

## AUGUST CURRENT AFFAIRS

### GI TAGS 2023

#### Why in News?

The Geographical Indications Registry granted the **GI tag** to different products from different regions of India.

#### About:

##### 1. Jalesar Dhatu Shilp

- Jalesar Dhatu Shilp is a metal craft that originated in the Jalesar town of Etah district in Uttar Pradesh.
- It is a unique form of brassware that involves intricate engraving and embossing of floral, geometric and animal motifs on brass utensils, lamps, idols, vases, trays and other decorative items.
- The craftsmanship involves the production of decorative items such as ghungrus (anklets) and ghantis (bells).
- This traditional art form is particularly mastered by the local community known as Thatheras, residing in Hathuras.
- The craft dates back to the 16th century when it was patronized by the Mughal emperors.
- The artisans use traditional tools and techniques to create exquisite designs, which reflect the influence of Persian, Turkish and Indian styles.
- The Jalesar Dhatu Shilp is known for its durability, elegance and artistic value.



##### 2. Goa Mankurad Mango

- Goa Mankurad Mango is a **variety of mango that is grown in Goa**, especially in the Bardez taluka.
- It is **also known as Goa Mancurad or Goa Alphonso**.
- It is considered to be one of the best varieties of mangoes in India, **owing to its sweet taste, juicy pulp, thin skin and pleasant aroma**.
- The mango's name has an interesting historical background. Initially named "malcorada" by the Portuguese, which means 'poor colored' it later evolved into "mankurad aamo" (mango) in Konkani.
- The Goa Mankurad Mango has a **long history of cultivation in Goa, dating back to the Portuguese era**.
- It is believed that the Portuguese brought the mango saplings from Brazil and planted them in Goa.



### 3. Goan Bebinca

- The **Regal Dessert of Goa, Goan Bebinca**, also known as Bibik or Bebinka, is a traditional dessert hailing from Goa.
- It is a **layered cake that consists of thin layers of flour, eggs, coconut milk, sugar and ghee (clarified butter)**.
- The cake is **baked in an earthen oven after each layer is added, resulting in a rich and moist texture**.
- The **number of layers can vary from seven to sixteen**, depending on the preference of the maker.
- This delectable dessert is a traditional Indo-Portuguese pudding, often regarded as the "queen of Goan desserts".



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#### 4. Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft

- Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft is a metal craft that originated in Udaipur city of Rajasthan.
- The Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft from Rajasthan produces exquisite ornamented weapons.
- This intricate art involves a complex process of etching intricate designs, embedding gold and silver wires into metal, and meticulously polishing it to perfection.
- It is also known as Damascening or Inlaying. It is a technique of decorating metal objects with fine wires or strips of gold or silver.
- The metal objects can be made of iron, steel, copper or brass, and can include swords, daggers, shields, armour, jewellery boxes, trays and other ornamental items.



#### 5. Bikaner Kashidakari Craft

- Bikaner Kashidakari Craft is an embroidery craft that originated in Bikaner city of Rajasthan.
- Bikaner Kashidakari Craft offers exquisite needlework for special occasions.
- It is a form of embroidery that uses gold or silver threads to create elaborate designs on fabrics such as silk, velvet, satin and brocade.
- The embroidery can include motifs such as flowers, leaves, birds, animals, geometric shapes and human figures.
- The craft is mainly used to decorate garments such as sarees, lehengas,





dupattas, shawls, turbans and jackets, as well as accessories such as bags, cushions and wall hangings.

- This craft is often employed for objects associated with weddings, particularly gift items. The mirrors used in the craft are believed to protect against the “evil eye” due to their reflective surfaces.
- The skilled Meghwal community in Bikaner and nearby districts is responsible for preserving and practicing this art form.

## 6. Jodhpur Bandhej Craft

- Bandhej, known as **one of the most renowned textile art forms of Rajasthan**, is the **Rajasthani art of tying and dyeing**.
- It is **also known as Bandhani or Bandhni**.
- This technique involves creating patterns or designs on fabrics by tying them with threads and then dyeing them in various colors.
- The fabrics can be made of cotton, silk, wool or synthetic materials, and can include sarees, dupattas, skirts, scarves and other garments.



## 7. Bikaner Usta Kala Craft

- Bikaner Usta Kala Craft is a **painting craft that originated in Bikaner city of Rajasthan**.
- It is **also known as Naqqashi or Nakashi**.
- This unique art form entails treating raw camel hide and skillfully molding it into a range of products.
- The **skilled Dhangar community of leather craftsmen carries forward this tradition with finesse**.



- It is a **form of painting that incorporates gold or silver foil to create intricate designs on diverse surfaces** like wood, metal, marble, ivory, and leather.
- The craft involves applying a layer of lacquer or varnish on the surface and then pasting the gold or silver foil on it. Then, the foil is cut with a fine needle to create the desired patterns or designs.
- The **craft also uses colours such as red, green, blue and black to fill in the gaps between the foil.**
- The craft is mainly used to decorate objects such as boxes, vases, trays, furniture and other decorative items.

## 8. Jaderi namakatti

- Jaderi is a **small village in Tiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu.**
- There are around 120 families in Cheyyar taluk whose primary occupation has been making namakatti for more than hundreds of years now.
- Jaderi namakatti is **white-coloured clay sticks**, usually available in **finger-like shape with a smooth texture.**
- The **namakatti is made up of the rich deposit of hydrous silicate minerals that form fine grain particles of clay.**
- The **clay is processed and shaped in a finger like structure.**
- The production of namakatti depends on the climatic condition as it needs a lot of sunlight to dry.
- It is **one of the most visible external symbols of Hindu identity and is the unique mark worn on the forehead.**
- Worshippers of Lord Vishnu wear a tilak in the shape of 'U' (called Naamam).
- The white tilak cools the forehead, protects the wearer, and prevents energy loss.
- It is used to adorn the foreheads of idols, men, and temple elephants as well as to cure stretched skin after childbirth.



## 9. Kannyakumari Matti banana

- Matti banana (*Musa sapidisiaca*) is a diploid cultivar commercially grown in Kannyakumari district of Tamil Nadu.
- Kanyakumari is located in the high rainfall zone.
- **Matti banana is a traditional table banana cultivar having medicinal value.**
- It is rich in manganese, potassium and vitamin C.
- The fruit is highly fragrant and sweet with a sub-acid flavour, firm texture and powdery nature.
- The Matti banana fruit's apex looks like mouth of a crocodile, and hence called 'Crocodile Finger Banana'.
- It is a rare variety and is grown only in the hills of South Travancore (Undivided Tamil Nadu and Kerala) near Nagercoil.
- Kanyakumari Matti banana has other variants like Semmatti (red Matti), Thaan Matti (Honey Matti) and Malai Matti (Hill Matti).



## 10. Chedibutta saree

- It is a handloom saree that depicts the Chedibutta design in art silk and cotton mix fabric.
- The name 'Chedibutta' is a combination of two Tamil words- 'Chedi' (plant) and 'Butta' (repeated motif or design).
- It has the iconic "plant and flower" motif woven on the border and pallu (edge of the saree).
- The saree is woven using art silk thread while the Chedibutta designs are made using brightly coloured cotton threads.



- The **Sowashtra community** are the **primary weavers of the saree** and skilled weavers of the Veeravanallur town in Tirunelveli.
- It is an **entirely manual process**, involves preparation of cotton yarn using a **Charkha**.
- The **Chedibutta saree** has a **soft texture** which is suitable for the **tropical climate**.
- It is comfortable in summer and warm during the winter.
- Due to the nature of the raw materials used, these sarees are light weight, do not wrinkle easily and are easy to maintain.

### Other products of India that were given GI tags:

- Agra's leather footwear
- Rajasthan's Nathdwara Pichhwai Painting
- Kashmir's Mushqbudji rice
- Bihar's Marcha Rice
- Jammu Kashmir's Rajouri Chikri Wood Craft
- Agsechi Vayingim (Agassaim Brinjal) of Goa
- Sat Shiro Bheno (Sat Shirancho Bhendo) also known as Okra which is vegetable crop of Goa.

### About Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:

- A geographical indication (GI) is a name or sign used on products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g., a town, region, or country).
- The use of a geographical indication, as an indication of the product's source, is intended as a certification that the product possesses certain qualities, is made according to traditional methods, or enjoys a good reputation due to its geographical origin.
- The **registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of 10 years**.





- It can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.
- **Nodal Agency: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- A GI tag enables the producers of such products to prevent unauthorized use of the indication by third parties who do not conform to the standards or criteria established for that product.
- Geographical Indications are covered as a **component of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under the Paris Convention** for the Protection of Industrial Property. GI is also governed by the **World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). (1994)**
- **In India, the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999 came into force in 2003** to comply with the obligations under TRIPS. The Act provides for the registration and protection of GIs in India.
- This **tag is issued by the Geographical Indication Registry** under the Department of Industry Promotion and Internal Trade, **Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- The **first product to get a GI tag in India was Darjeeling Tea** in 2004.

### Benefits of GI Tags:-

- It **preserves and promotes the cultural and historical identity of a region and its people** by highlighting their distinctive skills, traditions and heritage.
- It **increases the market value and competitiveness of the products.**
- It **ensures the quality and authenticity of the products** by preventing counterfeiting and misrepresentation by unauthorized parties who may try to imitate or exploit the reputation of the products.
- It **provides legal protection and enforcement against infringement and misuse of the indication by unauthorized parties** who may violate the rights and interests of the legitimate producers and consumers of the products.
- It **generates income and employment opportunities for the local communities** involved in the production and processing of the products by enhancing their skills, capacities and livelihoods.
- It **fosters innovation and creativity by encouraging the development and improvement of products** by incorporating new technologies, methods and standards.



