

DECEMBER CURRENT AFFAIRS

PM-JANMAN SCHEME

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (**PM-JANMAN**) to uplift the **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.

About PM-JANMAN Scheme:

- PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) is a government scheme that aims to bring tribal communities into the mainstream.
- The scheme will be implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in collaboration with the State governments and the PVTG communities.
- **Objective:** To raise awareness and ensure 100% saturation of Government Schemes in PVTG majority tribal habitations.
- The scheme will have a total outlay of Rs.24, 104 crore, with the Centre and the States sharing the cost in a ratio of 64:36.
- The scheme will concentrate on 11 critical interventions overseen by 9

The infographic for the PM JANMAN scheme, titled 'A Visionary Initiative towards Tribal Welfare', lists 11 basic amenities and 9 ministries. The amenities are: Sabko Pucca Ghar, Har Ghar Nal Se Jal, Gaon-Gaon Tak Sadak, Har Ghar Bijli, Shiksha Ke Liye Hostel, Kaushal Vikas, Door Daraz Goan Tak Mobile Medical Unit, Sabko Poshan, Unnat Aajeevika, and Door Daraz Gaon Tak Mobile Network. The scheme is supported by 9 ministries and has a total allocation of 24,000 crore. The tagline is 'Empowering Tribals Transforming India'.

PM JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) A Visionary Initiative towards Tribal Welfare	
11 Basic Amenities 24,000 Crore Allocated Convergence with 9 Ministries	
	Sabko Pucca Ghar
	Har Ghar Nal Se Jal
	Gaon-Gaon Tak Sadak
	Har Ghar Bijli
	Shiksha Ke Liye Hostel
	Kaushal Vikas
	Door Daraz Goan Tak Mobile Medical Unit
	Sabko Poshan
	Unnat Aajeevika
	Door Daraz Gaon Tak Mobile Network
Empowering Tribals Transforming India	

line Ministries, ensuring the implementation of existing schemes in villages inhabited by PVTGs.

- It **encompasses various sectors**, including safe housing under the PM-AWAS Scheme, access to clean drinking water, improved healthcare, education, nutrition, road and telecommunications connectivity, as well as opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.
- The Mission will **aim to provide basic amenities and services to all PVTG households and habitations**, such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- The **Mission will be implemented in the next three years under the Development Action Plan for the Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)**, with an allocation of Rs.15,000 crore.
- The **plan also includes the establishment of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras** for trading in forest produce, off-grid solar power systems for 1 lakh households, and solar street lights.
- **The scheme is expected to enhance the quality of life and well-being of the PVTGs**, by addressing their multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion, and by recognizing and valuing their unique and valuable contribution to national and global development.
- Other than the interventions mentioned above, the following intervention of other Ministries will be part of Mission:
 - **Ministry of Ayush will set up Ayush Wellness Centre** as per existing norms and Ayush facilities will be extended to PVTG habitations through Mobile Medical Units.
 - **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship will facilitate skill and vocational training in PVTG habitations**, Multipurpose centres and hostels as per the suitable skills of these communities.

FEATURES:

- The comprehensive IEC (Information, Education & Communication) campaign has **started initially in 100 districts**, covering approximately 500 blocks and **15,000 PVTG habitations across 18 states and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- In phase II, will cover the remaining districts.

- This campaign is an effort aimed at saturating PVTG families with individual entitlements and habitations with basic facilities, by making these tribal communities aware of their entitlements.
- **During the campaign period, Aadhar cards, Community certificates and Jan Dhan accounts will be provided** as these are basic requirements for other schemes such as the issue of Ayushman card, PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, Kisan credit card etc.
- **This initiative will ensure to cover every PVTG household that has remained unreached** because of distance, lack of road and digital connectivity.
- **It will provide facilities at their doorstep.**
- Places like Haat Bazar, CSC, Gram panchayat, Anganwadi, Multipurpose Centre, Vandhan Vikas Kendras, and Krishi Vigyan Kendras will be used to organize these events.

CHALLENGES:

- **Data inaccuracy:** There is lack of current data on PVTGs, as no census since 1951 has accounted for them separately.
- **Lack of transparency:** The current project is going ahead with the baseline surveys but the results are not made public.
- **Lack of accountability:** The scheme involves multiple ministries, this may lead to issue of overlapping or conflicting mandate, gaps in service delivery etc.
- **Loss of cultural heritage:** The scheme provides education, health, skill development etc., this may result in loss of their intellectual and cultural heritage, and reduce their resilience and adaptability.
- **Loss of ecological diversity:** Some of the interventions such as road construction may affect the availability and quality of natural resources.
- **Lack of autonomy:** Mobile connectivity, Anganwadi centres and Bandhan Vikas Kendra may bring the PVTGs under the purview of state and market forces and compromise their sovereignty and rights.

The **PM-JANMAN** scheme is expected to bring about a transformational change in the lives of the PVTGs by addressing their specific needs and aspirations.

The **scheme will also contribute to the vision of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas aur Sabka Prayas.**

CYCLONE MICHAUNG

Why in News?

On December 5, **Cyclone Michaung (pronounced mig-jaum) made landfall over Nellore in Andhra Pradesh** as a super-cyclonic storm.

