JULY CURRENT AFFAIRS

SHAKAMBARI FESTIVAL

Why in News?

Kanaka Durga temple in Vijayawada will be decorated with vegetables and fruits ahead of the **three-day Shakambari festival** that is celebrated every year.

About Shakambari Festival:

- The **annual Shakambari Festival held at the world famous Vijayawada Kanaka Durga Temple** in Ashada month
- During the three-day annual festival, **Goddess Durga takes the form of Mother Shakambari** - she is adorned with green leaves and vegetables.
- It is observed from Ashada Shukla Paksha Trayodashi to Purnima.
- **Goddess Shakambari Devi is an incarnation of Goddess Shakti and is worshipped in many parts of India.**
- She is **adorned with green leaves and vegetables.**
- It is believed that **she feeds those who are hungry with vegetarian food.**
- **She is Mother Earth who suffices hunger.**
- *Shakambari Ma is known as 'the bearer of the greens'* – Shaka means vegetables and Ambari means who bears.
- **Goddess Shakambari is mentioned in the Devi Mahatmya.**
- The annual festival in Ashada month is celebrated to propitiate the Goddess for abundant rains, good harvest and for the plentiful yield of vegetables.
- **Rituals like 'Chandi Homam' and 'Veda Pathanam' (Recitation of vedas) are observed during the three-day festival.**

- It is **estimated that more than nearly 200,000 people will visit the Vijayawada Kanaka Durga Temple** during the Shakambari festival.

LANSDOWNE IN UTTARAKHAND TO BE RENAMED AS JASWANTGARH

Why in News?

The **Lansdowne Cantonment Board has decided to rename the hill station of Lansdowne in Uttarakhand, India, as Jaswantgarh** in honour of Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat, Maha Vir Chakra recipient and hero of the 1962 war with China.
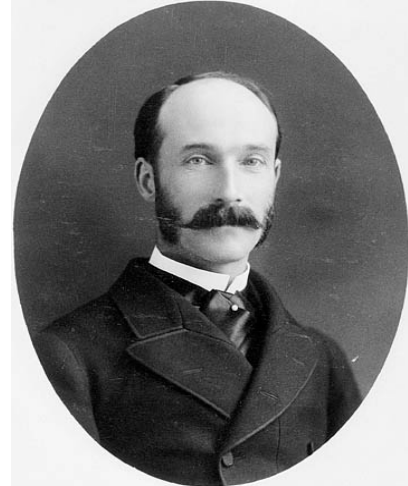
About Jaswant Singh:

- Rifleman Jaswant Singh, a **member of 4th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles,** is a war hero of 1962 war and a recipient of Maha Vir Chakra.
- He **was awarded the second highest gallantry award due to his role against the People's Liberation Army of China in Battle of Nuranang during 1962 war**
- The battle was fought in the North-East Frontier Agency, current Arunachal Pradesh.
- During an attack involving Chinese medium machine gun, he volunteered to fight and seized this medium machine gun.
- In the process he neutralised the Chinese detachment of five sentries but injured seriously.
- He finally succumbed to his injuries and **posthumously awarded Maha Vir Chakra.**

About Lord Lansdowne:

- Lord Lansdowne **was a British politician also known as Henry Charles Keith Petty-Firzmaurice.**
- He **also served as the Governor General of Canada.**
- **Lord Lansdowne was appointed Viceroy of India from 1888 to 1894.**
- He arrived on the subcontinent when *revenue was dwindling for the British, a constrained scheme for political reform, and unsettled relations with the amir of Afghanistan and the peoples of the northwestern frontier.*
- He **soon encountered several new problems,** including a bloody revolt in Manipur (1890–1891), an attempt by Parliament to slow the growth of indigenous Indian industry (1891), and a series of political blunders he largely attributed to the Indian Civil Service's "lack of sympathy for those they ruled."
- **Lord Lansdowne legitimized the work of the Indian National Congress,** recognizing the rise of Indian nationalism as an inevitable byproduct of the British administration. Lansdowne's relationships with Congress leaders were not always smooth, but he never wavered in his belief in India's political advancement.
- **The Indian Factory Act, 1891** was passed when Lord Lansdowne was the Viceroy of India.
- **On Aitchison Commission recommendations (1889), Statutory Civil Service was abolished.** The government's civilian officers were divided into three classes: Imperial Indian Civil Service, Provincial Civil Service, and Subordinate Civil Service.
- **The Age of Consent Act, 1891,** was enacted in British India in 1891, raising the age of consent for sexual intercourse for all girls, married or unmarried, from ten to twelve years in all jurisdictions, with violations punishable as rape.
- **Lord Lansdowne introduced the Indian Councils Act of 1892,** which *established additional members in the central and provincial legislative councils* and *introduced an indirect election system for council members.* It was a step toward a representative government in India.
- **Durand Line agreement** was signed to secure the **north-west and Afghanistan.**
- In 1893, a royal commission was issued to inquire into the results of using opium in India, and the possibility of prohibiting it. The commission's findings favoured the continued use of opium and led to the shelving of the idea of imposing a ban.

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for the enactment of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), pointing out the anomaly of having varying laws for different categories of citizens.

About UCC: Uniform Civil Code:-

- The Uniform Civil Code **is a proposal in India to formulate and implement personal laws of citizens which apply on all citizens equally regardless of their religion, gender and sexual orientation.**
- Currently, **personal laws of various communities are governed by their religious scriptures.**
- Personal laws are distinguished from public law and **cover marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and maintenance.**
- While article 25-28 of the Indian constitution guarantees religious freedom to Indian citizens and allows religious groups to maintain their own affairs, article 44 of the constitution expects the Indian state to apply directive principles and common law for all Indian citizens while formulating national policies.
- **UCC is defined in Article 44 as part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP),** in part of Part IV of the Constitution.
- Article 44 - It states that '**The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India'.**
- UCC aims to enforce a uniform legal framework to all citizens, irrespective of their religion.
- UCC **aims to safeguard the fundamental rights of all citizens and reduce social inequalities and gender discrimination.**
- The legality of UCC is rooted in the Constitution of India, Constituent Assembly debates and also Supreme Court of India judgments.

- Though <u>DPSP is fundamental to the country's governance,</u> **it is not enforceable or justiciable in a court of law.**
- **B.R. Ambedkar**, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, **stressed the importance of a UCC in ensuring gender equality and eradicating prevailing social evils.**
- None of the states have adopted UCC, except Goa, <u>**a version of the UCC is in place in Goa.**</u>
- It follows the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867, under which people of all religions in Goa are subject to the same laws on marriage, divorce, and succession.

Arguments in favour of the UCC:-

- A common civil code **would reinforce the principles of secularism in India.**
- UCC is **important for national integrity and equality of genders and religions.**
- UCC would **eliminate discriminatory practices** that deprive women of their rights and provide them with equal opportunities and protections.
- Uniformity in personal laws will **empower women and ensure gender equality** <u>in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance.</u>
- UCC **will make legislation in terms of succession and divorce easier** and reduces complexities, contradictions and legal ambiguities.
- A unified legal framework is required to foster **social cohesion and national integration in a diverse society like India.**
- **Ensures equality before the law** for all Indians under Article 14 of the Constitution.

Arguments against UCC :-

- UCC **could infringe upon religious freedom** and might clash with religious practices.
- **Implementing UCC would destroy the essential fabric of India, diversity,** which is a mosaic of 22 official languages, 398 dialects, and 645 tribes.
- India is a diverse nation and **different communities should have the right to maintain their distinct customs and practices.**
- A **law should not be implemented on minority communities without their consent.**

- The "ambit and scope" of religious freedom itself is not yet decided.
- The minority bodies think that a **common civil code is not in tune with Article 25,** which provides protection and freedom for all to practice their religion and customary laws.

Landmark Cases & Ruling and Implications

1) Shah Bano Case (1985): The Supreme Court upheld the right of a Muslim woman to claim maintenance from her husband even after the Iddat period.

It highlighted the need for a UCC to remove contradictions based on ideologies.

2) Sarla Mudgal (1995): The Supreme Court stated that a Hindu husband cannot convert to Islam and marry without dissolving his first marriage.

It emphasized that a UCC would prevent fraudulent conversions and bigamous marriages.

3) Shayara Bano case (2017): The Supreme Court declared triple talaq as unconstitutional and in violation of Muslim women's dignity and equality.

It recommended that Parliament enact a law to regulate Muslim marriages and divorces.

WAY FORWARD:

- The implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India requires a balanced approach that respects multiculturalism and diversity.
- Inclusive discussions with stakeholders, including religious leaders and legal experts, are essential to ensure diverse perspectives are considered.
- The focus should be on eliminating practices that hinder equality and gender justice while avoiding reactive culturalism.
- The reform process of Muslim Personal Law should be led by the Muslim clergy, and Muslims should critically examine practices to promote equality and justice.
- The aim is to develop a just and inclusive UCC that upholds constitutional values.

PANCHAYAT DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Why in News?

The Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj released the Report on Panchayat Development Index (PDI) recently.

About Panchayat Development Index (PDI):

- The PDI is a composite **index that measures the performance of panchayats in achieving the Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**
- It **provides a holistic and evidence-based assessment of the development status of panchayats,** highlighting their strengths and weaknesses.
- The PDI aims to promote the Localization of SDGs by creating awareness among panchayats and stakeholders about their importance.
- **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** is the nodal agency for implementation of LSDGs in PRIs.
- The scheme is implemented through thematic approach by **aggregating 17 SDG goals into 9 broad themes.**
- *Each of these themes covers several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*
- The goals empower Panchayats and other relevant stakeholders in Rural Areas.
- **Themes**: **Poverty-free, Healthy, Child-friendly, Water-sufficient, Clean and green, Self-sufficient, Socially just and secure, Well-governed, and Women-friendly.**
- **Ranking** is done on the basis of **scores ranging from 0 to 100.**
- Ranking is categorized into **A (75-90%), B (60-75%), C (40-60%)**, and **D (under 40%).**
- It will help in Policymaking, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Identifies strengths/weaknesses, allocates resources, promotes peer learning, and facilitates citizen engagement and social accountability.

ENERGY TRANSITION INDEX

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked India at the 67th place globally on its Energy Transition Index (ETI).**

About:

- Energy Transition index evaluates countries based on their energy system performance and readiness for a secure, sustainable, and inclusive energy transition.
- The Index **highlights India as the sole major economy with energy transition momentum accelerating across all dimensions.**
- It highlights *Singapore as the only other major economy showing "true momentum by advancing sustainability, energy security and equity in a balanced way.*
- The **top five countries** on the list are **Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Switzerland.**
- **France (7) was the only G20 Country in the top 10,** followed closely by Germany (11), the U.S. (12), and the U.K. (13).
- **Global average ETI scores increased by 10% since 2014** but showed only marginal growth in the past three years.
- Only 41 countries have made steady progress in the past decade.
- The report highlighted India's achievements in reducing energy and carbon intensity, achieving universal energy access, and managing electricity affordability.
- India also fared relatively well during the recent energy crisis due to a low share of natural gas in power generation and increased use of existing capacities.

About World Economic Forum:

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF) is an international non-governmental and lobbying organisation for multinational companies** based in Cologny, Canton of Geneva, Switzerland.
- It was **founded on 24 January 197**1 by German engineer **Klaus Schwab.**
- The *WEF is mostly known for its annual meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland.*
- **Recognized by the Swiss authorities** as the *international institution for public-private cooperation.*
- **Mission :** Committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.
- **Major Reports published by WEF** are:
  - *Global Competitiveness Report.*
  - *Global IT Report*
  - *Global Gender Gap Report.*
  - *Global Risk Report.*
  - *Global Travel and Tourism Report.*
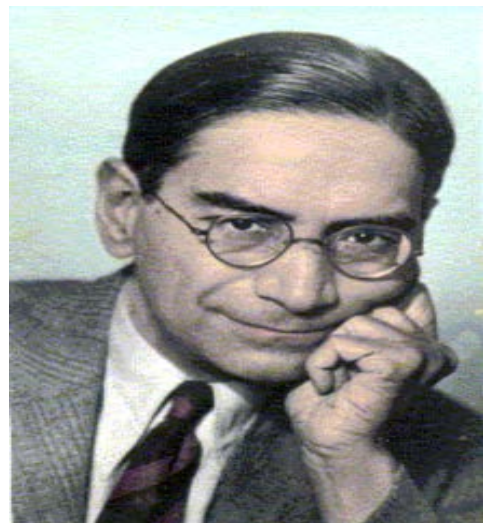
NATIONAL STATISTICS DAY

Why in News?