## ULLAS MOBILE APP

### Why in News?

The **Union Minister of Education** has launched the mobile application of **ULLAS: Nav Bharat SakshartaKaryakram** on the occasion of **three years of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.

### About ULLAS:Nav Bharat SakshartaKaryakram

- Full Form : **Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society.**
- Aim: To provide widespread access to basic literacy and critical life skills by leveraging technology.
- It will focus on promoting **functional literacy, vocational skills**, and many important life skills like financial literacy, legal literacy, digital literacy, and empowerment of citizens to involve in nation-building of the country.
- **ULLAS targets citizens aged 15 and above** who missed the opportunity to attend school, bridging the gaps in education.
- The **initiative operates through volunteerism.** It encourages volunteers to participate as DUTY or Kartavya Bodh towards nation-building.
- **Student volunteers will be incentivised with credits in school/university** and appreciation through certificates, letters of appreciation, felicitation, among other means.
- The **initiative has the potential to bring these students back to learning by providing them with an open-source learning platform.**
- It serves as a digital gateway for learners to access diverse learning resources through the DIKSHA portal of NCERT.



### About National Education Policy 2020:

- The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century in India, which replaces the previous National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986.
- The **Ministry of Education** formed a **committee under Dr. K Kasturirangan**, which outlined this new policy.
- Union Cabinet has approved the new **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020** with an aim to introduce several changes in the Indian education system - from the school to college level.
- The NEP 2020 aims at making “India a global knowledge superpower”.
- The Cabinet has also approved the **renaming of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to the Ministry of Education**.
- The two earlier education policies were brought in 1968 and 1986.



### **Features:**

- **Universalization of education from preschool to secondary level with 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030.**
- **To bring 2 crore out of school children back into the mainstream through an open schooling system.**
- **NEP 2020 emphasizes ensuring universal access to school education at all levels, from preschool to secondary.**
- **The 10+2 system to be replaced by a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years respectively.**
- **This will bring the hitherto uncovered age group of 3-6 years under the school curriculum, which has been recognized globally as the crucial stage for the development of the mental faculties of a child.**
- **Class 10 and 12 board examinations to be made easier, to test core competencies rather than memorised facts, with **all students allowed to take the exam twice.****
- **School governance is set to change, with a **new accreditation framework and an independent authority to regulate both public and private schools.****

- **Emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, no rigid separation between academic streams, extracurricular, vocational streams in schools.**
- **Teaching up to at least Grade 5 to be in mother tongue/regional language.** No language will be imposed on any student.
- Built on the **foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability**, this policy is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Other Government Initiatives Related to Educational Reforms:-**
  - National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning.
  - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
  - PRAGYATA
  - Mid Day Meal Scheme
  - Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
  - PM SHRI Schools

## WORLD COIN

### Why in News?

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman announced the launch of **Worldcoin**, a project that aims to create a **global identity and financial network based on biometric verification.**

### About Worldcoin:

- Worldcoin is a **cryptocurrency project** that aims to create a new form of digital identity that can verify that its holder is a real human being, not an AI bot or a fake account.
- It is **an initiative to create a digital network in which everyone can claim some kind of stake, and join the digital economy.**
- The project was **co-founded by Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, and the research organization behind ChatGPT,** one of the most advanced AI chatbots in the world.



- Aim :To provide its users with a private digital identity—“a World’s Identity”—after they register in person, where an “Orb” imaging device scans their eye’s unique iris pattern to verify they are “a real and unique person.”
- The project involves scanning individuals’ irises through a device called “Orb” to collect biometric data and issue them a World ID.
- **Orb**: It is a **silver sphere that can capture a high-resolution image of the iris**, which is unique for every individual.
- The orb then encrypts the image and sends it back to a blockchain network, where it is matched with a Worldcoin address.
- The **person who scans their eyes receives some Worldcoins[WLD] as a reward for joining the network.**
- The goal is to build the “world’s largest identity and financial public network” accessible globally.
- To be a part of the Worldcoin network, individuals can become “Orb operators” and scan the irises of others, or they can get their own irises scanned to receive a World ID and WLD cryptocurrency.
- Worldcoin claims that using biometric information to avoid duplication is a valid method for including everyone in its network.
- The company claimed that India had “proven the effectiveness of biometrics” through its Aadhaar system.
- Worldcoin lists 18 locations in India — largely in Delhi, Noida, and Bangalore — where Orb operators are scanning people’s eyes.
- Worldcoin faced criticisms, with **concerns raised about privacy, data security, and the validity of biometric scans.**



## AKIRA RANSOMWARE

### Why in News?





- To protect against Akira ransomware and other similar threats, users are advised to:
  - Maintain up-to-date offline backups
  - Keep operating systems and networks updated
  - Implement strong password policies and multi-factor authentication
  - Enforce data encryption
  - Block attachment file types that are commonly associated with malicious code
  - Regular security audits of critical systems
- As per the government data presented in the Parliament, **India witnessed 13.91 Lakh cyber security incidents in 2022**, marking an average of 3,835 cyber security issues reported every day of the year.
- The **Internet Crime Report by the FBI revealed that India is ranked third in the world among the top 20 countries being victimized by cyber-crimes.**
- At present, India does not have any dedicated cyber security law.

#### **STEPS RELATED TO CYBER SECURITY IN INDIA:**

- Information Technology Act, 2000
- National Cyber Security Policy (2013)
- Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)
- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)
- National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal

## **PAHARIS/PADDARIS IN J&K ADDED TO THE SCHEDULED TRIBE LIST**

### **Why in News?**

- The government has introduced the **Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023** in Lok Sabha to include four communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The four communities proposed for ST



status are **“Gadda Brahmin,” “Koli,” “Paddari Tribe,” and “Pahari Ethnic Group.”**

- **These communities are currently not recognised as STs in J&K, unlike the Gujjars, Bakerwals, Gaddis, and Sippis, who have been enjoying the benefits of reservation in jobs, education, and political representation since 1991.**

### **About:**

- **The Bill seeks to include these four communities (Gadda Brahmin, Koli, Paddari Tribe and Pahari Ethnic Group) in the ST list, potentially granting them reservation benefits in government jobs and educational institutions, despite existing apprehensions and disputes among different communities.**
- **The ST quota in J&K carries 7% spots in government jobs and educational institutions.**
- **The Gujjars and Bakerwals community were getting ST benefits since 1991.**
- **The Paharis were given a 4 percent quota in the OBC category from January 2020.**
- **The Centre formed the Justice Sharma Commission in March 2020, however it seemed to upset the Gujjars and Bakerwals.**
- **There were also protests performed by the Gujjars and Bakerwals in Jammu and Kashmir regarding the implementation of Status to Paharis.**
- **40 percent of the population in the border districts are Gujjar and Bakerwal, and Paharia lives in a few numbers.**

### **Process for Inclusion in the ST List:**

- **The State government makes a recommendation to the Tribal Affairs Ministry.**
- **The Tribal Affairs Ministry reviews the recommendation and sends it to the Registrar General of India for approval.**
- **The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes approves the recommendation.**
- **The Cabinet makes decision on the inclusion of the tribe in the ST list.**
- **The final decision rests with the President’s office issuing a notification specifying the changes under powers vested in it from **Articles 342.****

### **Criteria for Specification of Scheduled Tribes in India:**

1. Primitive traits

2. Distinctive culture
3. Geographical isolation
4. Shyness of contact with the community at large
5. Backwardness

### **About Pahari Ethnic Group:**

- The Paharis are Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, and consists of people of Kashmiri origin who settled in the districts of Rajouri and Poonch districts over a period of time.
- There are upper caste Hindus among the Paharis; also people who were displaced from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

### **About Paddari Tribe:**

- They reside in the remote Paddar area of the Kishtwar district, sharing borders with Zaskar (Ladakh) in the north and the east, Pangi in Himachal Pradesh in the south, and the rest of J&K in the west.
- As per 2011 census, Paddari population is 21548 comprising 83.6% Hindus, 9.5% Buddhists, and 6.8% Muslims.
- The people of this area speak the Paddari language.

## **BRICS SUMMIT 2023**

### **Why in News?**

The **15th BRICS summit hosted by South Africa in Johannesburg.**

The five-member **BRICS invited six more countries to join the alliance** on Thursday (August 24), in a move which can **strengthen its claim of being a 'voice of the Global South'** on one hand, while **raising concerns about China's increasing dominance on the other.**



## About BRICS:

- BRICS consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- BRICS is a grouping of the world economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa formed by the 2010 addition of South Africa to the predecessor BRIC.
- The original acronym "BRIC", or "the BRICs", was coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill to describe fast-growing economies that he predicted would collectively dominate the global economy by 2050.
- The BRICS nations encompass about 27% of the world's land surface and 42% of the global population.
- All five states are members of the G20.
- Chaired by member countries in rotational basis.



## About this summit:

- The 15th summit of BRICS was held in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- The theme for the 15th BRICS Summit : "***BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism***".
- The PM of India gifted **Bidri Surahi, Nagaland Shawl, and Gond Paintings** to BRICS leaders.
- BRICS marked its 15th summit by expanding its membership from five to eleven countries, reflecting a concerted effort to enhance its global standing.
- **Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, and Argentina** joined the BRICS fold, amplifying the group's representation across the Middle East, Africa, and South America.
- Full membership will take effect on January 1, 2024.
- Chaired by member countries in rotational basis.
- **South Africa is the chair for 2023.**

## NEW AYUSH VISA CATEGORY FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS

### Why in News?

The Indian government has introduced a **new Ayush visa category for foreign nationals seeking treatment under Indian systems of medicine**, including Ayurveda, wellness, and Yoga.

