipur and about 45 km from Mahasamund city.
- It was **established in 1976 under the Wildlife Protection Act**.
- The **Jonk River flows through the sanctuary**, which is a tributary of the Mahanadi river.
- The Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary is **named after the twin forest villages of Bar and Nawapara located in the sanctuary**.
- The sanctuary is **full with Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests and Bamboo is amongst the most commonly spotted tree here**.
- Sal, Mahua, Semal, Tendu Ber, Teak and other tropical dry deciduous trees like Tendu, Terminalia, Mahua, Ber and Semal trees are also commonly found in the reserve.
- There are a number of scenic waterfalls in the sanctuary, like **Dhaskund waterfall, Siddhakhoh Waterfall, Nakuti Darha waterfall**, etc.
- **Fauna:** Cheetal, Sambhar, Nilgai and Wild Boar, Sloth Bear, Wild Dog, are commonly seen.



About Indian Wild Buffalo:

- The **Indian Wild Buffalo** is the state animal of Chhattisgarh and is a large species of bovine native to the Indian Sub-continent and South East Asia.
- This **magnificent animal is an ancestor of domestic Buffalo** and is genetically invaluable.
- The total population of this animal all over the world is only about 4,000 of which half of the population lives in India itself.
- In India also, **majority of the population lives in North – East India**.
- Habitat: is mainly found in the alluvial grasslands, marshes, swamps and river valleys.
- **This animal is also important to the ecosystem** because it helps in the rejuvenation of grasslands.
- In India, they are generally concentrated in North East India in Kaziranga National Park, Manas and Dibru-Saikhowa National Parks, Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary and Bura Chapori Wildlife Sanctuary, D’Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN: Endangered**
 - **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule 1**

SANGATHAN SE SAMRIDDHI

Why in News?

Ministry of Rural Development’s Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) launched **“Sangathan Se Samridhhi– Leaving no Rural Woman Behind”**.

About SANGATHAN SE SAMRIDDHI SCHEME:

- Ministry of Rural Development’s Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) launched **“Sangathan Se Samridhhi– Leaving no Rural Woman Behind”**.

- It is a **national campaign** under **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Samaveshi Vikaas**.
- Aim: **To mobilize 10 crore women from vulnerable and marginalized rural households under the Self-Help Group (SHG) fold.**
- It aims to mobilize disadvantaged rural communities who are unaware of the benefits of the DAY-NRLM program.
- It will empower marginalized rural households by bringing all eligible rural women into the fold of Self Help Groups (SHGs).
- **Currently, 9 crore women already part of the SHG movement.**
- Benefits: sharing by SHG champions, mobilizing eligible women, training new SHG members, reviving defunct SHGs, and opening SHG bank accounts.
- The **campaign will be organized in all states and form more than 1.1 lakh SHGs through interventions like:**
 - Organising general Body Meetings of Village Organizations
 - Experience sharing by SHG champions to motivate left-out households to join SHGs
 - Conducting Community Resource Person drives
 - Opening SHG bank accounts, and creation of a common database of SHGs promoted by other stakeholders.
- **SHGs are small informal groups of 10-20 individuals, mostly women from similar social and economic backgrounds, who come together to form a group for mutual support and help.**
- **SHGs encourage members to save regularly, and these savings are then pooled to provide loans to members for various purposes such as starting a small business, paying for their children’s education or medical expenses, etc.**



NEED FOR THIS CAMPAIGN:

- **India’s rural population accounts for 65% of its total population**, and it is crucial to accord women from these areas all possible opportunities to enable them to contribute significantly to making India a 5 trillion dollar economy.
- When women in such a big number become part of SHGs, it will automatically have a considerable effect on the country’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

- The ‘Sangathan Se Samridhi’ campaign is an **important step towards empowering more rural women in India and promoting their financial independence.**
- It will provide women with the tools and resources they need to succeed in their businesses and improve their livelihoods.

MANGROVE PITTAS

Why in News?

A census of mangrove pitta birds was conducted in two coastal districts of Odisha, India, where the nearly threatened species is found.