The Government of India celebrates Statistics Day every year on June 29th in honour of the late Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, who made significant contributions to the fields of Economics, Planning, and Statistics.

About :

- In recognition of the notable contributions made by Professor (late) Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in the fields of statistics and economic planning, **Government of India has designated 29th June every year, coinciding with his birth anniversary, as "Statistics Day"** in the category of Special Days to be celebrated at the national level.

- The objective of this Day is **to create public awareness, especially in the younger generation** for drawing inspiration from Professor (late) Mahalanobis about the role and importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formulation.

- Every year, Statistics Day is celebrated with a theme of contemporary national importance.

- The **theme of Statistics Day, 2023** is **"Alignment of State Indicator Framework with National Indicator Framework for Monitoring Sustainable Development Goals".**

- The winners of 'On the Spot Essay Writing Competition, 2023' for Post Graduate Students organized by MoSPI will also be felicitated during the event.

- On this occasion, MoSPI (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) also recognizes outstanding contributions to the official statistical system through high-quality research in the fields of applied and theoretical statistics through awards established for this purpose.

About P.C.Mahalnobis:

- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (29 June 1893– 28 June 1972) **was an Indian scientist and statistician.**

- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis was a world-renowned Indian statistician who **founded the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in 1932.**

- He **was a physicist by training** when *he became interested in statistics after reading Biometrika,* a reputable peer-reviewed statistics journal at the time. Fascinated, he purchased the entire set of volumes of the

journal.

- He soon discovered that statistics could be used in a variety of fields, including meteorology and anthropology, and this proved to be a watershed moment in his scientific career.
- **Dr. Mahalanobis made numerous contributions to statistics, including the 'Mahalanobis distance,' which is a statistical measure.** In addition, he was a pioneer in the field of anthropometry, or the study of human measurements, in India, and he assisted in the design of large-scale sample surveys and sampling methods.
- He **also created the Feldman-Mahalanobis model, a Neo-Marxian model of economic development that was used in India's Second Five Year Plan, _which promoted rapid industrialization of the country._**
- **Mahalanobis also served on India's first Planning Commission.** He also received several awards, including the Padma Vibhushan.

MONSOON SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

Why in News?

The monsoon session of Parliament started recently.

About Parliament Sessions:

- A 'session' of Parliament is the period between the first sitting of a House and its prorogation.
- There are usually three sessions in a year, viz,
  - ➢ Budget Session (February to May)
  - ➢ Monsoon Session (July to September)
  - ➢ Winter Session (November to December)
- The **President of India is empowered to summon each House of Parliament** from time to time.
- The **maximum gap between two sessions of Parliament cannot be more than six months**. That means the Parliament should meet at least twice a year.
- The **period between the prorogation of a House and its reassembly in a new session is called 'recess'.**

Meetings of Session:

A session of Parliament consists of many meetings. Each meeting of a day consists of two sittings, that is, a morning sitting from 11 am to 1 pm and post-lunch sitting from 2 pm to 6 pm.

Termination of Session: A sitting of Parliament can be terminated by adjournment or adjournment sine die or prorogation or dissolution (in the case of the Lok Sabha).

Adjournment: It suspends the work in a sitting for a specified time, which may be hours, days or weeks.

Adjournment sine die: It means terminating a sitting of Parliament for an indefinite period i.e. when the House is adjourned without naming a day for reassembly.

The **power of adjournment as well as adjournment sine die lies with the presiding officer (Speaker or Chairman) of the House.**

Prorogation: The President issues a notification for prorogation of the session after the business of a session is completed and the presiding officer declares the House adjourned sine die.

The President can also prorogue the House while in session.

Dissolution: Only the Lok Sabha is subject to dissolution. Rajya Sabha, being a permanent House, is not subject to dissolution.

A dissolution ends the life of the existing House, and a new House is constituted after general elections are held.

The President is empowered to dissolve the Lok Sabha.

MAHILA SAMMAN SAVING CERTIFICATE, 2023

Why in News?

The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, has authorized Public Sector Banks and eligible Private Sector Banks to implement the Mahila Samman Savings Certificate, 2023.

About Mahila Samman Saving Certificate :

- Mahila Samman Savings Certificate **is a one-time savings scheme for women** to commemorate celebrations of 75 years of Independence.

- The **scheme was announced in the Union Budget FY 2023-24 to provide financial security to every girl and woman in India.**

- It **will be made available for a two-year period up to March 2025.**

- It will be **under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.**

- The **small saving certificate will have a fixed interest rate of 7.5% for two years.**

- Accounts opened under this scheme **will be single-holder accounts that can be opened at the Post Office or any registered bank.**

- **Any woman can open a Mahila Samman account can be opened for herself or on behalf of a little girl.**

- Any number of MSSC accounts can be opened by a woman, or in the name of a minor girl by the guardian, subject to the maximum limit of Rs 2 lakh.

- The **minimum investment amount is Rs 1000**, and any quantity in multiples of Rs 100 can be deposited in an account with no further deposits permitted. The maximum investment authorised under the plan is Rs 2 lakh and the scheme will have a partial withdrawal facility as well.

- The interest rate on the deposits made under this scheme is 7.5% annually. The interest will be compounded quarterly and credited to the account.

- The **deposit matures two years following the deposit date,** at which point the account holder may request the remaining funds by completing a Form-2 application.

- The eligible balance may be paid to the account holder on an application in Form-2 submitted to the accounts office on maturity.

- The account holder may withdraw up to 40% of the balance by submitting a Form-3 application after the first year from the date of account opening but before the account matures.

- **Significance**: This scheme is a commendable initiative by the Government to empower women and promote their financial independence.

- As the **scheme yields high returns on investment in a short span of 2 years, it will definitely increase women investors especially in rural areas.**

SCO SUMMIT

Why in News?

India hosts 23rd SCO summit in New Delhi for the year 2023.

During this 23rd Summit, **Iran officially joined the SCO as the Ninth Member Country**.

About SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic, international security and defence organization established in 2001.**
- It is the **world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population**, covering approximately 60% of the area of Eurasia, 40% of the world population.
- The **SCO is the successor to the Shanghai Five, formed in 1996** between the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.
- **In June 2001, the leaders of these nations and Uzbekistan met in Shanghai** to announce a new organization with deeper political and economic cooperation.
- **At a historic summit in Astana, Kazakhstan (2017) India and Pakistan become full-fledged members of SCO.**
- **Iran joined the group in July 2023.**
- Several countries are engaged as observers or dialogue partners.
- It has **four observer states,** namely
    1. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,
    2. The Republic of Belarus,
    3. The Islamic Republic of Iran and
    4. Mongolia
- SCO has **six dialogue partners,** namely:
    1. The Republic of Azerbaijan,
    2. The Republic of Armenia,
    3. The Kingdom of Cambodia,

4. The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal,
5. The Republic of Turkey, and
6. The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

- **Headquarters : Beijing(China)**
- Since its inception, the **SCO has mainly focused on**
  - ➤ Regional security issues
  - ➤ Regional terrorism
  - ➤ Ethnic separatism
  - ➤ Religious extremism
  - ➤ Regional development
- The **SCO is governed by the Heads of State Council (HSC), its supreme decision-making body, which meets once a year.** *The organization also contains the so-called Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS).*
- The R**egional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) Executive Committee, headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan,** is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- **Member Countries**- 9 members- **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, and Iran (latest member)**.
- The SCO's **official languages are Russian and Chinese.**
- The SCO has been an observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005.

🔸 23ʳᵈ SCO Summit:

- The 23rd SCO meeting of the council of heads of the member states **was held virtually.**
- This is the **first time India holds the presidency of the SCO summit.**
- **Theme** : "**SECURE- Security, Economic development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Environmental protection."**
- *India has created 5 new pillars and focus areas of cooperation* in SCO –
  1. Startups and Innovation
  2. Traditional Medicine
  3. Digital Inclusion
  4. Youth Empowerment

5. Shared Buddhist Heritage

- **24th SCO chair is Kazakhstan** and the summit is to take place in Astana.

Key Highlights of the 23rd SCO Summit:

New Entrant- Iran now become the full member of SCO which would help in achieving collective security and sustainable development.

New Delhi Declaration- It deals extensively with challenge of terrorism, extremism and separatism and calls for country cooperation.

It reaffirms its commitment to disrupt the terror financing channels, to suppress recruitment activities and cross-border movement of terrorists.

India's new Initiatives- To foster the engagement with member countries India launched new initiatives like

- ➢ SCO Millet Food Festival,
- ➢ Film Festival,
- ➢ SCO Surajkund Craft Mela,
- ➢ International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage etc.,

De-Dollarization- Countries spoke about the reducing the dominance of dollar in global markets.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - India refused to accept BRI as it is essential to "respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of member countries of the SCO.

Issue of Afghanistan- India urged SCO members to come together to extend humanitarian assistance to Afghan citizens.

Inclusion of English - India wants the inclusion of English as an official language besides Russian and Chinese to help disseminate SCO's views to a wider audience.

Joint statements- Joint statements were released on

- o Cooperation in countering the radicalisation leading to separatism, extremism and terrorism
- o Cooperation in the field of digital transformation.

GUTTI KOYA TRIBE

Why in News?

Gutti Koya tribes people erect stone memorials in the event of death of their three most important service provider namely **physician, priest and village leader inside the forest .**

About Gutti Koya Tribe:

- The Koya population is **concentrated in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.**
- They **speak Koya, which is a Dravidian language.**
- Koyas are **commonly referred to as Koi, Koyalu, Koyollu, Koya Doralu, Dorala Sattam, etc.**
- Koya tribes can be **further divided** into Koya, Doli Koya, Gutta Koya or **Gotti Koya**, Kammara Koya, Musara Koya, Oddi Koya, Pattidi Koya, Rasha Koya, Lingadhari Koya (ordinary), Kottu Koya, Bhine Koya, Raja Koya, etc.
- The **most important fair celebrated by Koyas is the Sammakka Saralamma Jatra** once in two years on full moon day of the Magha Masam (January or February) at Medaram village in Mulug taluk of Warangal district.
- **They practice Podu form of shifting cultivation,** as practiced by various tribal groups in forest areas has for long been an economic survival versus environmental sustenance issue.
- The **held ST status in Chattisgarh** but they were not granted ST status in their migrated states such as Telangana.
- They e**arn a living through animal husbandry and minor forest produce.**

TELE MANAS

Why in News?

India's first Tele-MANAS chatbot, designed to engage with people in distress, has been launched in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

About:

- The **initiative aims to provide round-the-clock access to health counsellors, clinical psychologists, and consultants.**
- The *launch took place during the J&K Health Conclave on Mental Health and Non-Communicable Diseases.*
- It comes **under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.**
- Tele-MANAS is a **two-tier system.**
- **Tier 1** comprises State Tele MANAS cells, which includes trained counsellors and mental health specialists.
- **Tier 2** comprises specialists at District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)/Medical College resources for physical consultation and/or eSanjeevani for audio visual consultation.