### About:

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had announced a creation of a special **Ayush Visa category** for facilitating foreign nationals travel to India seeking Ayush therapy, at **Global Ayush Investment and Innovation Summit (GAIS) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat in April 2022.**
- A *new chapter, e., Chapter 11A, Ayush Visa, has been incorporated* after Chapter 11 – Medical Visa of the Visa Manual, which deals with treatment under the Indian systems of medicine, and accordingly, necessary amendments have been made in various chapters of the Visa Manual, 2019.
- Introduction of Ayush Visa category is **part of India’s roadmap for the Heal in India initiative of the government**, which is intended at promoting India as a medical value travel destination.
- Aim : To provide “integrated and holistic treatment” to the world in India and “enhance patient mobility for access to world-class, affordable, and quality healthcare services” and “strengthen the global recognition of Indian traditional medicine”.
- Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are working together to develop a one stop Heal in India portal to promote India as a Medical tourism destination of the world.
- Medical Value Travel has seen significant growth in India in recent years.



- According to the report 'The Global Wellness Economy: Looking beyond COVID' by the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), the **Global Wellness economy will grow at 9.9% annually.**
- Ayush based healthcare & Wellness economy is estimated to grow to \$70 billion by 2025.
- Ministry of Ayush has been working on many fronts to promote Ayush system of treatment national and globally.
- Recently, a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), Ministry of Tourism, GoI was signed** to work together for the promotion of Medical Value Travel in Ayurveda and other traditional systems of medicine.

### **About AYUSH:**

- Ayush is a **term used in India to refer to traditional systems of medicine** and holistic wellness practices
- **AYUSH, which stands for Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Naturopathy, Siddha, and Homoeopathy**, is an acronym devised in 2003 to change the name of the Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy (ISM & H), representing various ancient healthcare systems and alternative medicine practices in the country.



### **About Medical Tourism:**

- It refers to the **practice of travelling to another country to receive medical treatment or healthcare services**, often due to cost savings, higher quality care, or availability of specialized treatments.

- **India has also been ranked 10th in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-21** out of 46 destinations in the world by the Medical Tourism Association.
- **Other steps** to encourage medical tourism:
  - National Medical and Wellness Tourism Board
  - Champion service sector scheme for Medical tourism
  - National strategy and roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism

## NATIONAL HANDLOOM DAY

### Why in News?

National Handloom Day is observed on **7th August every year** in India.

### About National Handloom Day:

- The National Handloom Day, **first celebrated in 2015**, was initiated to honor the Swadeshi Movement launched on 7th August, 1905, which promoted indigenous industries and handloom weavers.
- On this day, the nation remembers its long history of handloom weaving and pays tribute to the role that weavers have played in preserving the nation's cultural legacy.
- It **highlights the contribution of handloom to the socio-economic development of the country** and increases the income of the weavers.
- It is celebrated **under the coordination of the Ministry of Textiles.**
- National Handloom Day is being observed at 28 Weavers' Service Centres in different States and 16 National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Campuses.
- **This year, the 9th National Handloom Day is being celebrated.**
- An e-portal **Bhartiya Vastra evam Shilpa Kosh ("भारतीय वस्त्र एवं शिल्प कोष")** - a **Repository of Textiles & Crafts** that has been developed by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) has been launched.





## **Handloom Sector in India:**

- The handloom industry plays a crucial role in India's economy and society.
- According to the **Handloom Census 2019-20, there were around 35,22,512 handloom workers across the country**, with an impressive 72.29% of them being women.
- The sector is **one of the largest unorganized economic activities, providing employment to over 43.31 lakh weavers from rural and semi-urban areas**, most of whom are women and come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The **Indian handloom products hold immense potential in the global market**.
- **India stands as the second-largest exporter of handloom products**, with exports valued at US\$ 353.9 million in 2017-18.
- The industry caters to over 125 countries worldwide, showcasing its appeal and demand internationally.
- The handloom sector boasts various **strengths** that give it a comparative advantage over other sectors:
  - **Minimal Use of Capital and Power:** The handloom industry is eco-friendly and sustainable as it requires minimal capital and power for production.
  - **Diverse Premium Design Choices:** The sector enables the production of unique and customized designs, offering consumers a wide variety of premium choices.
  - **High Return on Investment (ROI):** Finished handloom products command higher prices, resulting in a higher return on investment for weavers.
  - **Geographical Diversity:** Handlooms are spread across India, with a significant concentration in the North East region, accounting for 65.2% of total operational handlooms.
  - **Women's empowerment** is at the core of the handloom industry, with over 77% of the adult weavers and allied workers being women.
- The handloom **sector faces various challenges** that hinder its growth and sustainability such as:
  - Shortage of Inputs and Working Capital,
  - Inadequate Credit Availability
  - Marketing Issues
  - Quality Inconsistencies and Supply Chain Inefficiencies
  - Competition from Power Looms and Mills

- Technological Backwardness
- Paucity in New Designs and Reduction in Number of Weavers

## TAMIL PALM MANUSCRIPT- GNANAMUYARCHI

### Why in News?

Palm manuscripts from the 18th Century titled “Gnanamuyarchi” have been discovered in an Armenian monastery in Northern Italy.

### About:

- Gnanamuyarchi are Tamil manuscripts found in an Armenian monastery in Northern Italy.
- The manuscript could be a copy of the first Tamil translation of Spiritual Exercise, written by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century.
- The translation was mostly done by Michele Bertoldi, known in Tamil as Gnanaprakasasamy.
- Initially categorized as ‘Indian Papyrus Lamulic Language–XIII Century’, the manuscripts were not recognized as Tamil texts.
- It’s suggested that Armenians from Chennai might have brought the manuscripts to Italy.



### About Manuscripts:

- A manuscript is a handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least 75 years and has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value.
- Lithographs and printed volumes are not manuscripts.

- **Manuscripts are found in hundreds of different languages and scripts.** Often, one language is written in a number of different scripts.
- For example, **Sanskrit is written in Odia script, Grantha script, Devanagari script and many other scripts.**
- **Manuscripts are distinct from historical records** such as epigraphs on rocks, firmans, revenue records which provide direct information on events or processes in history.
- **Manuscripts have knowledge content.** For example, the Bakhshali manuscript is an ancient Indian mathematical text written on birch bark, and is considered to be the earliest recorded example of the use of zero.

## HAVANA SYNDROME

### Why in News?

The Central govt has told the Karnataka High Court that it will look into the matter of 'Havana Syndrome' in India, in response to a Bengaluru resident's recent petition.

### About Havana Syndrome:

- **Havana Syndrome refers to a set of mental health symptoms** that are said to be experienced by United States intelligence and embassy officials in various countries.
- The word '**syndrome**' simply means a set of symptoms. It does not mean a unique medical condition, but rather a set of symptoms that are usually experienced together whose origins may be difficult to confirm.
- Havana Syndrome typically

### What is Havana syndrome?

The medical mystery named for the Cuban city where U.S. diplomats first experienced sudden, debilitating symptoms in 2016 has been reported by Americans serving in several other countries.

Acute symptoms (often occurring suddenly) may include:

Loud sounds (sometimes described as chirping, clicking or screeching) and pain in one or both ears; many felt the sensations came from a particular direction or were felt when in a specific location

Tinnitus, hearing loss

Intense pressure or vibration inside the head

Difficulty with memory or concentration

Visual disturbances

Nausea

Unsteady gait, loss of balance, vertigo/dizziness

Chronic symptoms (can last weeks, months or longer) may include:

Headache

Impaired concentration, memory loss

Insomnia

Depression

Impaired balance

No definitive cause has been found, but scientific studies have noted many of the acute symptoms are consistent with exposure to directed radio frequency (RF) energy. One theory posits the use of RF energy by a U.S. adversary as a weapon or a tool of espionage.

Source: National Academy of Sciences

AP

involves symptoms such as **hearing certain sounds without any outside noise, nausea, vertigo and headaches, memory loss and balance issues.**

- Its **origins may be difficult to confirm**
- But as the name suggests, **it traces its roots to Cuba in late 2016.**
- According to US media reports, **in the past few years, its officials have reported more than 130 such experiences across the world** including at Moscow in Russia, Poland, Georgia, Taiwan, Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Austria, among others.
- In India, the first such case was reported in the same year, when a US intelligence officer travelling to New Delhi with CIA director William Burns reported symptoms of Havana Syndrome.
- However, further study by scientists in the US and medical examination of the victims began to suggest that **they may have been subjected to high-powered microwaves that either damaged or interfered with the nervous system.**
- It was said to have built pressure inside the brain that generated the feeling of a sound being heard.
- Greater exposure to high-powered microwaves is said not only to interfere with the body's sense of balance but also to impact memory and cause permanent brain damage. Low levels of microwaves are also emitted from mobile phones but they are not targeted.
- **As of July 2023, the 2021 incident was the only reported occurrence of the syndrome in India.** Sources in the Indian security establishment said in 2021 that they were not aware of any weapon with such capacities being in the possession of an Indian agency.

## BELEM DECLARATION

### Why in News?

**Leaders from the eight countries across the Amazon**, including Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela, **failed to agree on the goal to protect the rainforest at the ongoing Amazon Summit** organised by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO).