About Mangrove Pittas:

- The mangrove pitta is a species of passerine bird in the family Pittidae native to the eastern Indian Subcontinent and western Southeast Asia.
- **Scientific Name: Pitta megarhyncha**
- A **colourful bird**, it has a black head with brown crown, white throat, greenish upper parts, buff underparts and reddish vent area.
- **Its call, sometimes rendered as wiew-wiew,** is sung from a high perch on a mangrove tree.
- **It is found in mangrove and nipa palm forests where it feeds on crustaceans, mollusks and insects.**
- Its **natural habitat** is specialised and restriction to **subtropical or tropical mangrove forests and Nipa palm stands.**
- While all pittas are noted for being difficult to study and spot in the wild, **the mangrove pitta is one of the easier ones to spot as it sits high up in mangrove trees and calls.**
- In this census, a **total of 179 individual mangrove pitta birds were counted.**
- The census was carried out by point count method, either by walking in the forest or using country boats in the creeks.



- It is **threatened by habitat loss**. Its diet consists of crustaceans, mollusks and terrestrial insects.
- This **species is important** because it **is a bio-indicator of the health of mangrove forests**, which are crucial to maintaining ecological balance in coastal areas.
- **Distribution: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Thailand** (primarily the west coast of the southern Thai peninsula).
- **IUCN: Near Threatened**

MAA KAMAKHYA CORRIDOR

Why in News?

The Prime Minister expressed hope that **Maa Kamakhya corridor will also be a landmark initiative.**

About:

- The project has been **initiated by the state government drawing inspiration from the Kashi-Vishwanath Corridor.**
- Once completed, **Maa Kamakhya corridor will provide ease of access to our divyang and elderly pilgrims.**
- Under the initiative, the temple's surrounding area will expand from 3,000 sq ft to about 100,000 sq ft across three levels.
- The access corridor will widen from about 8-10 ft to about 27-30 ft.
- It will have a **Pravesh Prangan, Maa Chinnamasta Prangan, and Maa Kamakhya Prangan.** Prangan is 'corridor' in English.



About Kamakhya Temple:

- The **Kamakhya temple is located at the top of the Nilachal hills in Guwahati, adjoining the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River.**

- The temple is dedicated to Kamakhya Devi or Maa Kamakhya, the goddess of desire.
- The Kamakhya temple is one of the oldest and most revered centres of Tantric practices.
- It is also one of the oldest of the 51 pithas in the Shakti tradition.
- It is believed that the temple is where parts of Devi Sati's corpse fell while her husband Lord Shiva performed taandav.
- There is no idol of a goddess or a god here in this temple. Instead, in the inner sanctum sanctorum of the temple, there is a yoni or the female genitalia, which is worshipped.
- It is believed that the ancient demon king, Narakasura had the temple built in honour of Goddess Kamakhya.
- The temple is the center of the Kulachara Tantra Marga and the site of the Ambubachi Mela, an annual festival that celebrates the menstruation of the goddess.
- The temple was rebuilt under the patronage of Naranarayan, the last ruler of the undivided Kamata kingdom that straddled present-day Assam, Bangladesh, and West Bengal.



CIVIL SERVICES DAY

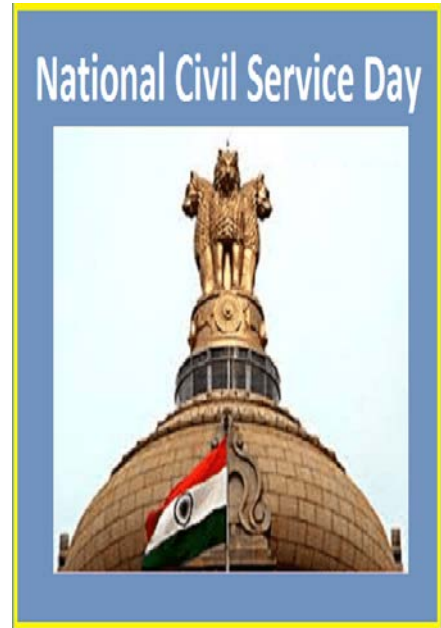
Why in News?