> ➤ **Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States (Tele-MANAS)** initiative was **launched by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare during October 2022.**

> ➤ It **aims to provide free tele-mental health services all over the country round the clock, particularly catering to people in remote or under-served areas.**

> ➤ **A toll-free, 24/7 helpline number (14416)** is now available as part of the initiative.
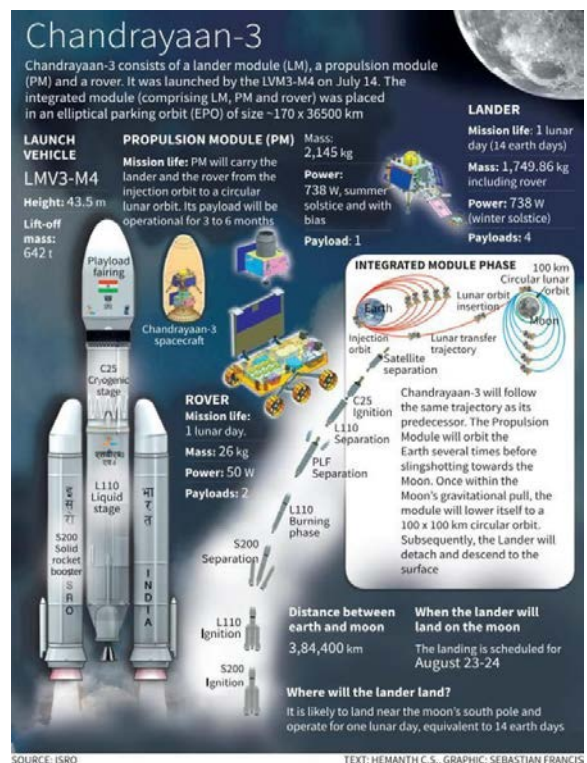
CHANDRAYAAN 3

Why in News?

With the launch of Chandrayaan-3, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is embarking to achieve a successful soft landing on the moon.

Chandrayaan-3 is India's upcoming lunar mission, which aims to be the world's first mission to soft-land near the lunar south pole.

About Chandrayaan 3:

- **Chandrayaan-3 is the third and most recent Indian lunar exploration mission under the Chandrayaan programme of ISRO.**
- It consists of a **lander named Vikram** and a **rover named Pragyan** similar to Chandrayaan-2.
- The Mission will have **three major modules-** the
  1. **Propulsion module** (*will carry the lander and rover configuration till 100 km lunar orbit)*
  2. **Lander module** (*capability to soft land and deploy Rover)*
  3. **Rover** (*will carry out in-situ chemical analysis of the lunar*

surface)

- The **launch of Chandrayaan-3 took place on 14 July 2023, at 2:35 pm IST from the Satish Dhawan Space Center (SDSC) in Sriharikota**.
- The lander and rover are expected to land near the lunar south pole region on 23 August 2023.
- Mission **Objectives of Chandrayaan-3:**
  - ➤ *To demonstrate Safe and Soft Landing on Lunar Surface*
  - ➤ *To demonstrate Rover roving on the moon and*
  - ➤ *To conduct in-situ scientific experiments.*
- Its **propulsion module would act like an orbiter.** The propulsion module carries the lander and rover configuration until the spacecraft is in a 100-kilometre (62 mi) lunar orbit.
- The propulsion module of Chandrayaan-3 features a **new experiment called Spectro-polarimetry of Habitable Planet Earth (SHAPE).**
- **SHAPE aims to search for smaller planets with potential habitability by analyzing reflected light.**
- The **lander and the rover will have a mission life of one lunar day (about 14 Earth days)** as they work on solar energy.
- The **landing site for Chandrayaan-3 is near the lunar south pole.**

SLINGSHOT MANOEUVRE - The Chandrayaan-3 will take a rather long interesting route to the Moon.

- It **will circle the Earth 5-6 times, then sling off to the Moon.**
- This **manoeuvre uses Earth's gravity to impart velocity to the spacecraft thereby reducing the fuel used.**
- This reduces the need to carry enormous amount of fuel thereby reducing the heaviness of the rocket.
- The module enters lunar orbit and the reverse will happen. **Loop-by-loop the spacecraft will get closer to the moon until it reaches a circular path 100 km**

above the moon's surface before the lander separates.

- On the Moon - The lander will soft land at a specified lunar site (lunar South Pole) and deploy the rover.
- **The rover will explore the lunar terrain for 14 Earth days (1 lunar day)** and will carry out in-situ chemical analysis of the lunar surface.
- The *success of the emission will make Chandrayaan-3, the world's first mission to soft-land near the lunar South Pole and India, fourth country to soft-land on the moon.*

WORLD INVESTMENT REPORT

Why in News?

Recently, ***UNCTAD released the World Investment Report 2023.***
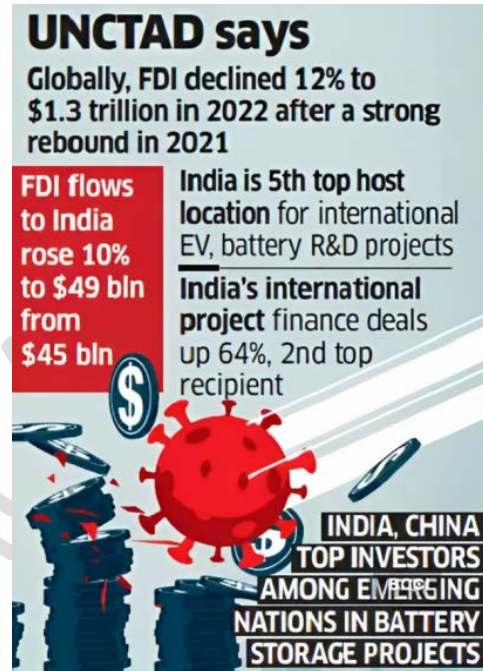
About World Investment Report:

- The **World Investment Report focuses on trends in foreign direct investment (FDI) worldwide,** at the regional and country levels **and emerging measures to improve its contribution to development.**
- It **also provides analysis on global value chains and the operations of multinational enterprises,** with special attention to their development implications.
- **Overviews of the report are available in all official UN languages.**
- Every issue of the Report has:
- ➢ Analysis of the trends in FDI during the previous year, with especial emphasis on the development implications.
- ➢ Ranking of the largest transnational corporations in the world.

- In-depth analysis of a selected topic related to FDI.
- Policy analysis and recommendations.
- Statistical annex with data on FDI flows and stocks at the country level.

Findings of the report:-

- **India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were the top recipients, with a 10% and 5% increase respectively.**
- *Asia accounted for over 50% of global FDI.*
- The **FDI growth in developing countries was concentrated in a few large emerging economies,** with India, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the United Arab Emirates accounting for nearly 80% of FDI flows to the region.
- **India saw a 10% increase in FDI,** making it the third-largest host country for greenfield project announcements and the second-largest for international project finance deals.

UNCTAD says
Globally, FDI declined 12% to $1.3 trillion in 2022 after a strong rebound in 2021

FDI flows to India rose 10% to $49 bln from $45 bln

India is 5th top host **location** for international EV, battery R&D projects

India's international **project** finance deals up 64%, 2nd top recipient

INDIA, CHINA TOP INVESTORS AMONG EMERGING NATIONS IN BATTERY STORAGE PROJECTS

- *Singapore was the largest recipient of FDI in the Southeast Asian region.*
- Developing countries received more FDI than developed economies in 2022.
- **FDI worldwide fell 12% to $1.3 trillion in 2022** after a sharp recovery in 2021 from the severe impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
- **China,** the world's second-largest FDI host country, **registered a 5% rise in FDI.**
- **FDI in the Gulf region dropped**, but the number of project announcements surged by two-thirds.
- The report also said that many smaller developing countries saw no change in FDI inflows, and **FDI to the least developed countries (LDCs) decreased.**
- The report highlights the widening investment deficit in developing countries as they strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in energy, water, and transport infrastructure.
- It also **highlights the importance of investing in sustainable energy for all,** as most of the international investment in renewable energy has been in developed countries.

- It **urges more support for developing countries to close the gap by attracting huge investments in clean energy.**

About UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade And Development:-

- The **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is a specialized agency of the United Nations** that **deals with issues related to international trade, investment, development and cooperation.**
- It was **established in 1964 by the UN General Assembly** as a permanent forum for discussing and addressing development challenges, especially those related to international trade.
- **Objective** : **To help developing countries integrate into the global economy, to assist them in diversifying their exports, to enhance their productive capacities, and to support their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.**
- It provides policy advice, technical assistance, and research on various topics such as trade, finance, technology, aid, and transport.
- It **convenes a conference every four years,** where member states adopt resolutions and set the organization's priorities.
- **UNCTAD has 195 member countries** and is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- **Reports published by the UNCTAD i**ncludes:-
o *The Trade and Development Report,*
o *World Development Report,*
o *The Least Developed Countries Report,*
o *Information and Economy Report,*
o *Commodities and Development Report,*
o *Technology and Innovation Report*
o *World Investment Report.*

DISQUALIFICATION OF MPs

Why in News?

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Monday disqualified nine MLAs including Ajit Pawar, who were sworn in as ministers in the Shinde-Fadnavis government on July 2, for indulging in anti-party activities.

The **NCP moved a disqualification petition against the nine MLAs** to Maharashtra Assembly Speaker.

About Disqualification of Members:

There are **three disqualification criteria:**

1) **Using Articles 102(1) and 191(1)** – The grounds here are holding an office of profit, being of unsound mind or insolvent or not having valid citizenship.

2) **Using the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution** – disqualification of the members on grounds of defection.

3) **The Representation of The People Act (RPA),1951** provides for disqualification for conviction in criminal cases.

 Though Article 19 of the Constitution grants freedom of speech to its citizens. However, Article 19(2) has imposed certain reasonable exemptions to this freedom such as - Contempt of Court, defamation and incitement to an offense.

What does the Representation of The People Act say?

Section 8(3) of the RPA states: "A person convicted of any offense and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years shall be disqualified from the date of such conviction and shall continue to be disqualified for a further period of six years since his release."

Section 8(4) of the RPA states that the disqualification takes effect only "after three months have elapsed" from the date of conviction

Within that period, the convicted MP can file an appeal against the sentence before the High Court.

IMPORTANT SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS:

2002– Union of India (UOI) v. Association for Democratic Reforms:

The SC held that every candidate, contesting an election to the Parliament, State Legislatures, or Municipal Corporation, has to declare their criminal records, financial records, and educational qualifications along with their nomination paper.

2005- Ramesh Dalal vs. Union of India:

The SC held that a sitting MP or MLA shall also be subject to disqualification from contesting elections if he is convicted and sentenced to not less than 2 years of imprisonment by a court of law.

2013- In Lily Thomas v. Union of India:

The SC held that Section 8(4) of The Representation of the People Act, 1951 is unconstitutional which allows MPs and MLAs who are convicted to continue in office till an appeal against such conviction is disposed of.

The court held that MP/MLA convicted for two years or above would be disqualified immediately.

2015 – Krishnamurthy v. Sivakumar &Ors:

The SC held that disclosure of criminal antecedents (especially heinous crimes) of a candidate at the time of filing of nomination paper as mandated by law was a categorically imperative.

Yes, the Supreme Court has the power to stay not only the sentence but also the conviction of a person.

GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2023

Why in News?

The **2023 Global Peace Index (GPI) recently released its annual ranking** of the most peaceful countries in the world.

About Global Peace Index (GPI):

- **Global Peace Index (GPI) is a report produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP).**
- It **measures the relative position of nations' and regions' peacefulness.**
- The **GPI ranks 163 independent states and territories** according to their levels of peacefulness.
- The **Index was first launched in May 2009,** with subsequent reports being released annually.
- The **GPI is developed in consultation with an international panel of peace experts from peace institutes and think tanks** with data collected and collated by the Economist Intelligence Unit.
- It **measures the state of peace across three domains:**
  o Societal safety and security;
  o Ongoing domestic and international conflict;
  o Militarization

Highlights of the 2023 Global Peace Index are:

- The **overall score for the 2023 GPI deteriorated this year** due to a reduction in six of the nine geographical regions represented.
- However, **more countries improved their levels of peacefulness than deteriorated:** 84 compared to 79.
- The **total number of conflict-related deaths increased by 96 per cent**.