## **About:**

- ACTO (Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization) is an **international organisation “aimed at the promotion of sustainable development of the Amazon Basin”**.
- Colombia had proposed that 80 per cent of the Amazon should be protected from deforestation and degradation by 2025 but did not find support from all the members.
- Scientists have warned for long that if the combined deforestation and degradation of the Amazon crosses a 20-25% threshold, the forest could reach an irreversible tipping point that may result in the dieback of the entire ecosystem.
- The **failure of consensus on protected areas could have implications on the overall goals and targets set under the Convention on Biological Diversity's Global Biodiversity Framework set in December 2022.**
- Under this, **member countries had agreed to protect at least 30 per cent of land and sea by 2030.**



## **BelemDeclaration:**

- The Belem Declaration is a **statement released during the Amazon Summit, involving leaders from Amazon countries.**
- The Belem Declaration **recognises Indigenous knowledge as a condition for biodiversity conservation.**
- It **calls for ensuring full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making and public policy formulation processes.**
- The **declaration promotes sustainable forest use and diverse economic solutions, addressing concerns about deforestation and degradation in the Amazon region.**
- It also underlines the need to protect land rights to prevent deforestation and preserve biodiversity within Indigenous territories.

## VAQUITA PORPOISE

### Why in News?

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has issued its first-ever extinction alert for the critically endangered vaquita porpoise, the world's smallest porpoise native to Mexico's Gulf of California.

### About Vaquita Porpoise:

- The vaquita is a species of porpoise endemic to the northern end of the Gulf of California in Baja California, Mexico.
- Vaquita Porpoise is the world's smallest cetacean.
- It is also known as the “panda of the sea” for the distinctive black circles around its eyes, along with a proportionally large dorsal fin.
- It has a small body with an unusually tall, triangular dorsal fin, a rounded head, and no distinguished beak. The coloration is mostly grey with a darker back and a white ventral field. Prominent black patches surround its lips and eyes.
- They live in shallow, turbid waters of less than 150 m depth.
- The vaquita is unique among the porpoises as it is the only species of that family found in warm waters.
- Vaquitas inhabit murky warm waters within 26 kilometres of the shoreline since there is high food availability and a strong tidal mix.
- Vaquitas are generalists, foraging on a variety of demersal fish species, crustaceans, and squids, though benthic fish such as grunts and croakers make up most of the diet.
- Vaquitas are generally seen alone or in pairs, often with a calf, but have been observed in small groups of up to 10 individuals
- **IUCN Status : Critically Endangered**
- **CITES : Appendix I**



- The **vaquita population has been declining** continuously for decades **due to bycatch in gillnet set to catch shrimp and fish including totoaba.**
- ``Its numbers have fallen from a population of approximately 570 in 1997 to around 10 animals in 2018.

### **About International Whaling Commission (IWC):**

- The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is a **specialised regional fishery management organisation**, established under the terms of the **1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW)**.
- Its **headquarters is in Cambridge, United Kingdom.**
- **Aim:** To **provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks** and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.
- As the decision-making body of the convention, the **IWC reviews and revises measures laid down in the "Schedule to the Convention"**, which govern the conduct of whaling throughout the world.
- The **IWC was created by voluntary agreement among the member nations** to function as the sole governing body with authority to act under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.



### **SuSwagatam Portal**

#### **Why in News?**

The **Supreme Court has introduced the 'SuSwagatam' portal**, an online platform that facilitates the issuance of e-passes for entering the apex court.

## **About SuSwagatam Portal:**

- ‘SuSwagatam’ is a **user-friendly web application** that enables advocates, visitors, and interns to register online and request e-passes for various purposes, including attending court hearings and meeting with advocate.
- In July 2023, the portal underwent testing as a pilot project and received positive responses from its users.
- It is a **web-based and mobile-friendly application** that allows users to request for e-passes for various purposes such as attending court hearings, meeting advocates, etc.



## **WORLD ELEPHANT DAY**

### **Why in News?**

World Elephant Day **observed on 12 August every year.**

**Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav**, addressing World Elephant Day, **highlighted India’s vital role in conserving wild Asian elephants due to its largest population.**

### **About World Elephant Day:**

- **World Elephant Day**, observed **globally on August 12**, is a significant event dedicated to raising awareness about the pressing challenges faced by elephants and advocating for their protection and conservation.
- The **theme for World Elephant Day 2023** is **“Ending the Illegal Wildlife Trade”.**



- This observance serves as a vital platform to highlight issues such as habitat loss, ivory poaching, human-elephant conflicts, and the urgent need for improved conservation efforts.
- This **occasion aims to promote the importance of safeguarding these magnificent creatures for future generations and to encourage actions that contribute to their welfare and survival.**
- It's a day **to appreciate the vital role elephants play in maintaining ecosystems,** as well as to support organizations and initiatives that work towards their preservation.

### **About Status of Elephants in India:**

- **India has about 30,000 Asian Elephants,** which is the world's largest population of the species (more than 60% of the Asian elephant population is in India)
- As per Elephant Census (2017), **Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054)**
- The Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*) is one of three extant recognised subspecies of the Asian elephant and native to mainland Asia
- **Since 1986, the Asian elephant has been listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List** as the wild population has declined by at least 50% since the 1930s to 1940s, i.e. three elephant generations.
- The **Asian elephant is threatened by habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation.**

### **About Elephant:**

- Elephants **are the largest living land animals.**
- Three living species are currently recognised: the **African bush elephant, the African forest elephant, and the Asian elephant.**
- Distinctive features of elephants include a long proboscis called a trunk, tusks, large ear flaps, pillar-like legs, and tough but sensitive grey skin.
- **African elephants have larger ears and concave backs,** whereas **Asian elephants have smaller ears and convex or level backs.**



- Elephants are scattered throughout sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia and are found in different habitats, including savannahs, forests, deserts, and marshes.

### Steps taken by government for elephant conservation:

- National Heritage Animal
- Project Elephant
- Protecting Corridors
- Minimizing Human-Animal Conflict
- Genetic Database for Captive Elephants
- Gaj Yatra
- MIKE program (2003)
- Asian Elephant Alliance
- Frontline Staff Field Manual
- Land Use Land Cover Analysis

### ABOUT ASIAN ELEPHANTS:

- The Asian elephant, also known as the Asiatic elephant, is the **only living species of the genus Elephas**.
- It is **distributed throughout the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia**, from India in the west, Nepal in the north, Sumatra in the south, and to Borneo in the east.
- The Asian elephant is the **largest living land animal in Asia**.
- The Asian elephant is listed on **CITES Appendix I**
- Since 1986, the Asian elephant has been listed as **Endangered on the IUCN Red List**



- The **population of Asiatic Elephant has declined by at least 50 per cent over the last three elephant generations**, which is about 60–75 years.
- It is **primarily threatened by loss of habitat, habitat degradation, fragmentation and poaching.**
- In general, the **Asian elephant is smaller than the African bush elephant** and has the highest body point on the head.
- The **back is convex or level.**
- The **ears are small with dorsal borders folded laterally.**
- The **forehead has two hemispherical bulges**, unlike the flat front of the African elephants.
- **Its long trunk or proboscis has only one fingerlike tip**, in contrast to the African elephants which have two.
- Asian elephants have more muscle coordination and can perform more complex tasks.
- Asian elephants **inhabit grasslands, tropical evergreen forests, semi-evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous forests and dry thorn forests.**
- Asian elephants are crepuscular. They are **classified as megaherbivores** and consume up to 150 kg (330 lb) of plant matter per day.

#### **ABOUT AFRICAN ELEPHANT:**

- African elephants **are members of the genus *Loxodonta* comprising two living elephant species**, the **African bush elephant** (*L. africana*) and the **smaller African forest elephant** (*L. cyclotis*).
- Both are **social herbivores with grey skin**, but differ in the size and colour of their tusks and in the shape and size of their ears and skulls.
- **IUCN Red List; as of 2021: The bush elephant - Endangered**

**The forest elephant -Critically Endangered.**

- African elephants **have grey folded skin up to 30 mm (1.2 in) thick** that is covered with sparse, bristled dark-brown to black hair.

- Short tactile hair grows on the trunk, which **has two finger-like processes at the tip**, whereas Asian elephants only have one.
- **Their large ears help to reduce body heat**; flapping them creates air currents and exposes the ears' inner sides where large blood vessels increase heat loss during hot weather.
- The **African bush elephant is the largest terrestrial animal**.
- African elephants are **distributed in Sub-Saharan Africa**, where they inhabit Sahelian scrubland and arid regions, tropical rainforests, mopane and miombo woodlands.
- African forest elephant populations occur only in Central Africa.
- **African elephants are highly intelligent**.
- Both species are **threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, and poaching for the illegal ivory trade** is a threat in several range countries as well.



## MATANGINI HAZRA & KANAKLATA BARUA

### Why in News?

President Droupadi Murmu, on Independence Day eve, **paid tribute to the remarkable women who fought for India's freedom**.

She **highlighted the contributions of two notable figures: Matangini Hazra, Kanaklata Barua**.

### MATANGINI HAZRA :

- She was a revolutionary leader who played a significant role in India's struggle for independence.
- She was **born in Hogla, West Bengal in 1869**.