The Government of India commemorates 'Civil Services Day' every year on **April 21**.

About Civil Service Day:

- On this day in 1947, India's first Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel had addressed the probationers of Administrative Services Officers at the Metcalf House in New Delhi.

- Sardar Patel also **laid out the rules and principles of good governance for the civil servants in his address.**
- Civil servants **constitute the backbone of the administration.**
- He **referred to administrative officers as the "Steel Frame of India".**
- The day is solely dedicated to India's civil servants in various departments.
- It acknowledges the contribution of these officials in public administration.
- First such function was held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi in 2006.
- They **ensure the implementation of government policies, ensuring the passage of benefits to the people.**
- The civil services in India consist of the
 - Indian Administrative Service (IAS)
 - Indian Police Service (IPS)
 - Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and
 - A comprehensive list of other Central Services (Group A, B)



WORLD BANK LOGISTIC PERFORMANCE INDEX 2023

Why in News?

India has climbed six places on the World Bank's Logistic Performance Index (LPI) 2023, now ranking 38th in the 139 countries index, as a result of significant investments in both soft and hard infrastructure as well as technology.

About Logistics Performance Index:

- The Logistics Performance Index (LPI) is an interactive benchmarking tool **created by the World Bank.**
- The **LPI was reported by the World Bank every two years** from 2010 to 2018 with a break in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a restructuring of the index methodology, eventually came out in 2023.

- It is to help countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their performance on trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.
- This measure indicates the relative ease and efficiency with which products can be moved into and inside a country.
- The LPI is based on a worldwide survey of stakeholders on the ground providing feedback on the logistics "friendliness" of the countries in which they operate and those with which they trade.
- Since 2023 the LPI incorporates certain KPI and Big Data to complement the results of the survey.
- The logistics performance (LPI) is the weighted average of the country scores on six key dimensions:
 1. The efficiency of the clearance process (i.e; speed, simplicity and predictability of formalities) by border control agencies, including customs.
 2. Quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure (e.g., ports, railroads, roads, information technology);
 3. Ease of arranging competitively priced shipments;
 4. Competence and quality of logistics services (e.g., transport operators, customs brokers);
 5. Ability to track and trace consignments;
 6. Timeliness of shipments in reaching the destination within the scheduled or expected delivery time.
- LPI 2023 allows for comparison across 139 countries and for the first time, LPI 2023 measures the speed of trade with indicators derived from big datasets tracking shipments.
- Singapore and Finland are the most efficient and highest ranked LPI countries as per the 2023 LP.



Highlights of LPI 2023:

- India's ranking: According to the report, India's rank in the index of 139 countries has risen to 38 from 44 in 2018.

- International shipments: In 2023, **India's ranking for international shipments improved significantly**, moving up from 44 in 2018 to 22 in 2023.
- Logistics competence and equality: The country also climbed four places to rank 48 in logistics competence and equality.
- Timeline: **In terms of timelines, India saw a significant improvement**, moving up 17 places in the rankings.
- Tracking and tracing: Additionally, **India improved three places in tracking and tracing**, now ranking at 38.

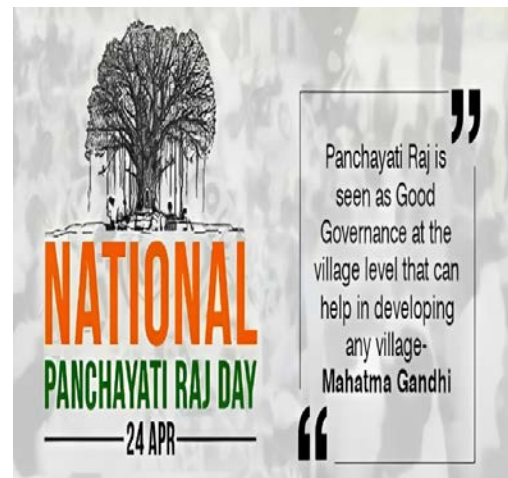
NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY

Why in News?