- Last year saw a **shift in the global distribution of violence**. Major conflicts in the MENA region and South Asia declined, while conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and Asia-Pacific intensified.
- The Safety and Security and Ongoing Conflict domains b oth deteriorated, while the Militarisation domain recorded a slight improvement, continuing a long-term trend of improvement.
- The **average level of global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.42 per cent.**
- *Iceland* **is the most peaceful country in the world** – a title it has held since 2008.
- **It is accompanied at the top by _Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand, and Austria_.**
- **Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, South Sudan, and Democratic Republic of the Congo** are the **least peaceful.**
- **India has occupied the 126th spot in the rankings,** two higher than its previous position.
- **The report stated that India experienced an improvement of 3.5 per cent in overall peacefulness over the past year,** owing to improvements in violent crime, neighbouring countries' relations, and political instability.
- However, it is running far behind its neighbouring countries such as Bhutan (17), Maldives (23), Nepal (79), China (80), Bangladesh (88), Sri Lanka (107).

LAMBANI ARTS

Why in News?

PM has praised the Guinness World Record achieved for the "largest display of Lambani items," totalling 1755 items, during the **3rd G20 Culture Working Group Meeting held in Hampi, Karnataka.**

About Lambani Art:

- Lambani art is a **form of textile embellishment practised by the Lambani or Banjara community,** a nomadic group **inhabiting several states of India, especially Karnataka.**

- It is **characterised by colourful threads, mirror work, and a rich array of stitch patterns on loosely woven fabric.**

- It **involves skilfully stitching together small pieces of discarded fabric** to create a beautiful patchwork.

- It is *recognised as a sustainable practice that works on the principle of recycle and reuse.*

- Lambani art includes a wide range of products, such as clothing, textiles, accessories, home decor items, and jewellery.

- The Lambani embroidery techniques and aesthetics bear similarities with textile traditions in Eastern Europe, West Asia, and Central Asia, showcasing the interconnectedness of global textile arts

- **Sandur Lambani embroidery, a specific type of Lambani art from the Sandur region of Karnataka, received a Geographical Indication tag in 2010.**

- It is practised in several villages of Karnataka such as Sandur, Keri Tanda, Mariyammanahalli, Kadirampur, Sitaram Tanda, Bijapur, and Kamalapur.

- This rich embroidery tradition, predominantly upheld by the skilled women of the Lambani community, serves as a vital source of livelihood and sustenance, intertwining living practices with economic empowerment.

About Lambani Community:

- **Lambanis, also called Lambadis or Banjaras, were nomadic tribes who came from Afghanistan to Rajasthan** and have now spread themselves across Karnataka and other parts of India.
- In the 17th century, **they are believed to have assisted the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to carry goods to the southern part of India.**
- In the 18th century the British authorities framed the Criminal Tribe Act of 1871 and stopped their free movement.
- The **language of Banjara is known as "Gorboli" "Gor mati Boli" or "Brinjari" an independent dialect (under the category of Indo-Aryan language)**.
- They are **known by different names like:**
  - ➢ **Lambada or Lambadi, Sukali in Andhra Pradesh**
  - ➢ **Lambani in Karnataka**
  - ➢ **Gwar or Gwaraiya in Rajasthan**

About G20:

- The G20 or Group of 20 is an **intergovernmental forum** comprising **19 countries and the European Union (EU).**
- It works to address major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development.

- The G20 is composed of most of the world's largest economies, **including both industrialised and developing nations.**

- The G20 members represent around **85% of the global GDP**, over **75% of the global trade**, and about **two-thirds of the world population**.
- The **G20 was founded in 1999** in response to several world economic crises.
- The G20 is the latest in a series of post–World War II initiatives aimed at international coordination of economic policy, which include institutions such as the "Bretton Woods twins", the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and what is now the World Trade Organization.

G20 Summit:

- The G20 Summit is held **annually**, under the leadership of a **rotating Presidency**.
- The G20 Presidency steers the G20 agenda for one year and hosts the Summit.
- The G20 consists of two parallel tracks: the **Finance Track and the Sherpa Track**. Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors lead the Finance Track, while Sherpas lead the Sherpa Track.
- **India's G20 Sherpa, Amitabh Kant** is presiding over the four-day meeting.
- India holds the Presidency of the G20 **from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023.**
- The **G20 Logo** draws inspiration from the **vibrant colours of India's national flag** – saffron, white and green, and blue. It juxtaposes **planet Earth with the lotus**, India's national flower that reflects growth amid challenges.
- The Earth reflects India's pro-planet approach to life, one in perfect harmony with nature.
- **Below the G20 logo is "Bharat", written in the Devanagari script.**

GST COUNCIL TO IMPOSE 28% TAX ON ONLINE GAMING FIRMS

Why in News?

The **GST Council** has said that the **government will impose a goods and service tax of 28% on the turnover of online gaming companies, horse racing and casinos.**

About:

- Earlier, the ministerial panel had discussed the option of levying tax on gross gaming revenue or platform fee – the charge paid to avail the gaming services, but this did not find favour.
- The **uniform levy of 28% tax will be applicable on** –
  - The **face value of the chips purchased in the case of casinos,**
  - The **full value of the bets placed with the bookmaker/totalisator in the case of horse racing,** and
  - The **full value of the bets placed in the case of online gaming.**
- The government will bring in amendments to the GST-related laws to include online gaming and horse racing as taxable actionable claims – goods under the CGST Act, 2017.
- So far, **lottery, betting, and gambling were classified as actionable claims.**
- **At present, most gaming companies were paying a tax of 18% applicable on the platform fees.**

About GST: Goods & Services Tax:-

- It is **an indirect tax** (not directly paid by customers to the government), **that came into effect from 1 July 2017** through the implementation of the **101st Amendment to the Constitution of India** by the Indian government.
- It has **actually replaced various indirect taxes** such as - service taxes, VAT, excise and others in the country.
- It is **levied on the manufacturer or seller of goods and the providers of services.**

- It is **divided into five different tax slabs** for collection of tax - *0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%.*
- **Types of GST**: State Goods and Services Tax **(SGST),** Central Goods and Services Tax **(CGST)** and the Integrated Goods and Services Tax **(IGST**, on exports and imports).

About GST Council:

- **Article 279A of the Indian Constitution** gives **power to the President of India to constitute a joint forum of the Centre and States called the GST Council,** consisting of the -
    - Union Finance Minister - **Chairperson**
    - The Union Minister of State, in-charge of Revenue of finance - **Member**
    - The Minister in-charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State Government - **Members**
- The **GST Council is an apex committee to modify, reconcile or to make recommendations to the Union and the States on GST,** *like the goods and services that may be subjected or exempted from GST, model GST laws, etc.*
- **Decisions in the GST Council are taken by a majority** of **not less than three-fourth of weighted votes cast.**
- **Centre has one-third weightage of the total votes cast** and **all the states taken together have two-third of weightage of the total votes cast.**
- **All decisions** taken by the GST Council have been **arrived at through consensus.**

GREENWASHING

Why in News?

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 is currently under discussion by a Joint Committee of Parliament.

About Greenwashing:

- **Greenwashing is an act by a country or a company projecting its efforts or its products as climate-friendly without any verifiable and justifiable data to support its claim**.

- It refers to the deceptive practice of making misleading or unsubstantiated claims about the environmental benefits of a product, service, or company **in order to appear more environmentally friendly than they actually are.**

- These **efforts help the companies to boost their image in the market and thus accrue profits in the long run.** But, these efforts do not guarantee any climate benefits.

o **Delta Air Lines,** which claimed to be the world's first carbon-neutral airline, is facing a lawsuit alleging false advertising. The lawsuit accuses Delta of misleading customers with its sustainability pledges, particularly its use of carbon offsetting to balance out its carbon emissions.

o **The Volkswagen scandal**, where the German car company was found to have been cheating in the emissions testing of its supposedly green diesel vehicles, was a case of greenwashing. In other words, the green diesel did not lead to reduced emissions as was promised.

- **Greenwashing depicts a false picture of companies and rewards them for the initiative.** In reality, these efforts are pushing the countries to the brink of climate disaster.

KUI LANGUAGE

Why in News?

The state cabinet of Odisha, recently approved a proposal to recommend the **inclusion of the Kui language in the 8th schedule of the Constitution of India.**

About Kui Language:

- There are **around 46 languages are which are spoken by tribal population in Odisha.**
- **Kui language is a vernacular tribal language of Odisha.**
- Kui is **also known as Kandh, Khondi, Khond, Khondo, Kanda, Kodu, Kodulu, Kuinga, Kuy.**
- It is a **South-Eastern Dravidian language** mainly **spoken by the Kandhas or Kondhs.**
- It is **mostly spoken in the hilly and forested areas of Odisha** for instance –South and central Odisha which are Phulbani (Kondhamal), Boudh, Koraput, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Nabarangpur, Sonepur, Angul and Dhenkanal district.
- Closely related to the Gondi and Kuvi languages, **Kui language is written in the Odia script.**
- The language has approximately 1 million speakers, 9,41,488 to be precise, as per census of India.
- According to information available on UNESCO site, the **Koi language status situation is potentially vulnerable.**
- Significance - **Inclusion of Kui in the 8th schedule will help in the preservation, promotion and propagation of the language and culture.**

About 8th Schedule of Constitution of India:

- The **8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution consists of 22 languages.**
- Of these languages, **14 were initially included in the Constitution.**
- **Sindhi language was added in 1967** while **Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were included in 1992.**
- Subsequently **Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added in 2004** by the 92nd Amendment Act of 2003.
- The **22 languages now included in the eighth section of the Constitution are**- Manipuri, Maithili, Kashmiri, Hindi, Kannada, Gujarati, Konkani, Malayalam, Assamese, Marathi, Nepali, Bengali, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Telugu, Tamil, Odia, Urdu, Bodo, Dogri, and Santhali.
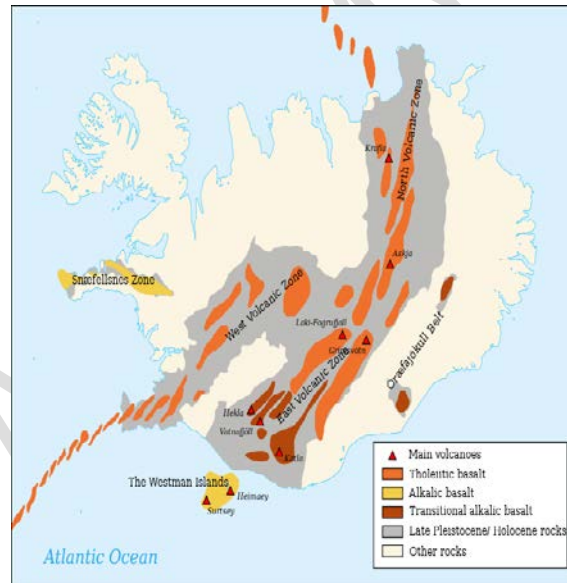- **English is not among the 22 languages in the 8th Schedule** and it is one of the 99 non-scheduled languages.

2200 EARTHQUAKES IN ICELAND IN 24 HOURS

Why in News?

Nearly **2,200 earthquakes have been recorded in the vicinity of Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland in the past 24 hours.**

About:

> The country's meteorological office has warned that this seismic activity could be a signal of an impending volcanic eruption.

> **Iceland experiences frequent volcanic activity, due to its location** both on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a divergent tectonic plate boundary, and over a hot spot.

> **Nearly thirty volcanoes are known to have erupted in the Holocene epoch**; these include Eldgjá, the source of the largest lava eruption in human history.

> The Mid-Atlantic Ridge is a mid-ocean ridge (a divergent or constructive plate boundary) located along the floor of the Atlantic Ocean and part of the longest mountain range in the world. In the North Atlantic, the ridge separates the North American from the Eurasian Plate and the African Plate, north and south of the Azores Triple Junction.