- Born into a humble family of farmers, Matangini faced financial constraints that prevented her from receiving a formal education.
- Due to the lack of resources to arrange a substantial dowry, **she was married at the age of 12** to Trilochan Hazra, a 60-year-old resident of Alinan village in Medinipur.
- **After her husband's death, she dedicated herself to social causes** and became deeply involved in the Nationalist movement, supporting Mahatma Gandhi's ideals.
- Matangini's deep admiration for Gandhi was so profound that in the village, **she earned the nickname Gandhiburi**, signifying the elderly woman dedicated to Gandhian principles.
- Hazra **actively engaged in several protests**, like the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Salt March.
- **Her involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement resulted in multiple brief incarcerations.** It was during these periods of confinement that she joined the ranks of the Indian National Congress, actively following Gandhi's path by engaging in spinning her own khadi cloth.
- **During Quit India Movement in 1942, Matangini Hazra, then 73 years old,** fearlessly led a substantial procession of approximately 6,000 protestors, **rallying for the occupation of the Tamluk police station.**
- In the ensuing **clash with British authorities, she was shot and killed**, becoming a martyr for the cause of Indian independence.



### KANAKLATA BARUA:

- **Kanaklata Barua was an eminent freedom fighter in Assam.**
- She was **born on December 22, 1924**, at Barangabari of Sonitpur district of Assam.
- She was **born to Krishna Kanta Baruah and Korneswari Baruah.**

- **At the age of 17 she was motivated to join the freedom struggle of the country and **tried to join the Azad Hind Fauz.** But because of her being minor she could not succeed.**
- At a mere 17 years of age, **she assumed leadership of the MrityuBahini, a group of freedom fighters,** in a **daring endeavor to unfurl the Tricolour at the Gohpur police station in Assam on September 20, 1942.**
- Her unflinching determination to lead the procession was remarkable, and her valiant actions left an indelible mark.
- **In the face of a confrontation with the police, she was tragically shot and killed while clutching onto the national flag.**
- Her sacrifice became a wellspring of inspiration, especially at a juncture when women's participation in the struggle for freedom was gaining momentum.
- **She was one of the youngest martyrs of the Quit India Movement,** she died at the age of 17 devoted for the independence of the country.
- **In 2020, the Coast Guard named a Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) after her, the ICGS Kanaklata Barua.**



These women, Matangini Hazra and Kanaklata Barua exemplified the spirit of India's struggle for independence and their contributions continue to be honoured and remembered.

## VISHWAKARMA YOJANA

### Why in News?

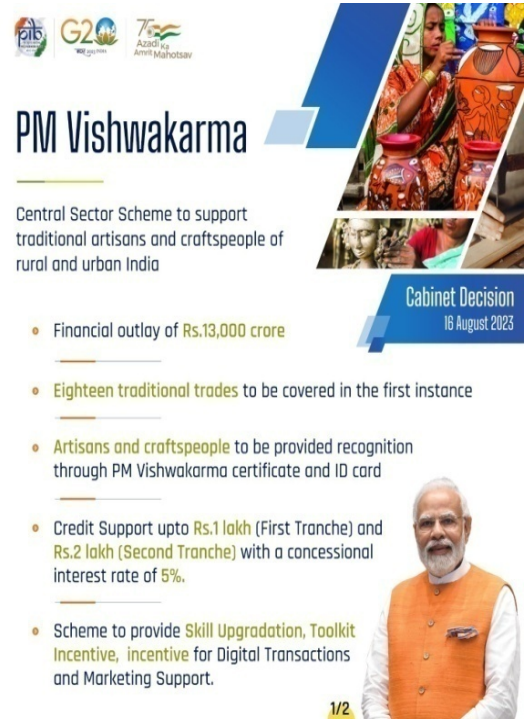
In the recent **Independence Day address**, the Prime Minister unveiled two significant initiatives aimed at empowering artisans and women's self-help groups (SHGs) across India.



The two initiatives are: the **Vishwakarma Yojana** and the provision of drones for women SHGs under Lakpati Didi Scheme.

### **About Vishwakarma Yojana:**

- The Vishwakarma Yojana is a pioneering **scheme designed to uplift individuals skilled in traditional craftsmanship, particularly from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) community.**
- Aim : **To promote skill development and empowerment among the youth who are engaged in traditional artisan works** such as weaving, goldsmithing, blacksmithing, laundry, barbering and others.
- Skilled artisans like weavers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, laundry workers, and barbers, among others, will be empowered through this scheme.
- The scheme **will encompass various elements such as financial aid, modern and green technology training, brand promotion, market connectivity, digital payments, and social security.**
- The scheme will have an initial allocation of around 13,000 crore to 15,000 crore and **will be launched on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti, which falls on September 17 this year.**
- This scheme, **named after the divine architect and craftsman Vishwakarma, seeks to preserve and enhance the guru-shishya parampara (teacher-pupil tradition) of passing down skills within families engaged in various artisanal trades.**



The infographic features the title 'PM Vishwakarma' in a large, bold font. Below it, a subtitle reads 'Central Sector Scheme to support traditional artisans and craftspeople of rural and urban India'. To the right, there is a photograph of a woman in traditional attire working on a pottery wheel. A blue box on the right side of the infographic contains the text 'Cabinet Decision 16 August 2023'. Below the title, a list of key features is provided in bullet points: 'Financial outlay of Rs.13,000 crore', 'Eighteen traditional trades to be covered in the first instance', 'Artisans and craftspeople to be provided recognition through PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card', 'Credit Support upto Rs.1 lakh (First Tranche) and Rs.2 lakh (Second Tranche) with a concessional interest rate of 5%', and 'Scheme to provide Skill Upgradation, Toolkit Incentive, incentive for Digital Transactions and Marketing Support.' At the bottom right, there is a small portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a page number '1/2'.

### **Features of Vishwakarma Yojana:**

- Vishwakarma Yojana is a scheme that aims to provide skill development, financial assistance, market linkages, social security and empowerment to the artisans and

craftsmen belonging to various communities, especially the Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

- It **will cover artisans and craftsmen from various sectors** such as textiles, leather, metal, wood, clay, stone, bamboo, cane, paper, glass etc.
- Artisans and craftspeople enrolled in the scheme **will receive a PM Vishwakarma certificate and an identity card.**
- They will **also be eligible for collateral-free credit support of up to 1 lakh** (first tranche) and **2 lakh (second tranche) at a concessional interest rate of 5%.**
- The Vishwakarma Yojana has been allocated a **budget ranging from 13,000 crore to 15,000 crore for five financial years** from 2023-2024 to 2027-2028.
- The **scheme encompasses 18 traditional trades** across both rural and urban areas. These trades encompass carpenters, boat-makers, blacksmiths, potters, sculptors, cobblers, tailors, and more.
- It will provide skill training to the artisans and craftsmen based on their existing level of proficiency and market demand. The **training will be imparted through various modes** such as online courses, mobile apps, workshops, seminars etc.
- It **will provide financial assistance to the artisans and craftsmen in the form of loans, grants, subsidies, interest waivers** etc. The assistance will be given for various purposes such as raw material procurement, tool purchase, product development, quality improvement etc.
- A notable objective of the scheme is **to ensure that artisans are seamlessly integrated into both domestic and global value chains**, thus enhancing their market access and opportunities.
- It will provide market linkages to the artisans and craftsmen through various platforms such as **e-commerce portals, exhibitions, fairs, festivals etc.** It will also facilitate branding, packaging.

### **Other Steps taken by Government of India to support and uplift traditional artisans and craftsmen:**

- Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi)
- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme
- Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)
- Hunar Haat

- Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTAAD) scheme
- GeM (Government e-Marketplace)

## LAKHPATI DIDI SCHEME

### Why in News?

On the Independence Day address, the Prime Minister unveiled initiatives **Lakpati Didi Scheme** which aimed at empowering artisans and women's self-help groups (SHGs) across India.

### About Lakpati Didi Scheme:

- The 'Lakpati Didi' scheme is an initiative to empower women in rural areas by encouraging them to start micro-enterprises and become economically self-sufficient.
- Aim: The goal of the scheme is **to create two crore women millionaires ("lakpati didis") in villages using SHGs**
- This scheme aligns with the broader mission of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment.
- Under this scheme, **women will be provided skill training so that they can earn over Rs 1 lakh per year.**



### Features of the Scheme:

- This initiative aims to leverage technology to transform the agricultural landscape while empowering women in rural communities.
- **Drones will be provided to women SHGs for agricultural activities.**

- Around **15,000 women's SHGs will be given training in operating and repairing drones.**
- This training will not only create new avenues for income generation but also equip women with cutting-edge skills.
- Drones have the potential to revolutionize agriculture by enabling precision farming, crop monitoring, and pest control.
- Under the scheme, **women will be trained in skills like LED bulb making, plumbing, among others.**
- Fostering women-led development and promoting their active participation in the workforce and economic growth.
- **Providing skill development training to women through Self Help Groups (SHGs)**
- Enabling them to earn at least Rs 1 lakh annually.

## GLOBAL SUMMIT ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

### Why in News?

The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Ayush, is organizing a unique global summit on Traditional Medicine.

### About Global Summit on Traditional Medicine:

- The **Ministry of Ayush** and the **World Health Organisation** is organizing the two-day Summit, on the 17th and 18th of August 2023 **in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.**
- **Theme** of the Global Summit: **"Towards Health and Well-being for All"**
- **Aim:** To explore the role of traditional complimentary and integrative medicine in addressing pressing health challenges and driving progress in global health and sustainable development.