Marking a landmark law that came into effect on April 24, 1993, the National Panchayati Raj Day was the day when the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, vested constitutional status on Panchayati Raj institutions.

About National Pachayati Raj Day:

- **National Panchayati Raj Day (National Local Self-Government day) is the national day of Panchayati Raj System in India celebrated by Ministry of Panchayati Raj on 24 April annually.**
- The **first National Panchayati Raj Day was celebrated in 2010**. Since then, the National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated on 24th April every year in India.
- The **day marks the enactment of the 73rd amendment of the constitution in 1992.**
- **Panchayati Raj was constitutionalised through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993.**
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been **awarding the best performing Panchayats/States/UTs across the country in recognition of their good work.**
- Awards are given under various categories namely:
 - Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar,
 - Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar,



- Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award,
- Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award and
- e-Panchayat Puraskar (given to States/UTs only).

About PRI:

- Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) was constitutionalized through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 **to build democracy at the grass roots level and was entrusted with the task of rural development in the country.**
- **PRI is a system of rural local self-government in India.**
- Local Self Government is the management of local affairs by such local bodies who have been elected by the local people
- To strengthen e-Governance in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across the country, the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has launched eGramSwaraj, a user-friendly web-based portal.**

INDIA'S 1ST DIGITAL SCIENCE PARK

Why in News?

India's first Digital Science Park will come up at Technocity campus in **Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala.**

It is located adjacent to the Kerala University of Digital Sciences Innovation and Technology in around 14 acres of land.

About Digital Science Park:

- The **Digital Science Park at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala** being constructed **will be first digital science park in India.**
- The **foundation stone of the park was laid on 25 April 2023 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.**
- The Digital Science Park project **had been conceived as a multidisciplinary**



cluster-based interactive-innovation zone focused on digital technologies and is expected to be completed in two years.

- The park will initially have two buildings with a total area of 2,00,000 square feet.
- The first one in 1,50,000 square feet will have five floors, housing the Centre of Excellence (CoE) including research labs and digital incubator, while the second building will house the administrative as well as Digital Experience centre.
- Initially, Digital Science Park will **facilitate industry and business units as well as technology startups** from the domains of Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, electronics, smart hardware, sustainable and smart materials.
- This is so that knowledge can be shared, innovation promoted, technology transferred, and research outcomes progressed to viable commercial products.
- Science parks are also often perceived as contributing to national economic development, stimulating the formation of new high-technology firms, attracting foreign investment and promoting exports
- The park is being constructed on a 13.93 acre land near the Kerala University of Digital Sciences Innovation and Technology as part of the Technopark Phase IV- Technocity.
- It is **India's first third-generation digital science park.**
- **The construction of the park is expected to be completed in 2026.** It will create and use a communications network overlay built on a triple helix integrating universities, industry, and government.
- The park will initially support commercial and industry units as well as technological startups in the fields of robotics, artificial intelligence, smart hardware, electronics, sustainable materials etc.
- **The AI center at the park will focus on responsible AI hardware and software issues.** Multinational American technology company NVIDIA will join as a partner of the project. The Universities of Manchester, Oxford and Edinburgh have signed MoUs with the Digital University to participate in the development of the park.

HAKKI PIKKI TRIBE

Why in News?

More than 181 members of the Hakki Pikki tribal community from Karnataka are stuck in violence-hit Sudan, even as the government is making efforts to bring them back.

About Hakki Pikki Tribe:

- The Hakki Pikki is a tribe that lives in several states in west and south India, especially near forest areas.
- Hakki Pikkis (**Hakki in Kannada means 'bird'** and **Pikki means 'catchers'**) are a semi-nomadic tribe, traditionally of bird catchers and hunters.
- **According to the 2011 census, the Hakki Pikki population in Karnataka is 11,892, and they live majorly in Davangere, Mysuru, Kolar, Hassan and Shivmogga districts.**
- In different regions, they are known by different names, such as Mel-Shikari in northern Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- The Hakki Pikki **move in groups from place to place in search of livelihood.**
- They are **divided into four clans, called Gujaratia, Panwar, Kaliwala and Mewaras.** These clans can be equated with castes in the traditional Hindu society.
- In the olden days, there was a hierarchy among the clans, with the Gujaratia at the top and the Mewaras at the bottom.
- **The forest is the main natural resource of the "Hakki Pikki."**
- Hakki Pikki people are **believed to hail originally from the bordering districts of Gujarat and Rajasthan.**
- Traditionally, **Hakki Pikkis lived in forest areas,** leading a nomadic life for nine months a year and coming back to their permanent camps for three.
- **The Hakki Pikki are a semi-nomadic tribe who have travelled and lived in various parts of the country over the past few decades.**
- Hakki Pikkis in Tamil Nadu travelled to Singapore, Thailand and other places about 20-25 years ago to sell some marbles, in the process discovering there was a huge demand for Ayurvedic products in the African continent.
- **Education levels among the Hakki Pikkis are still low.**
- Hakki Pikkis in Karnataka **follow Hindu traditions and celebrate all Hindu festivals.** They are non-vegetarians. The eldest son in a family is not supposed to cut his hair so that he can be identified easily.
- **The society is matriarchal,** where the groom gives dowry to the bride's family.
- It is a **Scheduled Tribe in Karnataka.**



- They speak many south Indian languages such as Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam along with Vagribooli which is similar to Gujarati.
- The Hakkipikki tribal community are a Kshatriya or warrior tribal community who had to migrate to southern India after their defeat with Mughal kings.

2nd NORTH SEA SUMMIT

Why in News?

Nine European countries have signed a declaration aimed at transforming the North Sea into a green power plant.

About 2nd NORTH SEA SUMMIT

- **Nine European countries have convened for a summit** aimed at boosting the deployment of offshore wind turbines in the North Sea to make it the largest green energy centre in Europe.
- **It is the second summit** which was held in the city of Ostend in Belgium.
- **Participant countries:** Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands Norway, and the United Kingdom.
- **Objective :** To accelerate deployment of offshore wind turbines to make the North Sea the “largest green energy centre in Europe”.
- **Targets :** **120 GW offshore wind energy capacity by 2030, and 300 GW by 2050.**
- **The first summit in 2022 had Esbjerg Declaration** (signed by Belgium, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands in 2022).
- The Netherlands and the United Kingdom announced a new interconnection to link a Dutch offshore wind farm to the UK.
- **The signatory countries also aim to double their total offshore wind capacity to at least 300 GW by 2050.**
- **It focuses on the mass production of offshore wind and renewable hydrogen, as well as on electricity and hydrogen interconnections and national projects.** The



declaration also indicates the possibility of co-financing by countries that do not have direct access to the sea.

- The nine signatory countries have committed to take measures to promote the balanced coexistence of renewable energy deployment, biodiversity and environmental protection, as well as to contribute to the health and robustness of marine ecosystems.

About North sea:

- The North Sea lies between Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France.
- An epeiric sea on the European continental shelf, it connects to the Atlantic Ocean through the English Channel in the south and the Norwegian Sea in the north.
- It is more than 970 kilometres (600 mi) long and 580 kilometres (360 mi) wide, covering 570,000 square kilometers.
- It hosts key north European shipping lanes and is a major fishery.
- The coast is a popular destination for recreation and tourism in bordering countries, and a rich source of energy resources, including wind and wave power.
- The North Sea is bounded by the Orkney Islands and east coast of Great Britain to the west and the northern and central European mainland to the east and south, including Norway, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France.
- In the southwest, beyond the Straits of Dover, the North Sea becomes the English Channel connecting to the Atlantic Ocean.
- In the east, it connects to the Baltic Sea via the Skagerrak and Kattegat, narrow straits that separate Denmark from Norway and Sweden respectively.
- In the north it is bordered by the Shetland Islands, and connects with the Norwegian Sea, which is a marginal sea in the Arctic Ocean.
- The North Sea receives freshwater from a number of European continental watersheds, as well as the British Isles.



- The largest and most important rivers **flowing into the North Sea are the Elbe and the Rhine – Meuse.**

ZERO SHADOW DAY

Why in News?