About Earthquakes:

- An **earthquake (also known as a quake, tremor or temblor) is the shaking of the surface of the Earth resulting from a sudden release of energy in the Earth's lithosphere that creates seismic waves.**
- **Earthquakes can range in intensity**, from those that are so weak that they cannot be felt, to those violent enough to propel objects and people into the air, damage critical infrastructure, and wreak destruction across entire cities.
- The seismic activity of an area is the frequency, type, and size of earthquakes experienced over a particular time.

- It is **caused due to the tectonic movements of the earth.**
- The energy release produces waves that travel in all directions.
- This causes a release of energy, and the energy waves travel in all directions.
- The **point where the energy is released is called the focus of an earthquake or hypocentre.**
- The **point on the surface of the earth which is vertically above the focus is called the epicentre.** It is the first place to experience the waves.

SHELF CLOUD

Why in News?

Recently, a **massive Shelf Cloud formation has been spotted in Haridwar, Uttarakhand.**

About Shelf Cloud:

- A shelf cloud, **also referred to as an arcus cloud,** are **wedge-shaped formations that appear on the leading edge of thunderstorms.**
- It is **a low-lying, horizontal cloud formation characterized by a distinct line of solid clouds.**
- They occur when cold and dense air is forcefully driven into a warmer air mass during the downdraft of a thunderstorm.
- In other words, a shelf cloud is a low, horizontal, wedge-shaped arcus cloud attached to the base of the parent cloud, which is usually a thunderstorm cumulonimbus, but could form on any type of convective clouds.

Formation of Shelf Cloud:

- Shelf clouds **form when warm, moist air is lifted rapidly by an advancing thunderstorm or cold front.**
- As the **warm air rises, it cools and condenses, forming a cloud.**

- The **rising air creates a boundary between the cool, downdraft air from the storm and the warm, updraft air ahead of it.**
- The shelf cloud is usually dark and ominous-looking due to the condensation and the presence of rain or hail within the storm.

GRAND CROSS OF LEGION OF HONOUR

Why in News?

Prime Minister **Shri Narendra Modi was conferred with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, <u>France's highest award</u>** today by, the President of the Republic of France.

<u>About Legion of Honour:</u>

- The National Order of the **Legion of Honour**, formerly the Royal Order of the Legion of Honour **is the highest French order of merit, both military and civil.**
- It was **established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte.**
- it has been <u>retained (with occasional slight alterations) by all later French governments and regimes.</u>
- The **order's motto** is **Honneur et Patrie** ("*Honour and Fatherland"*)
- It's seat is the Palais de la Légion d'Honneur next to the Musée d'Orsay, on the left bank of the Seine in Paris.
- The Legion of Honour is **divided into five degrees of increasing distinction** (lower to higher) : **Chevalier (Knight)**, **Officier (Officer), Commandeur (Commander), Grand officier (Grand Officer)** and **<u>Grand-croix (Grand Cross)</u>**.
- The **<u>PM Shri Narendra Modi was awarded the fifth honour.</u>**
- The <u>colour of the ribbon is red and the badge is a five-armed Maltese asterisk hung on an oak and laurel wreath</u>. On the obverse is the effigy of the Republic and on the reverse two tricolour flags surrounded by the motto 'Honor and Fatherland' written in French.

- Although the membership to Legion of Honour is restricted to French nationals, **foreign nationals who serve France or uphold its ideals may also be given a distinction of the Legion.**
- **Other personalities who received this honour** includes:-
  o Former South African President - **Nelson Mandela,**
  o The then Prince of Wales - **King Charles,**
  o Former German Chancellor - **Angela Merkel,**
  o Former United Nations Secretary - **General-Boutros Boutros-Ghali**, and
  o Russian President - **Vladimir Putin**.

SUSHRUTA JAYANTI

Why in News?

The **All-India Institute of Ayurveda organised a three-day seminar on the occasion of Sushruta Jayanti.**

Sushruta Jayanti is celebrated every year on 15th July to honour the legendary Sushruta, hailed as the father of surgery.

About Sushruta :

- Sushruta is the listed **author of the Sushruta Samhita** (Sushruta's Compendium), a treatise considered to be one of the most important surviving ancient treatises on medicine and is considered a foundational text of Ayurveda.
- He **lived in the ancient city of Kashi, now known as Varanasi** or Banaras in northern India.
- He is **regarded as the 'Father of Indian Medicine' and the 'Father of Plastic Surgery.'**
- Disease, he claimed (following the precepts

of Charaka), was caused by imbalance in the body, and it was the physician's duty to help others maintain balance or to restore it if it had been lost.

- **Sushruta's medical prowess is exhibited through his writings on rhinoplasty, involving nasal reconstructions using skin from the patient's forehead or cheek, often for criminals punished with amputations.**
- His work includes rhinoplasty, treating burns, classification of eye diseases, the introduction of wine as a surgical anaesthetic, etc.
- **Sushruta attracted a number of disciples who were known as Saushrutas** and required to study for six years before beginning hands-on surgical training.

KAAS PLATEAU

Why in News?

A recent study **conducted by the Agharkar Research Institute in Pune, Maharashtra, has revealed significant climate and environmental changes on the Kaas Plateau.**

About Kaas Plateau:

- The Kas Plateau Reserved Forest, **also known as the Kaas Pathar, is a plateau situated 25 kilometres west from Satara city in Maharashtra, India.**
- It **falls under the Sahyadri Sub Cluster of the Western Ghats,** and it **became a part of a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 2012.**
- The **plateau's name is derived from the Kaasa tree,** scientifically known as Elaeocarpus glandulosus

- It is a biodiversity hotspot known for various types of seasonal wild flowers bloom and numerous species of endemic butterflies **annually in the months of August and September.**

- The plateau is situated at an altitude of 1200 metres and is approximately 10 square kilometers in area. **Kaas has more than 850 different species of flowering plants.**
- These include **orchids, shrubs such as the Karvy, and carnivorous plants such as Drosera Indica.**
- **Kaas Pathar is a plateau made from volcanic rocks (igneous rocks) in the Satara district of Maharashtra,** and comes under the biosphere of the Western Ghats.
- The **Kaas Plateau is characterized by its lateritic crust, formed by weathering of basaltic rocks over time.**
- Shallow depressions and pediments (rock debris) contribute to the unique topography of the plateau.
- These geological features play a crucial role in the water retention and hydrological processes of the region.

CPTPP : COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE AGREEMENT FOR TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Why in News?

U.K. government signed the accession protocol for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in New Zealand.

About CPTPP : Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

- The **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), also known as TPP11 or TPP-11**, is a <u>**trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.**</u>
- It **evolved from the Trans-Pacific**

Partnership (TPP), which was never ratified due to the withdrawal of the United States.

- The **eleven members** have combined economies representing 13.4 percent of global gross domestic product, at approximately US$13.5 trillion, making the CPTPP one of the world's largest free-trade areas by GDP, along with the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement, the European single market,and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

- The **United Kingdom formally signed the trade agreement on 16 July 2023** and will join the agreement when it has been ratified by all parties.

- The **TPP had been signed on 4 February 2016 but never entered into force,** as the U.S. withdrew from the agreement soon after the election of president Donald Trump

- The **pact requires countries to eliminate or significantly reduce tariffs and make strong commitments to opening services and investment markets.**

- It a**lso has rules addressing competition, intellectual property rights and protections for foreign companies.**

- While the CPTPP aims to counter China's regional dominance, China and other countries such as Taiwan, Ukraine, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Ecuador have applied to join.

EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX

Why in News?

NITI Aayog released the third edition of the report titled 'Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022' for States/UTs of India.

About:

- **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) is a comprehensive tool aimed at gauging the export readiness of India's states and union territories (UTs).**

- The **EPI 2022 recognizes that by unlocking regional competitiveness and leveraging our innate diversity, India can enhance its export potential.**

- The **Export Preparedness Index is released by NITI Aayog** in association with the Institute for Competitiveness, delves deeper beyond states and examines exports at the district level.

- The EPI 2022 report seeks to empower State governments with region-specific insights to assist decision-making, identify strengths, address weaknesses, and foster comprehensive growth across States and UTs of India.

- The **report aims to facilitate competitive federalism in the country which creates a spirit of healthy competition among the states and encourage peer-learning among the states.**

- The **EPI 2022 Report evaluates the performance of the states across four pillars** – **Policy, Business Ecosystem, Export Ecosystem, and Export Performance.**

  - **Policy Pillar** evaluates states and UTs' performance based on its adoption of export-related policy ecosystem at a state and district level as well as the institutional framework surrounding the ecosystem.
  - **Business Ecosystem assesses** the prevailing business environment in a state/UT, along with the extent of business-supportive infrastructure, and a state/UTs' transport connectivity.
  - **Export Ecosystem** focuses on the export-related infrastructure in a state along with the trade support provided to the exporters, and the prevalence of Research and Development in the state to foster innovation.
  - **Export Performance** is an output-based indicator which gauges the growth of a state's export over the previous year and analyses its export concentration and footprint on the global markets.

- These **pillars are further based on ten sub-pillars** – Export Promotion Policy; Institutional Framework; Business Environment; Infrastructure; Transport Connectivity; Export Infrastructure; Trade Support; R&D Infrastructure; Export Diversification; and Growth Orientation.

- The **index uses 56 indicators** which holistically capture the export preparedness of States and UTs in terms of exports at both the state and district-level.
- The EPI 2022 Report observed that **most 'Coastal States' have performed well**, with the states of _Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat being the top-performers in the Export Preparedness Index across the country,_ in all categories of states.
- The **report encourages state governments to create solutions to their context-specific challenges to exports**.

CCHF VIRUS

Why in News?

Climate change is aiding the spread of the deadly Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) virus in Europe, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

About CCHF Virus: Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever

- CCHF is a **viral haemorrhagic fever** transmitted by ticks and contact with viremic animal tissues.
- **Congo fever was first discovered in Crimea in 1944** and was **later named as Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever.**
- It poses a **threat to public health due to its potential for epidemics, high case fatality ratio (10-40%), according to the World Health Organization (WHO).** and difficulty in prevention and treatment.
- **Symptoms** include **fever, muscle ache, dizziness, headache, abdominal pain, and mood swings.**
- There is **currently no vaccine for CCHF,** and treatment involves managing symptoms and using antiviral drugs in some cases.
- The an**tiviral drug ribavirin** has shown potential benefits in treating CCHF infections.

- CCHF virus is **primarily transmitted through tick bites or contact with infected animal blood or tissues during and after slaughter.**
- **Human-to-human transmission can occur** through close contact with infected individuals or improper sterilization of medical equipment.
- **Initially endemic to Africa, the Balkan countries, the Middle East, and parts of Asia,** CCHF has been spreading northward and westward in Europe.
- **Reported cases have emerged in Spain, Russia, Turkey, and the UK.**
- **Rising temperatures and disrupted climate patterns have created favourable conditions for viruses** not typically found in colder climates.
- **Climate change contributes to the spread of diseases** by expanding the habitat of disease-carrying insects, altering water habitats, and causing changes in animal migration patterns, increasing human contact with infected animals.

INDIA –UAE LOCAL CURRENCY SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

Why in News?

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have signed a pact to establish Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS) **to promote the use of the Indian rupee (INR) and UAE Dirham (AED) for cross-border transactions.**

About LCSS: Local Currency Settlement System

- The **Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS)** is a mechanism that **enables cross-border transactions** between two countries to be conducted **in their respective domestic currencies.**
- It **covers all current account transactions** and **permitted capital account transactions**.
- It **allows exporters and importers to invoice and make payments in their local currencies**, reducing the reliance on a third-party currency such as the US dollar. This would enable the

development of an INR-AED foreign exchange market.

- It will **reduce transaction costs and settlement time,** including for remittances by Indians in the UAE.
- **India could use this mechanism to pay for imports** of oil and other commodities from the UAE.
- India-UAE trade rose to USD 85 billion in 2022, making the **UAE as India's 3rd largest trading partner for 2022-23.**
- India's the 2nd largest export destination and it is UAE's 2nd largest trading partner.
- **UAE** accounts for 9% of its total foreign trade and 14% of non-oil export, it is the **7th largest FDI investor in India.**
- Major imports- In 2022, major imports were petroleum crude and petroleum products.
- Major exports-In 2022, major exports were petroleum products.