- This Global Summit **presents a unique platform for dialogue, idea exchange, collaboration, and international partnerships in the realm of Traditional and Complementary Medicine.**
- Health ministers from 30 countries will attend this two-day event.
- For centuries, **traditional and complementary medicine has played a pivotal role in promoting personal and community health.**
- Even in modern times, the demand for natural and herbal-based pharmaceuticals and cosmetics underscores the enduring significance of traditional healing practices.”
- This center serves as a knowledge hub, synergizing ancient wisdom with modern science for the betterment of people and the planet.
- By supplementing WHO's core functions, the center accelerates the advancement of traditional medicine globally.”
- The first ever Global Summit for Traditional Medicine holds immense significance as **it goes beyond borders, unites mind for future of healthcare, and signifies the dawn of a new era in healthcare globally.”**
- This summit highlights the strides India has made in blending traditional practices with contemporary approaches, ultimately showing a path toward achieving universal health coverage through traditional medicine system
- The summit will **also feature an exhibition showcasing traditional medicine systems from around the world, including the Ministry of Ayush’s contributions.**

### **TRADITIONAL MEDICINES:**

- **Traditional medicine, as defined by the WHO, is the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures.**
- These skills are used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental illness.
- Its reach **encompasses ancient practices such as acupuncture, ayurvedic medicine, herbal mixtures as well as modern medicines.**
- Some traditional medicine systems are supported by huge volumes of literature and records of the theoretical concepts and practical skills.



- Others pass down these skills from generation to generation through verbal teaching.
- **The most widely used traditional medicine systems today include those of China, India, and Africa.**

## 6<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF MINAMATA CONVENTION

### Why in News?

The **sixth anniversary of the Minamata Convention on Mercury** is a reminder of global efforts to combat the toxic effects of mercury.

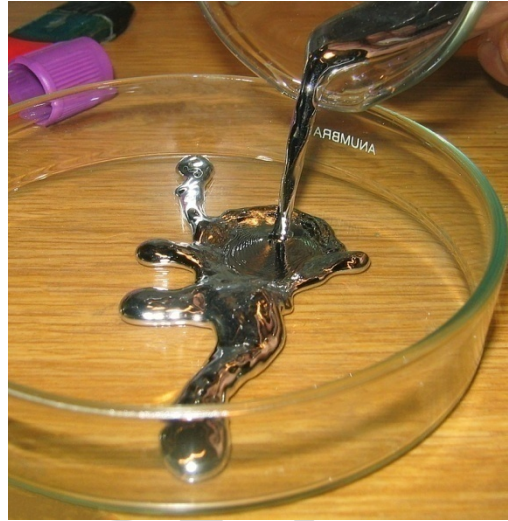
### About Minamata Convention:

- The Minamata Convention on Mercury, which marks its sixth anniversary, is a significant global agreement aimed at safeguarding people and the environment from the harmful impacts of mercury exposure.
- **It was agreed at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Geneva, Switzerland 2013.**
- It entered into force in 2017.
- Controlling the anthropogenic releases of mercury throughout its lifecycle is one of the key obligations under the Convention.
- It also regulates the movement of mercury across international borders.
- It excludes naturally occurring mercury emissions.
- The Convention also addresses interim storage of mercury and its disposal once it becomes waste, sites contaminated by mercury as well as health issues.
- **India has ratified the Convention.**



### About Mercury:

- Mercury is a naturally occurring element found in the Earth's crust.
- It is **found in air, water and soil.**
- It is considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) as one of the top ten chemicals or groups of chemicals of major public health concern.
- It may have toxic effects on the nervous system, thyroid, kidneys, lungs, immune system, eyes, gums and skin.
- Mercury is a **heavy, silvery-white metal that is liquid at room temperature.**
- Solid mercury is malleable and ductile and can be cut with a knife.
- Compared with other metals, **it is a poor conductor of heat, but a fair conductor of electricity.**
- Mercury's **high coefficient of thermal expansion** and **easy visibility** make it **suitable for use in traditional thermometers and barometers.**
- Mercury has been used in various chemical and mining processes, including the production of chlorine and mining of gold.
- **Mercury-wetted switches are used in various electrical applications** because mercury's conductivity and low resistance make it suitable for creating a reliable electrical connection.
- **Minamata Disease:** A disorder caused by methylmercury poisoning that was **first described in the inhabitants of Minamata Bay, Japan** and resulted from their eating fish contaminated with mercury industrial waste.
- The disease is characterized by **peripheral sensory loss, tremors, and both hearing and visual loss.**



### **Sources of Mercury Pollution:**

- Natural Sources – Volcanic Eruptions and Erosion of rocks
- Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM)
- Industrial Processes – Chlorine Production, Cement Manufacturing, Waste Incineration etc.

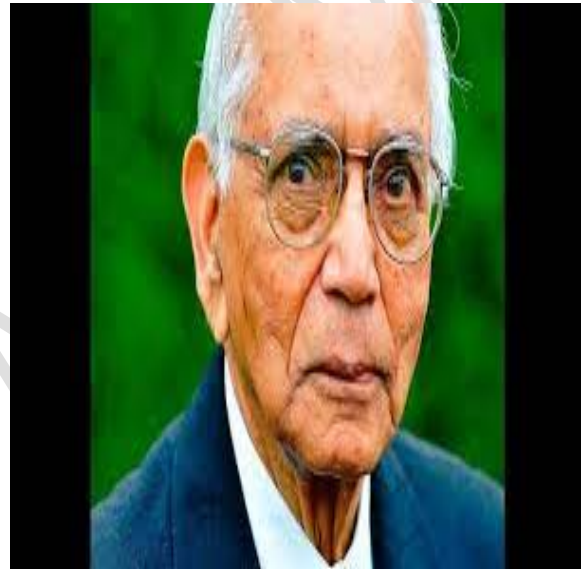
## C.R.RAO

### Why in News?

**Mr. Calyampudi Radhakrishnan Rao**, known as C.R. Rao, 102, among the world's most eminent statisticians, and who spent nearly his entire professional career in India, **died on 23 August in the United States.**

### About C.R.Rao:

- Calyampudi Radhakrishna Rao, (10 September 1920 – 22 August 2023), commonly known as C. R. Rao, **was an Indian-American mathematician and statistician.**
- He **was professor emeritus at Pennsylvania State University and Research Professor at the University at Buffalo.**
- In 1972 he was **appointed Director-Secretary of the Indian Statistical Institute.**
- He was **named Jawaharlal Nehru Professor in 1976.**
- He played a key role in developing statistical education and research in India, serving on various government committees and contributing to the field's growth.
- He received numerous awards, including **India's Padma Bhushan (1968) and Padma Vibhushan (2001).**
- Rao was honoured by numerous colloquia, honorary degrees, and festschrifts and was awarded the US National Medal of Science in 2002.
- In 2023, Rao was awarded the International Prize in Statistics, an award often touted as the "statistics' equivalent of the Nobel Prize".
- He served as chairman of the Committee on Statistics and Demographic and Communication for Population Control.
- His famous book is **"Statistics and Truth: Putting Chance to Work"**



- Rao's remarkable paper, published in 1945 in the Bulletin of the Calcutta Mathematical Society, demonstrated three fundamental results that paved the way for the modern field of statistics and provided statistical tools heavily used in science today.

### 1) The Cramer-Rao Lower Bound:

- Provides a means of knowing when a method for estimating a quantity is as good as any method can be.

### 2) The Rao-Blackwell Theorem:

- Provides a means of transforming an estimate into an optimal estimate. Together, these results form a foundation on which much of statistics is built.

### 3) The Information Geometry:

- Provided insights that pioneered a new interdisciplinary field that has flourished as "information geometry."
- Information geometry is the study of the geometrical structure of families of probability distributions.

## About International Prize in Statistics:

- The International Prize in Statistics is **awarded every two years to an individual or team** "for major achievements using statistics to advance science, technology and human welfare".
- The International Prize in Statistics, along with the COPSS Presidents' Award, are the two highest honours in the field of Statistics.
- The prize is modelled after the Nobel prizes, Abel Prize, Fields Medal and Turing Award.
- It **comes with a monetary award of \$80,000.**
- The **award ceremony takes place during the World Statistics Congress.**



## GRAND CROSS OF THE ORDER OF HONOUR- GREEK

### Why in News?

The **Greek President** has awarded the **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** with The Grand Cross of the Order of Honour.

The citation recognizes PM's efforts in promoting global awareness of India, advancing economic growth and reforms, and prioritizing environmental protection and climate change.



### About Grand Cross of the Order of Honour:

- The **Order of Honour** was established in **1975**.
- It is the **second-highest civilian honour in Greece**.
- It is conferred to "eminent personalities who, by reason of their distinguished position, have contributed to enhancing the stature of Greece".
- The head of the goddess Athena is depicted on the front side of the Star with the inscription "**ONLY THE RIGHTEOUS SHOULD BE HONOURED**".



## VISHNUGAD PIPALKOTI HEP (HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT)

### Why in News?

An independent panel of the World Bank is considering a plea by residents of Haat village, **Chamoli district, Uttarakhand** to investigate environmental damage from the under-construction Vishnugad Pipalkoti Hydro Electric Project (VPHEP) in the district.