On **April 25**, Bengaluru and at all places along the **130 north Latitude** experienced a '**Zero Shadow Day**', when vertical objects appear to cast no shadow.

Odisha, Bhubaneswar witnessed Zero Shadow Day on May 21st 2021 for about 3 minutes.

About Zero Shadow Day:

- A zero shadow day is a day on which **the Sun does not cast a shadow of an object at solar noon**, when the sun will be exactly at the zenith position.
- During this time, no shadows appear of any object or living being when the sun is at its highest point in the sky.
- Zero shadow day **happens twice a year for locations in the tropics (between the Tropic of Cancer at latitude 23.4° N and the Tropic of Capricorn at 23.4° S).**
- So, places north of Ranchi in India does not have Zero shadow day.
- **One ZSD falls during Uttarayan (movement of the Sun from south to north from winter solstice to summer solstice) and one other during Dakshinayan (back from north to south).**
- The **dates will vary for different locations on Earth.**
- This phenomenon occurs when the Sun's declination becomes equal to the latitude of the location.
- On a zero shadow day, when the sun crosses the local meridian, the sun's rays will fall exactly vertical relative to an object on the ground and one cannot observe any shadow of that object.



INDIA'S 1ST WATER METRO

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday (April 25) inaugurated the first phase of the **Kochi Water Metro** — a first of its kind public boat service in India integrated with a metro rail network.

About Kochi Water Metro Project:

- The Kochi Water Metro is a **project being implemented by Kochi Metro Rail Corporation Limited (KMRL) with the assistance of a German funding agency, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau.**
- It includes **boats that are hybrid, battery-powered, air-conditioned and disabled-friendly among other features.**
- The **water metro will operate on water bodies like any other ferry or traditional boat service, but with modern facilities,** enhanced safety and security measures.
- **Kochi, often referred as the commercial capital of Kerala, is one of the most densely populated districts in the state.**
- Kochi Water metro has been envisaged as a feeder service of the Kochi metro rail, which has been operational since 2017.
- While boats have been designed as coaches of Kochi Metro, boat terminals, passenger entry and exit gates, ticket counters and safety measures mirror the features of the metro rail service.
- All jetties feature electronic display boards about boat service.
- **Announcements will be made in English, Hindi and Malayalam** when the services are operating in full swing.
- Passenger entry and exit to boats, with air-conditioned cabins, are similar to the system in Kochi metros.
- The **water metro system will include 38 terminals and 78 electric boats.**
- The first phase of the KWM service will launch from High Court-Vypin and Vyttila-Kakkanad terminals.



- The tickets for the boat trip will start at Rs 20 and weekly and monthly passes will be available for frequent travelers.
- The **Kochi One Card** can be used for both **Kochi Metro Rail** and **Kochi Water Metro**.
- The **Kochi One App** allows users to **digitally purchase tickets**.
- **Kochi is abundantly blessed with waterways** with over 1,100 kms of waterways available.
- The **Kochi Water Metro project envisages the development of 15 identified routes**, connecting 10 islands along a network of routes that span 78 km.
- The **modern boats constructed by Cochin Shipyard Limited** will replace the ferry services operated by Kerala Water Transport Department.
- The Kochi Water Metro project is **expected to reduce pollution and traffic congestions in the city** and **also ease access to business areas on the mainland for urban household situated along the Kochi lakeshore.**
- It is also **expected to give a big boost to the tourism sector in the Kochi backwaters**, apart from giving a modern transport facility for people living on islands on the outskirts of Kochi.

PUSHKARALU FESTIVAL

Why in News?

The 12-day Pushkaralu festival of Telugu-speaking people began on April 22 in Varanasi.

About Pushkaralu Festival:

- **Pushkaram is an Indian festival dedicated to worshiping of rivers.** It is also known as **Pushkaralu (in Telugu), Pushkara (in Kannada) or Pushkar.**
- It is celebrated at shrines along the banks of 12 major sacred rivers in India, in the form of ancestor worship, spiritual discourses, devotional music and cultural programmes.
- The celebration happens annually, once in 12 years along each river.