- ➤ The **RBI plan to settle international trade in the local currency** which will let importers make payments in the rupee.
- ➤ The rupee will be credited to the special account of the correspondent bank of the partner country and the exporters will be paid from the balances in the designated special account.
- ➤ The **Central bank is also in the process of issuing a Standard Operating Procedure to all banks so that e-BRC** (electronic bank realisation certificate) becomes easy to use.

✚ Advantages of Local Currency Settlement System:

- o **De-Dollarization-** It reduces the dependency on dollar payments for international transactions and strengthens the value of rupee.
- o **Strengthen bilateral ties-** It is the reflection of mutual confidence and underlines the robustness of the economies and enhances the economic engagement between both the countries.
- o **Increase economic partnership-** In 2022, India became the first country with which the UAE has signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

- o **Optimisation-** It would optimise transaction costs and settlement time for transactions, including for remittances from Indians residing in UAE. It could act as an important step in internationalisation of rupee.
- o **Mitigate currency risk-** The use of the rupee in cross-border transactions mitigates currency risk and confers protection from currency volatility.
- o **Foreign exchange** - It would enable the development of an INR-AED foreign exchange market. It will make India less vulnerable to external shocks as the need to hold foreign reserves will be reduced.
- o **Competitive pricing-** As the use of the rupee becomes significant, the *bargaining power of Indian businesses* would improve.
- o **Promote economic growth-** It leads to increase in the investment and remittances of both countries.

✚ Challenges of Local Currency Settlement System:

- o **Rupee acceptability**- US dollar accounted for 60% of the global reserves and Euro accounted for 20% of the global reserves, the share of rupee in international market is very low.
- o **Trade deficit-** If there is trade surplus we can invest the remaining amount in the country we trade with, but trade deficit is problematic.
- o **Emerging NPAs-** Increase in non-performing assets in the banking system will affect the financial stability of the country.

As recommended by RBI, **a standardised procedure must be adopted to ensure local currency settlement system.**

There is a **need to reduce trade deficit** (by boosting the exports and improving the manufacturing sector) to leverage the benefits of local currency settlement system.

FUSION OF ROCK ART- RUDRAGIRI HILLOCK

Why in News?

Rudragiri hillock in Andhra Pradesh stands as a shining example of the rich historical and artistic legacy of Andhra Pradesh.

It **features a unique combination of prehistoric rock paintings from the Mesolithic period** and exquisite **artwork from the Kakatiya dynasty,** dating back to around 1300 AD.

About:

- Rudragiri Hillock is **located in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.**
- It is **nestled amidst the Eastern Ghats**, features five naturally formed rock shelters at its foothills, facing westward.
- The site includes five naturally formed rock shelters that served as living quarters during the Mesolithic age, around 5000 B.C.
- The **Kakatiya-era paintings display scenes from the epic Ramayana** and are adorned with a variety of colours derived from white kaolin and different pigments.
- The **first cave** presents a *narrative mural portraying the intense battle between the Vanara brothers, Vali and Sugriva.*
- In the **middle cave,** a grand sketch of **Hanuman, accompanied by sacred symbols of the conch (Sankha) and the fire altar (Yagna Vedi) is present.** Hanuman is depicted carrying the Sanjivani hill in his right hand symbolizing his mission to save Lakshmana's life.
- The **third cave** houses the *prehistoric rock paintings from the Mesolithic era.* The Kakatiya artist chose the same rock shelter to superimpose the elegant figure of Hanuman who is portrayed in a unique 'Anjali' posture, folding his hands in a divine offering.
- Moreover, the Ganapati Deva (1199-1262 AD), the founder of Muppavaram temple and a prominent figure of the Kakatiya dynasty likely patronized the rich ancient mural heritage found at Rudragiri.

About Kakatiya Dynasty:

o The **Kakatiya dynasty was a Telugu dynasty** that <u>ruled most of eastern Deccan region in present-day India between 12th and 14th centuries.</u>

o Their **territory comprised much of the present day Telangana and Andhra Pradesh,** and **parts of eastern Karnataka, northern Tamil Nadu, and southern Odisha.**

o Their **capital was Orugallu,** now known as **<u>Warangal.</u>**

o <u>Early Kakatiya rulers served as feudatories to Rashtrakutas and Western Chalukyas for more than two centuries.</u>

o Kakatiyas unified the distinct upland and lowland cultures of Telugu lands, which brought into being a feeling of cultural affinity between those who spoke the Telugu language.

o Kakatiya **period also saw the construction of reservoirs for irrigation in the uplands called "tanks"** many of which are still used today.

o They were **known for the construction of a network of tanks for irrigation and drinking water** and thereby gave a big boost to the overall development of the region.

o **They were egalitarian in nature** and <u>anyone, regardless of birth, could acquire the nayaka title that denoted the warrior status.</u>

o **They recruited peasants into the military** which resulted in a new warrior class and provided social mobility.

o **Kakatiya era also saw the development of a distinct style of architecture** which improved and innovated upon the existing modes.

o Most **notable examples** are the **Thousand Pillar Temple in Hanamkonda, Ramappa Temple in Palampet, Warangal Fort, Golconda Fort and Kota Gullu in Ghanpur etc.**

NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX 2023

Why in News?

The NITI Aayog released the 'National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023'.
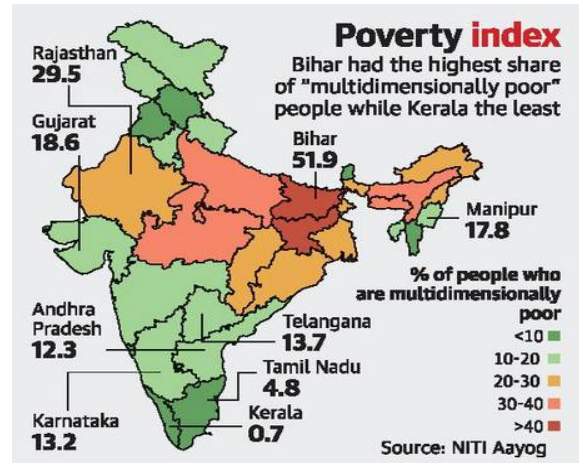
About Multidimesional Poverty Index:

- The **MPI has been used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its flagship Human Development Report since 2010.**

- In this context, **NITI Aayog had published the first edition of national Multidimensional Poverty Index for India in 2021.**

- The MPI seeks to measure Poverty across its multiple dimensions and in effect complements existing poverty statistics **based on per capita consumption expenditure.**

- It seeks to draw up comprehensive Reform Action Plans with the larger goal of improving India's position in the Global MPI rankings.

- **NITI Aayog is the nodal agency for the National MPI,** ranking States and UTs based on their performance.

- It has three equally weighted dimensions – **Health, Education, and Standard of living.**

- **These three dimensions are represented by 12 indicators** such as nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, maternal health, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, assets, and bank accounts.

Key Highlights of Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023:

- ➢ **Decline in Poverty:** India has witnessed a substantial decline in multidimensional poverty, with a decrease of 9.89 percentage points from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-21.

- **Progressiveness in rural areas**: Rural areas experienced the fastest decline, from 32.59% to 19.28%, while urban areas saw a reduction from 8.65% to 5.27% between 2015-16 and 2019-21.
- **Regional Progress:** UP recorded the largest decline in the number of poor, with 3.43 crore people escaping multidimensional poverty.
- The states of UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan showed the fastest reduction in the proportion of multidimensional poor.
- **Path towards SDG Targets:** The report indicates that India is on track to achieve SDG Target 1.2, which aims to reduce multidimensional poverty by at least half by 2030.

Poverty index
Bihar had the highest share of "multidimensionally poor" people while Kerala the least

Rajasthan 29.5
Gujarat 18.6
Bihar 51.9
Manipur 17.8
Andhra Pradesh 12.3
Telangana 13.7
Tamil Nadu 4.8
Karnataka 13.2
Kerala 0.7

% of people who are multidimensionally poor
<10
10-20
20-30
30-40
>40

Source: NITI Aayog

BHOOMI SAMMAN AWARDS

Why in News?

Recently, the **President of India presented the "Bhoomi Samman" 2023** at a function organised by the Union Ministry of Rural Development.

The **awards will be presented to 9 State Secretaries and 68 District Collectors, along with their teams**, who have demonstrated exceptional achievements in implementing the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) – a crucial component of governance.

About Bhoomi Samman Awards:

- Bhoomi Samman Award is **launched by the Union Ministry of Rural Development.**

- The **main objective** of the "Bhoomi Samman" scheme is *to recognize and encourage outstanding performance in the implementation of DILRMP (Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme).*
- The program is instrumental in modernizing land records and registration processes, streamlining administrative procedures and ensuring transparency and efficiency in governance.
- The **award is presented by the President of India to the state secretaries and district collectors along with their teams** who have excelled in achieving saturation of the core components of DILRMP, such as:
  - Computerization of land records
  - Digitization of cadastral maps
  - Integration of textual and spatial data
  - Survey/re-survey using modern technology
  - Computerization of registration
  - Interoperability between registration and land records
- Under the programme, a **monthly grading system has been implemented by them** based on the data recorded on the MISs of the programme to reward the districts that have done well since January 2022.
- It **offers Silver grades ranging from 90% to 95%**, **Gold from 95% to 99%** and **Platinum grades at more than 99% work efficiency.**

Key Findings:

- In the field of Digital India Land Records modernization, **Madhya Pradesh has secured the first position in the country in both state and district categories.**
- Collectors of 15 districts of the state – Agar Malwa, Alirajpur, Anuppur, Bhopal, Guna, Harda, Indore, Khargone, Neemuch, Sidhi, Singrauli, Tikamgarh, Ujjain, Umaria and Vidisha were honoured with Bhoomi Samman certificates.
- These **districts of Madhya Pradesh have been awarded Platinum Grading on 100% achievement** in all components of Digital India Land Records Modernization Program.
- These components are the computerization of land records, digitization of land tax maps, computerization of registration, integration of registration with land records, linkage of land tax maps with land records and modern record rooms.

About DILRMP (Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme):

- The **Digital India Land Record Modernization Programme (DILRMP), previously known as the National Land Record Modernization Programme (NLRMP),** was launched in 2008 by the Government of India.
- **Aim**: **To digitize and modernize land records and develop a centralised land record management system.**
- The official land records of mapped and unmapped will enable the government to give access to basic facilities and rights to the land owners.
- A 14 digit alphanumeric unique ID (Unique Land Parcel Identification Number {ULPIN}) based on geo-coordinates assigned to land parcels will be assigned to each registered title.
- The **DILRMP is the amalgamation of two projects: Computerisation of Land Records (CLR) and Strengthening of Revenue Administration and Updating of Land Records (SRA & ULR).**
- **Nodal Ministry : Ministry of Rural Development.**
- The **three main components are**
  - **Computerization of registration**
  - **Survey/resurvey**
  - **Land records.**

RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME BILL 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the Rajasthan Assembly passed 'The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023.

About:

- The **Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023,** introduced by the Rajasthan government, **aims to provide additional income support to people in the state.**

- The **bill seeks to help citizens cope with inflation and improve their financial stability.**
- **Rajasthan has become the first and the only State in the country to give social security guarantee to the people** with the passage of the Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill in the Assembly.
- The **Bill has three broad categories:**
    1. right to minimum guaranteed income,
    2. right to guaranteed employment, and
    3. right to guaranteed social security pension.

Right to Minimum Guaranteed Income:

o The Bill guarantees a minimum income for every adult citizen for 125 days a year.

o Each adult citizen will receive minimum income through the Indira Gandhi Shahri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana in urban areas and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in rural areas.

o The state will add 25 days of employment to MGNREGA's 100 days for rural areas.