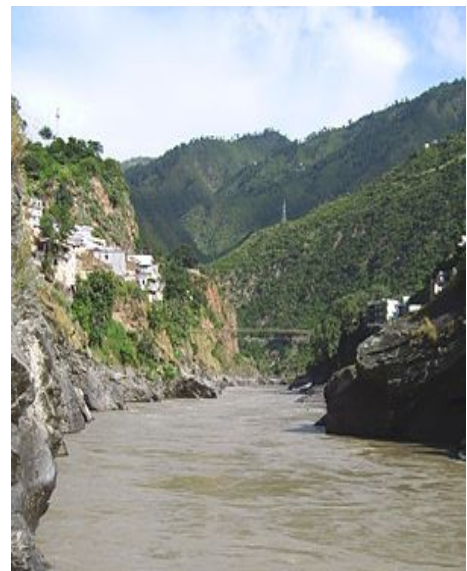
## **About Vishnugad Pipalkoti HEP:**

- The World Bank assisted **444-MW Vishnugad Pipalkoti HEP** is being built by the Tehri Hydropower Development Corporation (THDC), a partially State-owned enterprise **on the Alaknanda River in Uttarakhand**.
- The project is primarily funded by the **World Bank** and was sanctioned in 2011.
- It is **proposed to be completed in June 2023**.
- About 40% of the funds for the \$792 million project (64,000 crore approx.) had already been disbursed.
- **Residents in their complaint have said muck dumping from the dam threatens the local Lakshmi Narayan Temple**, which is deemed to be of historical and cultural importance by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- Other than ecological damage the project had caused forced resettlement, **loss of livelihoods and, in several instances, the amount of compensation offered was inadequate.**



## **About Alaknanda River:**

- The Alaknanda is a **turbulent Himalayan river in the Indian state of Uttarakhand** and one of the two headstreams of the Ganges.
- The Alaknanda **rises at the confluence and foot of the Satopanth and Bhagirath Kharak glaciers** in Uttarakhand.
- **At Devprayag the Alaknanda River converges with the Bhagirathi River** and travels onward as the Ganges River.
- The Alaknanda **contributes a significantly larger portion to the flow of the Ganges than the Bhagirathi**.



- The Alaknanda system **drains parts of Chamoli, Tehri, and Pauri districts.**
- **Badrinath**, one of the holy destinations for Hindus in India is **located near to the bank of the Alaknanda River.**
- At Its origin, Lake Satopanth is a triangular lake located at a height of 4402 m and named after the Hindu trinity Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Shiva.
- **Panch Prayag:** Five sites in Uttarakhand where **five rivers merge into River Alaknanda to ultimately form the holy River Ganga** is called Panch Prayag (in Hindi, 'panch' means five and 'prayag' means confluence). These are:
  1. ***Vishnuprayag***, where the **Alaknanda is met by the Dhauliganga River**
  2. ***Nandaprayag***, where it is **met by the Nandakini River**
  3. ***Karnaprayag***, where it is **met by the Pindar River**
  4. ***Rudraprayag***, where it is **met by the Mandakini River**
  5. ***Devprayag***, where it **meets the Bhagirathi River and officially becomes the Ganges**

## SEETHAKALI FOLK ART

### Why in News?

The **Perinad Seethakali Sangham**, a group of artists from diverse backgrounds, **revived the dying Seethakali folk art form in 2017.**

This group is now set to perform outside Kerala for the first time.

### About Seethakali Folk Art:

- Seethakali is a **traditional folk-dance drama from Desinganad, Kerala, primarily during the Onam festivities.**
- It is **presented by Dalit artists from the Veda and Pulaya communities.**
- Seethakali **portrays the journey from “vanayatra” (exile to the forest) to “andardhanam” (descend**



into the earth) of Sita, featuring a blend of songs, storytelling, and fast movements.

- The **dance drama is accompanied by instruments** such as **ganjira, manikatta, chiratta, and kaimani.**
- **Seethakali's story is conveyed through songs**, with 28 collected over three years, featuring a folk style influenced by Vallappaattu, Kuthirappaattu, and Rakshasappattu.
- **Seethakali songs were orally transmitted from one generation to the next**, which led to a pause in the tradition.
- The **performance includes key characters** such as Sita, Ram, Lakshman, Ravan, and Hanuman.

## PROJECT AMBER

### Why in News?

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with Generation India Foundation (GIF) and Amazon Web Services India Private Limited (AWS India) is providing 'cloud' skills training to 1,500 learners.

### About Project AMBER:

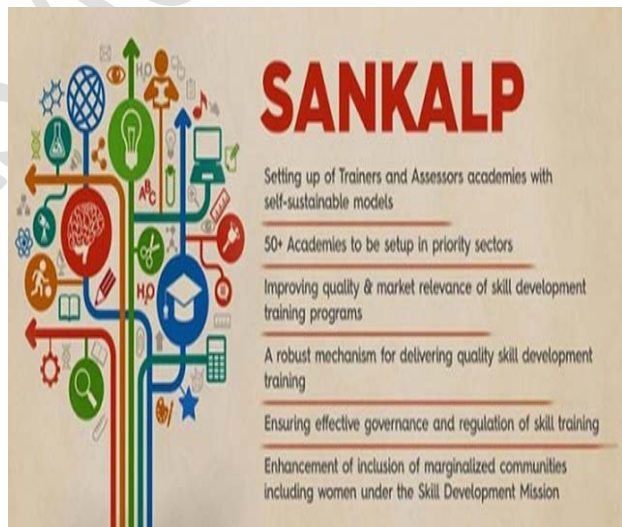
- The **Accelerated Mission for Better Employment and Retention (AMBER)** project is a joint initiative of the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** – under the aegis of the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** - and **GIF (Generation India Foundation)** to create the necessary avenues.
- The initiative has been **undertaken under the SANKALP programme of MSDE** with a focus on women to improve gender diversification in the tech industry and underprivileged groups.
- This project **aims to train 30,000 youth**, 50% of whom will be women.



- As part of this collaboration, the **learners take part in AWS (re/Start), a workforce development program for unemployed and underemployed individuals.**
- It **covers fundamental AWS cloud skills as well as practical career tips**, including resume writing and interview preparation.
- The **program also covers the cost for learners to take the AWS Cloud Practitioner Certification exam**, an industry-recognized credential that validates their cloud skills and knowledge and connects the participants with job interview opportunities in the cloud or IT with local employers.
- It **will bring entry-level talent into the workforce and help individuals to launch successful cloud careers, organisations to increase their competitive edge with in-demand talent, and communities.**

### **About SANKALP Programme:**

- Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood **(SANKALP) is an outcome-oriented programme of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) with a special focus on decentralised planning and quality improvement.**
- The **project focuses on transforming the overall skilling ecosystem of India, covering both central and state-level agencies for improved outcomes.**
- SANKALP has three result areas namely (i) Institutional Strengthening at National, State and District level; (ii) Quality Assurance of skill development programmes; and (iii) Inclusion of marginalized population in skill development programmes.
- Key initiatives under this programme are:
  - **Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) Programme:** A two-year academic programme that combines classroom sessions at IIMs with an intensive



field immersion at the district level to strengthen the District Skill Committees (DSCs) for skill planning and management.

- **Engagement with Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR):** A partnership to integrate skill development planning in the Gram Panchayats (GPs) by leveraging their local resources, institutions and governance mechanisms.
- **Awards for Excellence in District Skill Development Planning (DSDP Awards):** An award scheme to recognise the efforts in creating functional and innovative DSDPs by District Administration.
- **Kaushal Bharat:** A digital platform to provide information, guidance and support to all stakeholders involved in skill development such as trainees, trainers, training providers, employers, policymakers etc.

## STATE OF INDIA'S BIRD 2023

### Why in News?

According to the State of India's Birds 2023 Report, there is a general decline in numbers in most bird species in the country.

### About SoIB : State of India Bird

- The SoIB (State of India Bird) report was created to assess the conservation status of a wide range of species regularly present in India.
- It is published by State of India's Birds Partnership, a partnership involving 13 governmental and non-governmental organizations, including SACON, WII, and ZSI.
- Worldwide, common and widespread species are declining.
- But in India, lack of information has meant that conservation attention has been focussed on only a few species (usually large, charismatic and threatened).

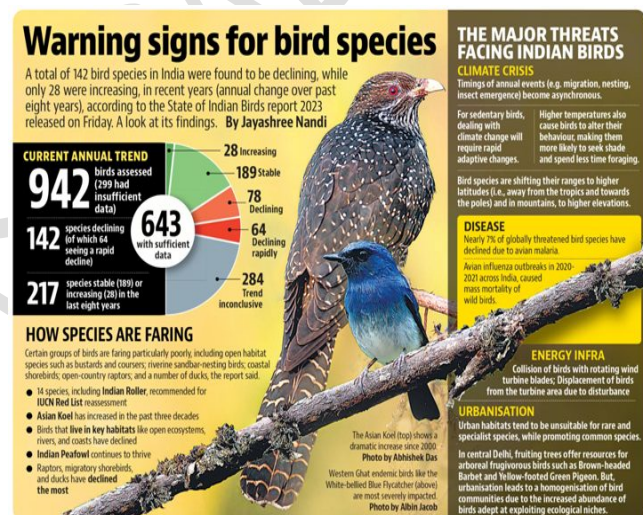




- The 2023 report extensively employs data from over 30 million observations on eBird by more than 30,000 birdwatchers.
- The report assesses **distribution range size, abundance trends over the long term** and since 2015, and **information from the IUCN Red List**
- Using these three measures, plus information from the IUCN Red List of global threat status, this **report places Indian species into Low, Moderate and High categories of Conservation Priority for India.**
- A large number of species that are thought to be common and widespread find themselves as of High Conservation Priority in the SoIB 2023 Report.