- **Each river is associated with a zodiac sign, and the river for each year's festival is based on which sign Jupiter is in at the time.**
- Due to regional variations, some of the zodiac signs are associated with multiple rivers.
- **Associated Rivers are Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Bhima, Tapti, Narmada, Saraswati, Tungabhadra, Sindhu, Pranhita.**
- **Purpose: Ancestor worship;** Bathing in the sacred river during Pushkaram is believed to cleanse the devotees of their sins.
- The devotee Pushkara was blessed by Lord Shiva with the ability to live in water and purify holy rivers. On a request from Bruhaspati (Jupiter), Pushkara decided to enter one of the 12 sacred rivers.
- **It is believed that bathing in the sacred river during Pushkaram cleanses the devotees of their sins.**
- This year festival involves worshipping ancestors and the river Ganga and is being organised in Kashi after a gap of 12 years.

BLUEWASHING

Why in News?

Recently, a report has been released by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES) titled “Who’s tipping the scales”, highlights how corporate capture of global Food Governance is increasingly taking place in more visible ways and raising concerns over Bluewashing.

About Bluewashing:

- **Bluewashing refers to a deceptive form of marketing** in which an enterprise uses deceptive marketing techniques to overstate its commitment to responsible social practices.
- It is **using misinformation to deceive consumers into thinking that a company is more digitally ethical and secure than it really is.**
- Alternatively, **it could be phrased as a way that companies hide the social damage that their policies have caused.**
- Active disinformation is a tool that companies use to make their goods or services more attractive to their consumers and shareholders.

- It can be used interchangeably with the term greenwashing **but has a greater focus on economic and community factors.**
- **Greenwashing** is a form of deceptive marketing in which a company falsely claims that its products, policies, or programs are environmentally friendly or beneficial, while doing little or nothing to actually assist the environment in practice.

State of Global Climate Report, 2022

Why in News?

Recently, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has released the State of the Global Climate Report 2022.

About WMO State of Global Climate Report:

- The State of the Global Climate report is an **annual publication from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** that presents the latest findings on the state of climate change worldwide.
- The **report combines observations from global networks of weather and climate stations, ocean buoys, and satellites, as well as modeling studies, to provide a comprehensive assessment of the Earth's climate system.**
- The **most recent report**, released ahead of Earth Day 2023, **reveals several alarming trends that highlight the urgent need for climate action.**
- The **report focuses on key climate indicators – Greenhouse Gases, Temperatures, Sea level rise, Ocean Heat and Acidification, Sea ice and Glaciers.** It also highlights the impacts of climate change and extreme weather.
- The temperature figures used in the provisional 2022 report are until the end of September. The final version will be issued next April.



Findings of the Report:

- The State of the Global Climate 2022 shows the planetary scale changes on land, in the ocean and in the atmosphere caused by record levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases.
- For global temperature, 2015-2022 were the eight warmest on record despite the cooling impact of a La Niña event for the past three years. Melting of glaciers and sea level rise - which again reached record levels in 2022 - will continue for up to thousands of years.
- From mountain peaks to ocean depths, climate change continued its advance in 2022. Droughts, floods and heat waves affected communities on every continent and cost many billions of dollars.
- Global mean temperatures for the past 8 years have been the highest on record.
- Sea level and ocean heat are at record levels – and this trend will continue for many centuries.
- Antarctic sea ice falls to lowest extent on record.
- Europe shatters records for glacier melt.
- Glaciers are losing a lot of ice, with a thickness change of over (-) 1.3 meters on average between October 2021 and October 2022, which is much larger than the average of the past decade.
- Concentrations of the main greenhouse gases - carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide – once again reached record levels in 2021. The annual increase in methane concentration was the highest on record.
- Around 90% of the energy trapped in the climate system by greenhouse gases goes into the ocean, somewhat ameliorating even higher temperature increases but posing risks to marine ecosystems.
- India also reported significant flooding at various stages during the monsoon season, particularly in the northeast in June.

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