Right to Guaranteed Employment:

o The government will pay minimum wages weekly or fortnightly after the completion of work in urban and rural employment schemes.

o A designated officer will ensure job sites are within five kilometers of the registered job card address.

o If employment is not provided within 15 days of application, the applicant will receive a weekly unemployment allowance "and in any case not later than a fortnight."

Right to Guaranteed Social Security Pension:

o The Bill ensures that people falling under categories like old age, specially abled, widows, and single women receive a pension.

o The pension will see an annual increase of 15% in two installments, starting from the financial year 2024-2025.

The **bill aligns with the principle of social justice** and aims to provide support and security to the most vulnerable members of society.

CANNABIS MEDICINE PROJECT

Why in News?

Jammu is set to lead India's first Cannabis Medicine Project.

About Cannabis Medicine Project:

It is **an initiative of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu.**

The project is **under public-private partnership (PPP) with a Canadian firm**.

Aim:

➤ To harness the potential of cannabis for medical purposes, particularly in treating neuropathies, cancer, and epilepsy.
➤ To produce export quality drugs meant for different kinds of neuropathies, diabetic pains etc.
➤ To spread awareness that this substance of abuse has diverse medicinal uses especially for the patients suffering from malignancies and other diseases.
➤ To address drug abuse awareness in J&K and Punjab.

Significance:

➤ The cannabis research project holds promise for discovering therapeutic properties of the plant, previously known for abuse, and obtaining regulatory approvals for clinical studies and drug development.
➤ The project will boost CSIR-IIIM's reputation as a prestigious scientific research institute in India.

➢ The <u>project has the potential to produce medicines that are currently imported from foreign countries,</u> thereby promoting indigenous production and reducing dependency on external sources.

➢ It will <u>foster investment opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir.</u>

About Cannabis:

- Cannabis is a **generic term used to denote the several psychoactive preparations of the plant Cannabis sativa.**

- <u>Cannabis, weed, pot, and marijuana all refer to the same group of plants</u> **known for their relaxing and calming effects.**

- Cannabis **contains at least 120 trusted Source active ingredients,** or cannabinoids. The **most abundant ones are cannabidiol (CBD) and delta-9`-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).**

- Cannabidiol (CBD) – This is a psychoactive cannabinoid, yet it's non-intoxicating and non-euphoric.

- THC- This is the main psychoactive compound in cannabis.

- **Cannabis is by far the most widely cultivated, trafficked and abused illicit drug.** Half of all drug seizures worldwide are cannabis seizures.

- The **central law that deals with cannabis (weed or marijuana) in India is the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.**

- The **NDPS Act prohibits the sale and production of cannabis resin and flowers, but the use of leaves and seeds of the cannabis plant is permitted,** with the states having the power to regulate and form the state rules for it.

- **Cannabis-based medical treatment** utilizes compounds like THC and CBD <u>to manage conditions like chronic pain, nausea, muscle spasms, and epilepsy, interacting with the body's endocannabinoid system.</u>

MAHRA/MAHARA INCLUDED IN SC LIST IN CHHATTISGARH

Why in News?

The **Chhattisgarh government has proposed inclusion of 'Mahra' and 'Mahara' communities in the list of SCs**, which has been accepted by both the Registrar General of India and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

The **Centre will have to introduce an amendment to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, for this inclusion.**

About:

- The **Bill proposes to add "Mahara" and "Mahra" as synonyms for the Mahar community in Chhattisgarh.**

- The Mahar community is already listed as a Scheduled Caste in the state, **but members of the "Mahara" and "Mahra" communities, who identify themselves as Mahar, are not able to avail themselves of the benefits available to SCs.**
- The Bill seeks to rectify this anomaly and ensure that members of these communities are not deprived of their constitutional rights and entitlements as SCs.
- The **inclusion of these two synonyms was initiated by the Chhattisgarh State government**, which sent a proposal to the Centre for amending the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order.
- The proposal was based on the recommendations of the State-level Scrutiny Committee, which verified the claims of these communities to be Mahar.
- The State government also conducted a socio-economic survey of these communities and found that they were facing similar problems and challenges as other SCs in terms of education, employment, health, and social status.

- The <u>State government argued that adding these synonyms would help in addressing the issues of identity, dignity, and inclusion of these communities and bring them into the mainstream of society.</u>
- **It will have a positive impact on the lives of about two lakh people belonging to the "Mahara" and "Mahra" communities in Chhattisgarh**. They will be able to access various government welfare programs and benefits designed for SCs, such as scholarships, reservations, loans, subsidies, etc.
- **It will also enhance their representation in various institutions and bodies at different levels of governance,** such as panchayats, municipalities, assemblies, and parliament.
- <u>It will also contribute to the overall development and empowerment of SCs in Chhattisgarh,</u> **which constitute over 12% of the state's population.**
- The Bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha and is awaiting discussion and passage. Once it is passed by both houses of parliament and receives the assent of the President, it will become a law and come into force.

About Updation in the Schedule Caste (SC):

- ➢ **Scheduled Castes (SCs) are a group of historically disadvantaged people in India who are recognized by the Constitution of India and given certain rights and protections.**
- ➢ The term "Scheduled Caste" derives from the fact that they are listed in the Schedule (Annexure) of the Constitution.
- ➢ The **list of SCs is not static, but dynamic.**
- ➢ It **can be updated by the President of India,** <u>in consultation with the state governor, by issuing an order under Article 341 of the Constitution.</u>
- ➢ **The order can include or exclude any caste, race or tribe, or part of or group within any caste, race or tribe, from the list of SCs.**

LUDWIGIA PERUVIANA

Why in News?

An **invasive weed called Ludwigia Peruviana** is **posing a significant threat to elephant habitats and foraging areas in Valparai, Tamil Nadu.**

About Ludwigia Peruviana:

- Ludwigia Peruviana, **also known as primrose willow,** is originally native to Central and South America.
- It is **an aquatic plant** that was likely introduced as an ornamental species due to its attractive pale yellowish flowers.
- It is **among the 22 priority invasive plants in Tamil Nadu.**
- It has infested the majority of the hill station's swamps, locally known as vayals .

- However, its introduction to new regions has resulted in it becoming an invasive weed, causing ecological disruptions in various swampy areas worldwide.
- Ludwigia Peruviana **grows relatively tall, reaching a height of about 12 feet.**
- **As an aquatic plant, it thrives in wetlands and water bodies.**
- It **grows faster than many other harmful weeds**, and the pre-monsoon temperature and monsoon rains contribute to its rapid growth and spread.
- **This fast growth is disrupting the balance of perennial foraging grounds, hindering the growth of grass and native plants that elephants and other animals** such as Gaur, rely on for food.
- The **spread of this invasive weed also impacts the overall biodiversity of invaded areas**, leading to the loss of native plant species and potentially forcing wildlife to move to other areas, resulting in negative interactions with humans.

NO CONFIDENCE MOTION

Why in News?

Recently, **Lok Sabha Speaker** Om Birla **accepted a no confidence motion moved by the Opposition against the government.**

The <u>motion was brought amidst the Opposition's ongoing protests demanding a statement on the situation in Manipur from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.</u>

About No Confidence Motion:

- <u>In a parliamentary democracy,</u> **a government can be in power only if it commands a majority in the directly elected House.**
- **Article 75(3) of our Constitution** embodies this rule by specifying that the **Council of Ministers are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.**

- <u>For testing this collective responsibility, the rules of Lok Sabha provide a particular mechanism</u> – **a motion of no-confidence.**
- A **no confidence motion can only be moved in the Lok Sabha.**
- The **no confidence motion has historically been used as a strategic tool to force a discussion on a certain topic or issue.**
- Since the beginning of the Monsoon Session, <u>opposition parties have been demanding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi make a statement in Parliament **on the violent situation in Manipur.**</u>
- After several days of protests and washouts, the opposition gave two separate notices to move motions of no-confidence against the government, hoping to force the Prime Minister to reply to the debate.

Rules to move a No Confidence Motion:

- ➢ A **No-Confidence Motion can be moved by any member of the Lok Sabha** but **it must be supported by atleast 50 members of the House.** The notice of the motion **must be in written and presented before 10am** and the **Speaker will read it in the House.**
- ➢ **After the motion is moved, the speaker will decide whether to admit the motion for discussion and debate.** <u>If admitted, the date of the motion must be scheduled within 10 days of acceptance by the Speaker.</u>

> **The motion is debated in the Lok Sabha,** with the member who submitted it. It is followed by the response of the government and the opposition parties can speak over it.
> **After the debate, the Lok Sabha votes on the motion** and **it passes if supported by a majority of the members.**
> There are two conditions:
> o <u>If the motion is passed</u>, **the government must resign.**
> o <u>If the motion is not passed by the majority</u>, **the government remains in power.**

MANGROVE CELL

Why in News?

West Bengal has announced the setting up of a mangrove cell in the state <u>*to mark the International Mangrove Ecosystem Conservation Day.*</u>

About:

- The **state of West Bengal is home to about 40% of the mangrove forests in India.**
- The **Mangrove Cell will be a specialized body that will be solely dedicated for mangrove management and conservation.**
- It **will have an action plan aimed at planting and maintaining mangroves in the state.**
- It will **work in coordination with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** to enhance mangrove conservation efforts.
- The **cell will generate funds not only from government sources** <u>but also from private and international sectors.</u>

International Day of Mangrove Ecosystem:

- The International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem **is celebrated every year on 26 July.**

- Aim : **To raise awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems as "a unique, special and vulnerable ecosystem"** and to promote solutions for their sustainable management, conservation and uses.

- This International Day was adopted by the General Conference of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2015.

About Mangroves:

- ➢ Mangroves are **salt-tolerant plant communities found in tropical and subtropical intertidal regions.**

- ➢ They are **formed when there is intertidal flow and where adequate sediments are available for the trees to set down roots.**

- ➢ They **can survive under extreme hostile environments** such as low oxygen conditions.

- ➢ The **mangrove root system absorbs oxygen from the atmosphere.**

- ➢ Mangroves have special roots for this purpose called pneumatophores (breathing roots) with pores through which oxygen enters the underground tissues.

- ➢ Mangroves, like desert plants, **store fresh water in thick succulent leaves and the waxy coating on the leaves seals in water and minimises evaporation.**

- ➢ They are **considered blue carbon ecosystems.**

- ➢ *Blue carbon refers to the carbon stored in coastal and marine ecosystems, such as mangroves, seagrasses, and salt marshes.*

- Mangroves **stabilize coastlines and reduce erosion caused by storms, currents, waves and tides.**
- The <u>complex root system of the mangrove tree also makes these forests attractive to fish and other organisms that seek food and shelter from predators.</u>
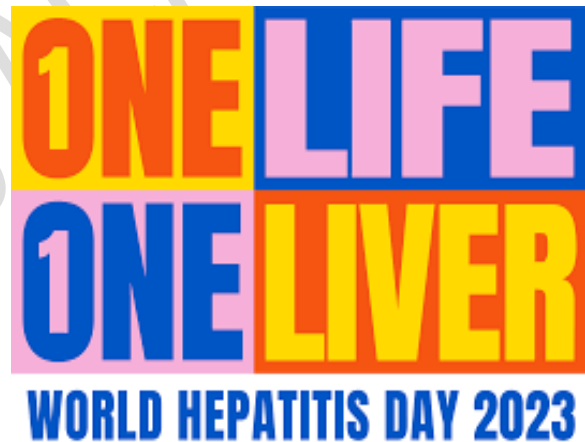- **Their soil is a very efficient carbon sink, sequestering huge amounts of carbon.**

WORLD HEPATITIS DAY

Why in News?