## Highlights of the Report:

- Of the 338 species that had enough data to assess for long-term trends, **60% of the species showed long-term declines.**
- **Birds that feed on vertebrates and carrion (including raptors and vultures) have declined greatly, suggesting harmful pollutants in their food resources, a decline in prey availability, or both.**
- **Birds endemic to the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka biodiversity hotspot have rapidly declined in India over the past few decades.**
- Certain **generalist species**, exemplified by the Indian peafowl, **demonstrate remarkable increases in abundance**, with a 150% rise observed over the past decades.
- The **main threats to birdlife in India** highlighted in the report include:
  - **Climate Change**
  - **Urbanization**
  - **Monocultures**
  - **Energy Infrastructure**



- **Specialist bird species**, which inhabit specific habitats like wetlands and rainforests, **are facing rapid declines**, while generalist species capable of adapting to various habitats are faring better.
- **Long-distance migratory birds**, such as those from Eurasia and the Arctic, have **suffered significant declines**, while resident species remain more stable.

## NEERAKSHI

### Why in News?

India has introduced an innovative Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) named 'Neerakshi' designed for mine detection (currently in the prototype stage).

### About Neerakshi:

- **Neerakshi is an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) designed to detect mines.**
- It is a **collaboration of Kolkata-based warship maker Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd and MSME entity AEPL.**
- The AUV was named **"Neerakshi" (meaning "Eyes in the Water").**
- The lightweight and man-portable AUV has been **designed to operate in a totally autonomous manner** and its modular design enables it to carry out a variety of roles depending on the payload.
- This **2.1-meter-long cylindrical AUV**, weighing around **45 kg**, can **perform various tasks such as mine detection, disposal, and underwater surveys.**
- It has an **endurance of nearly 4 hours**, and is **capable of operating up to a depth of 300m.**
- These AUVs once in operation by our Armed Forces, could play an important role in mine countermeasure operations and also make excellent reusable targets during Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) practices by warships.



- They can also be deployed for passive acoustic monitoring during which they could remain in position for prolonged durations, monitoring the possible movement of sub-surface platforms.
- This can be used for a variety of functions ranging from mine detection to mine disposal to underwater survey.
- Once the user trials are complete, and user requirements are incorporated, commercial production of the AUV will commence.
- Efforts are in place to increase its endurance by 200-300%, enabling it to be deployed for coastguard duties either from a mother ship or the coast.

## NATIONAL SPACE DAY

### Why in News?

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that **23rd August**, the day of the soft landing of Chandrayaan 3 on the Moon **will be commemorated as 'National Space Day'**.

### About:

- National Space Day is a **day of the year set aside in India to commemorate Chandrayaan-3's successful landing on the Moon.**
- On 23 August 2023, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) reached a significant milestone by successfully landing Chandrayaan-3's lander and rover on the Moon.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended ISRO scientists for inspiring a generation and creating a lasting impression on children's brains while speaking to a group of ISRO scientists in Bengaluru.
- At the ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network Mission Control Complex in Bengaluru, Karnataka, the Prime Minister was speaking to scientists.
- The **Prime Minister celebrated the achievement of Chandrayaan-3 as a significant scientific milestone that demonstrates India's prowess in space**



exploration. He also announced that the point of Chandrayaan-3's landing would be known as 'Shiv Shakti.'

- He acknowledged the contribution of women scientists and referred to the Chandrayaan-2 landing site as 'Tiranga,' highlighting its significance in inspiring efforts and overcoming failures.
- He announced that August 23rd will be observed as 'National Space Day' to celebrate science, technology, and innovation.
- According to experts, India's space sector would grow to \$16 billion in a few years from \$8 billion, said PM Modi.
- With the successful landing of the Chandrayaan 3 mission on the moon, all eyes are on the next phase of the Moon mission i.e., the Chandrayaan-4 Mission or Lunar Polar Exploration Mission (Lupex), which will be jointly launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

## MAGIC RICE

### Why in News?

Chokuwa Rice, Assam's famed "Magic Rice", recently secured a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

### About Magic Rice (Chokuwa Rice):

- Magic rice also known as Chokuwa rice is a part of Assam culinary heritage.
- This unique rice has been a staple of the troops of the mighty Ahom dynasty.
- This unique and healthy rice is cultivated around the Brahmaputra area and is cultivated in several parts of Assam like Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar,



Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon, Morigaon to name a few.

- Chokuwa rice is **basically a semi-glutinous winter rice**, known as Sali rice.
- The **sticky and glutinous variety is categorized as Bora and Chokuwa based on their amylose concentration.**
- The low amylose Chokuwa rice variants are used to make soft rice, which is known as Komal Chaul or soft rice. This whole grain can be consumed after soaking the rice in the cold or lukewarm water.
- For the uninitiated, **this rice is pre-boiled, dried, then stored and soaked right before consumption.**
- This rice variety is widely consumed for its convenience of preparation and nutritional value.
- This unique rice variety is **consumed with curd, sugar, jaggery, bananas to name a few.** This rice is also used in making several Assamese delights like Pithe and other local dishes.

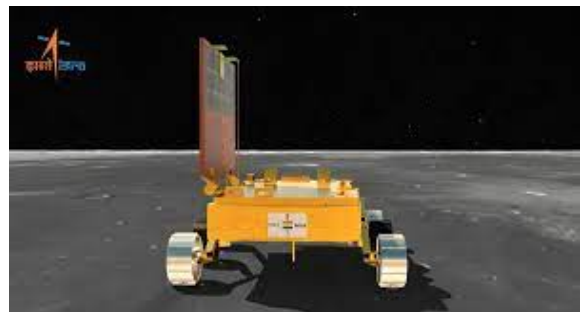
## PRAGYAN ROVER CONFIRMS SULPHUR ON MOON

### Why in News?

India's Chandrayaan-3 mission's Pragyan rover has confirmed the existence of sulphur on the moon's surface near the south pole.

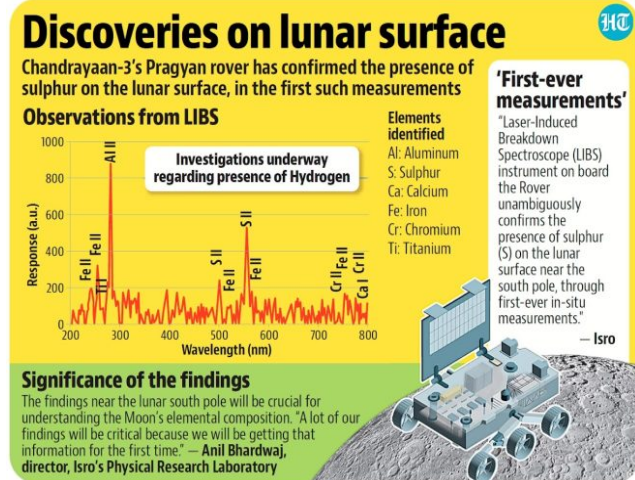
### About:

- This significant revelation comes as a result of the **first-ever in-situ recordings conducted near the lunar south pole.**
- The confirmation of sulphur's presence **holds paramount importance in unraveling the Moon's elemental composition** and furthering our understanding of its geological history.





- ISRO's statement highlighted that the **Laser-Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy (LIBS) instrument onboard the Pragyan rover unambiguously detected the presence of sulphur** in the lunar surface near the south pole.



- The **LIBS technique involves using intense laser pulses to analyse materials, creating hot and localized plasma whose emitted light is then studied to determine the material's elemental composition.**
- Apart from sulphur, the rover has detected elements including aluminium (Al), calcium (Ca), iron (Fe), chromium (Cr), titanium (Ti), manganese (Mn), silicon (Si), and oxygen (O).**
- The findings are the first time such data has been gathered and is set to prove critical in the understanding the Earth's natural satellite.
- ISRO is actively conducting a thorough investigation into the presence of hydrogen as well.**

## HOLLONGOPAR GIBBON SANCTUARY

### Why in News?

Primatologists have suggested rerouting a 1.65-km-long railway track that has divided the **Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, in eastern Assam** dedicated to the western hoolock gibbon into two unequal parts.

### About Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary:

- The Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, formerly known as the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary or Hollongapar Reserved Forest is **an isolated protected area of evergreen forest located in Assam, India.**
- The **sanctuary was officially constituted and renamed in 1997.**

- The Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary contains **India's only gibbons – the hoolock gibbons**, and Northeastern India's only nocturnal primate – the Bengal slow loris.
- The **upper canopy of the forest is dominated by the hollong tree** (Dipterocarpus macrocarpus), while the **nahar (Mesua ferrea) dominates the middle canopy**. The **lower canopy consists of evergreen shrubs and herbs**.
- The **habitat is threatened by illegal logging, encroachment of human settlements, and habitat fragmentation.**
- To counter this, scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have **suggested constructing an artificial canopy bridge to enable the gibbons to move across the railway line.**
- This would help maintain genetic diversity and support the survival of the endangered gibbons, which are highly sensitive to disruptions in their canopy habitat.



### **About Hoolock Gibbons:**

- The **hoolock gibbons are three primate species of genus Hoolock in the gibbon family, Hylobatidae, native to eastern Bangladesh, Northeast India, Myanmar, and Southwest China.**
- It is the **only ape found in India.**
- The Hoolock gibbon, **unique to India's northeast, is one of 20 species of gibbons on Earth.**
- It is **categorised into Western Hoolock Gibbon and Eastern Hoolock Gibbon.**



- Like all apes, they are extremely intelligent, with distinct personalities and strong family bonds.
- Conservation Status:
- International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List:
  - **Western Hoolock Gibbon: Endangered**
  - **Eastern Hoolock Gibbon: Vulnerable.**
- **Schedule 1 of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act 1972.**

CLASSIC IAS ACADEMY

CLASSIC IAS ACADEMY