World Hepatitis Day is observed on July 28 every year to spread awareness about hepatitis on a global scale.
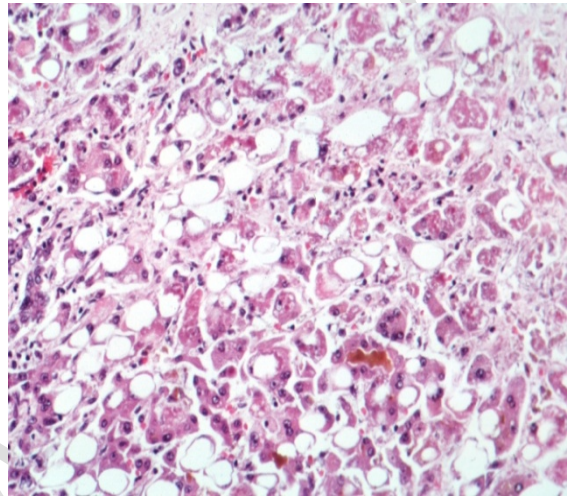
About:

- **World Hepatitis Day is observed on July 28 every year.**
- Viral hepatitis is a hidden killer, causing many deaths every year.
- Aim: <u>To increase public awareness about the problem and the necessary steps to improve efforts in the prevention, screening, and control of viral hepatitis.</u>

- Each year, **this day focuses on a specific theme** <u>to increase knowledge about the current situation of hepatitis worldwide and bring about positive changes.</u>
- The **theme for World Hepatitis Day 2023** is <u>**"One life, one liver,"**</u> which focuses on creating awareness about viral hepatitis.
- **Various events such as campaigns, seminars, and lectures are organized, inviting people from all over the world to participate and learn more about the disease.**
- On this day, **communities, people, and politicians may learn about the many varieties of hepatitis,** <u>as well as about preventative strategies, testing, and treatment choices.</u>

- It **promotes global advocacy and cooperation** in the fight against the rising number of hepatitis-related diseases and fatalities.

About Hepatitis:

➢ Hepatitis is **inflammation of the liver tissue.**

➢ **Hepatitis is acute if it resolves within six months**, and **chronic if it lasts longer than six months.**

➢ **Some** people or animals **with hepatitis have no symptoms, whereas others develop yellow discoloration of the skin and whites of the eyes (jaundice), poor appetite, vomiting, tiredness, abdominal pain, and diarrhea.**

➢ Hepatitis is **most commonly caused by the virus hepatovirus A, B, C, D, and E.**

Types of Hepatitis:-

Hepatitis A virus (HAV):

➢ It is **an inflammation of the liver that can cause mild to severe illness**.

➢ It is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food and water or through direct contact with an infectious person (sex practices).

➢ Almost everyone recovers fully from hepatitis A with a lifelong immunity (few people with HAV could die from fulminant hepatitis).

➢ A safe and effective vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B virus (HBV):

➢ It is a viral infection that attacks the liver and can cause both acute and chronic disease.

➢ It is most commonly transmitted from mother to child during birth, in early childhood, during sex with an infected partner, unsafe injections.

➢ Hepatitis B **can be prevented by vaccines.**

Hepatitis C virus (HCV):

➤ The virus can cause both acute and chronic hepatitis, ranging in severity from a mild illness to a serious, lifelong illness including liver cirrhosis and cancer.

➤ It is a bloodborne virus and most infection occurs through exposure to unsafe health care, blood transfusions, injection drug use and sexual practices.

➤ Direct-acting antiviral medicines (DAAs) can cure more than 95% of persons with hepatitis C infection, but access to diagnosis and treatment is low.

➤ There is currently **no effective vaccine against hepatitis C.**

Hepatitis D virus (HDV):

➤ It is a virus that requires hepatitis B virus (HBV) for its replication. It affects globally nearly 5% of people who have a chronic infection with HBV.

➤ Hepatitis B and D can infect people together (co-infection) or one after the other (super-infection). This is more common in native people, dialysis patients and drug users. Having both viruses is very bad for the liver and can cause cancer or death.

➤ Hepatitis D infection can be prevented by hepatitis B immunization, but treatment success rates are low.

Hepatitis E virus (HEV):

➤ It is an inflammation of the liver caused by infection with the HEV. It is found worldwide, but most common in East and South Asia.

➤ The virus is transmitted via the fecal-oral route, principally via contaminated water.

➤ A vaccine to prevent hepatitis E virus infection has been developed and is licensed in China but is not yet available elsewhere.

STAPLED VISA

Why in News?

India withdrew its 8-athlete wushu contingent from the Summer World University Games, after China issued stapled visas to 3 athletes from the team who belong to Arunachal Pradesh.

About Stapled Visa:

- A **stapled visa is simply an unstamped piece of paper that is attached by a pin or staples to a page of the passport and can be torn off or detached at will.**
- This is <u>different from a regular visa that is affixed to the passport by the issuing authority and stamped.</u>
- <u>China has made it a practice to issue stapled visas to Indian nationals from Arunachal Pradesh and J&K.</u>
- It says the visas are valid documents, but the Government of India has consistently refused to accept this position.
- **India's long-standing and consistent position is that there should be no discrimination or differential treatment based on domicile or ethnicity in the visa regime.**
- A <u>passport and visa entitle their holders to travel freely and under legal protection across international borders.</u>
- <u>China disputes India's unequivocal and internationally accepted sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh.</u>
- <u>Hence, they started the practice of issuing 'stapled' visas (since 2005-06) to all Indian citizens from Arunachal Pradesh.</u>
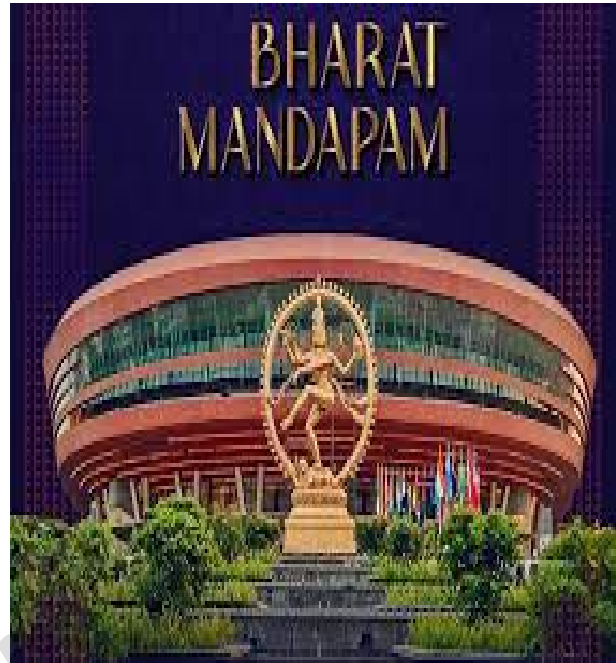- The stapled visas for J&K residents appear to have started around 2008-09.

BHARAT MANDAPAM

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the international exhibition-cum-convention Centre (IECC) complex named *Bharat Mandapam* <u>at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.</u>

About Bharat Mandapam:

- The IECC complex **is India's largest MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) destination**.

- It **features state-of-the-art facilities, including a convention centre, exhibition halls, and an amphitheatre.**

- The **architectural design of the convention centre incorporates elements from India's traditional art and culture,** representing the nation's rich heritage and modern achievements.

- The **building's shape is reminiscent of the elegant form of the Shankha, or conch shell.**

- Its **elliptical design, devoid of sharp edges, mirrors the fluidity of the Yamuna River, which meanders through the city.**

- Th**is design theme extends to the pavilions and galleries within the venue.**

- The t**erm 'Bharat Mandapam' is derived from Lord Basaveshwara's concept of 'Anubhav Mantapa,'** which was a significant institution in the 12th century.

- Anubhav Mantapa is considered one of the earliest parliaments in human history, where poets and socio-spiritual reformers known as Sharanas discussed and deliberated on various reforms.

- This **expansive complex will be open to the public and will offer comprehensive facilities in support of the nation's aspiration to progress into a modern and developed society**.

- A prominent feature of Bharat Mandapam is the **monumental bronze statue of Nataraja,** standing at a towering height of 27 feet.

- Crafted from Ashtadhatu and weighing approximately 18 tons, this sculpture is a masterpiece by renowned sculptor Radhakrishnan Sthapaty, hailing from Swami Malai in Tamil Nadu.

- Bharat Mandapam is **designed to promote India as a premier global business hub.**
- Its **architectural marvel is intended to host large-scale international exhibitions, trade expos, conventions, conferences, and various prestigious assemblies.**
- Built at an investment of approximately Rs 2,700 crores, **Bharat Mandapam is equipped with numerous meeting rooms, auditoriums, lounges, an amphitheater, and a fully-equipped business center, making it suitable for a wide range of events.**

INDIAai

Why in News?

INDIAai and Meta India have entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) <u>to create a framework for collaboration and cooperation in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies.</u>

The MoU aims to make Meta's open-source AI models accessible for various applications.

About INDIAai:

It is a **joint venture between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the National e-Governance Division (NeGD), and NASSCOM.**

It **is a knowledge portal, research organization, and ecosystem-building initiative focused on preparing the nation for an AI-driven future.**

Objectives:

➢ To **establish a framework for cooperation and to make Meta's open-source AI models available for use by the Indian AI ecosystem.**

➢ To **advance research and development in AI and Emerging Technologies,** seeking breakthroughs in AI technology and its applications.

➢ **Establishing a Centre of Excellence to nurture the startup ecosystem of AI** and other Emerging Technologies.

➢ **Building datasets in Indian Languages to enable translation and large language models**, prioritizing low-resource languages to foster social inclusion and improve government service delivery.

➢ **Enhance accessibility to AI compute resources** for researchers, startups, and organizations with limited resources.

I**NDIAai and Meta India will also work together to promote responsible AI practices** by collaboratively developing comprehensive tools and guidelines.

The partnership between INDIAai and Meta India aims to leverage cutting-edge AI technologies, foster social inclusion, spur innovation, and strengthen India's digital leadership in the AI domain.

The **focus on Indian languages and low-resource languages can lead to significant advancements in AI applications in the country,** addressing unique needs and challenges.

SEMICONINDIA 2023

Why in News?

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated SemiconIndia 2023 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

About:

- SemiconIndia 2023 is **inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.**
- **Theme**: **"Catalysing India's Semiconductor Ecosystem".**
- **Aim:** To exhibit India's semiconductor strategy and policy, with a vision to position the country as a global hub for semiconductor design, manufacturing, and technology development.

- The 'Semicon India 2023' **conference will emphasize investment opportunities in India's semiconductor secto**r <u>through informative presentations and stimulating panel discussions led by industry experts.</u>

- The event **aims to accelerate the progress of the semiconductor industry** by facilitating networking, technology demonstrations, and lucrative business prospects.
- Throughout the three-day conference, which concludes on July 30, **experts from various parts of the world specializing in semiconductor chip, display fab, chip design, and assembly will convene to share their insights on emerging opportunities in India.**
- Prominent companies such as Foxconn, Micron, AMD, IBM, Marvell, Vedanta, LAM Research, NXP Semiconductors, ST Microelectronics, Grantwood Technologies, Infineon Technologies, and Applied Materials, among others, will actively participate in the event.
- **With a strong emphasis on innovation, participation, and growth, this conference holds immense significance in shaping the future of the semiconductor industry,** <u>both in India and Gujarat.</u>

RBI'S DIGITAL PAYMENT INDEX

Why in News?

As per *Reserve Bank of India's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI)*, **Digital payments across the country registered a growth of 13.24% in a year through March 2023.**

<u>About RBI-DPI:Reserve Bank of India- Digital Payment Index:-</u>

Digital Payment Index has been **constructed by the RBI to measure the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.**

It is **based on multiple parameter**s and reflects the expansion of various digital payment modes accurately.

It is a **first-of-its kind index to measure the spread of digital payments across the country.**

Digital Payments Index of RBI

It **contains five broad parameters** that measure the deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods.

It is **released semi-annually and consists of five main parameters with varying weights:**

- ➢ **Payment Enablers (weight 25%)**
- ➢ **Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors (10%)**
- ➢ **Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side factors (15%)**
- ➢ **Payment Performance (45%)**
- ➢ **Consumer Centricity (5%)**

The **base period of the index is March 2018.**

The index has been published on a semi-annual basis from March 2021 onwards with a lag of 4 months.