About Cyclone Michaung:

- The cyclone developed from a **low pressure area in the southwest Bay of Bengal**.
- Towards the **end of November 2023**, a **low-pressure area reached the Bay of Bengal from the Gulf of Thailand**.
- On 2 December, the **depression intensified into a deep depression located about 440 kilometres east-southeast of Puducherry**.
- After that, the **system intensified into a cyclonic storm and was given the name 'Michaung'**.
- It **gradually intensified into a deep depression, a cyclonic storm, and finally a super-cyclonic storm**.
- They were **aided by warm sea surface temperatures** and the **Madden-Julian oscillation**, a weather anomaly that influences rainfall patterns
- It **moved northward towards the Andhra Pradesh coast**, while bringing heavy rain and strong winds to north Tamil Nadu. It made landfall near Bapatla district, and weakened into a depression over land.
- **A day before it made landfall, it had caused intense rainfall in northern Tamil Nadu** leading to flooding and water-logging in Chennai and rain-related incidents.
- Transport was also affected owing to the cancellations of trains and the closure of the airport on the 4th.



- **Heavy rainfall was also experienced in parts of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh.**
- The Tamil Nadu government declared a holiday for schools and colleges in Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, and Chengalpattu on the 7th due to severe flooding caused by the Michaung cyclone.
- Educational institutions were shut down on account of the rainfall and flooding.
- The Indian Air Force carried out relief activities in the flood-affected areas.
- The **name Michaung was suggested by Myanmar** symbolises **strength and resilience.**
- It was the 4th tropical cyclone of the year over the Bay of Bengal, and the first super-cyclonic storm since 1999.
- It reached a peak intensity of 90-100 km/hr winds gusting to 110 km/hr at the time of landfall.

<u>TROPICAL CYCONES IN 2023</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
CYCLONE FREDDY	SOUTHERN INDIAN OCEAN
CYCLONE MOCHA	BAY OF BENGAL
CYCLONE BIPARJOY	ARABEAN SEA
CYCLONE TEJ	ARABEAN SEA
CYCLONE HAMOON	BAY OF BENGAL
CYCLONE MIDHILI	BAY OF BENGAL
CYCLONE MICHAUNG	BAY OF BENGAL

The various categories of cyclones are as follows, depending on their maximum sustained wind speed:

- Low-pressure area: Windspeed does not exceed 31 km/h.
- Depression: Windspeed between 31-49 km/h
- Deep depression: 50-61 km/h.
- Cyclonic storm: 62-88 km/h.
- Severe cyclonic storm: 89-117 km/h
- Very severe cyclonic storm: 118-167 km/h
- Extremely severe cyclonic storm: 168-221 km/h
- Super cyclonic storm: 222 km/h and higher.

About Tropical Cyclones

- A tropical cyclone is a **rapidly rotating storm system** characterized by a **low-pressure center**, a closed **low-level atmospheric circulation**, **strong winds**, and a spiral arrangement of thunderstorms that produce strong winds, heavy rain and squalls.
- **Depending on its location and strength, a tropical cyclone is referred to by different names**, including hurricane , typhoon , tropical storm, cyclonic storm, tropical depression, or simply cyclone.
- Cyclone refers to their **winds moving in a circle, whirling round their central clear eye, with their surface winds blowing counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere.**
- Pre-Conditions for Tropical Cyclones:-
 - Large sea surface with temperature higher than 27°C
 - Presence of Coriolis force
 - Small variations in the vertical wind speed
 - Pre-existing weak low-pressure area or low-level cyclonic circulation
 - Upper divergence above the sea level system.



STRUCTURE OF CYCLONE:

Eye of Cyclone

- A mature tropical cyclone is characterised by the **strong spirally circulating wind around the centre** which is called the eye.
- The eye is **an area with calm weather descending air**.
- It is **characterized by light winds and clear skies**.

Eye Wall

- Around the eye is the eyewall, where there is a strong spiralling rise of air to a greater height reaching the tropopause.
- The wind reaches maximum velocity in this region and torrential rain occurs here.
- From the eyewall, rain bands may radiate and trains of cumulus and cumulonimbus clouds may drift into the outer region.

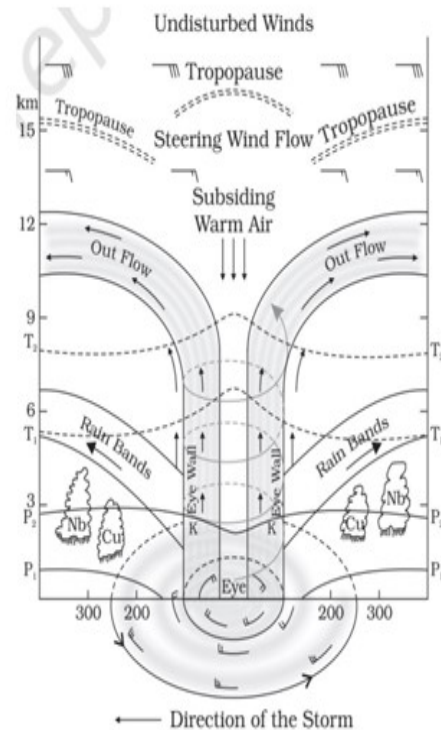


Fig 4: Vertical section of the tropical cyclone

CHARACTERISTICS OF TROPICAL CYCLONES:

- Tropical cyclones are **most violent and most disastrous** of all the atmospheric disturbances.
- The average speed is 120 km/h. Although it may vary from 32 km/h to 200 km/h or more.
- **They have closed isobars.** The pressure gradient is very sharp. More closely spaced isobars represent greater velocity of the storm and vice versa.
- **The pressure at the center is extremely low.** The winds from the surrounding area are drawn towards this low-pressure core called the "eye" of the cyclone.
- Tropical cyclones **develop over oceans and seas only**.
- **On landfall, their velocity decreases due to friction**, and as a source of energy is cut off, they dissipate soon. Thus they affect the coastal areas mostly.

- The **movement of tropical cyclones is affected by the prevailing wind system.** Normally they move from east to west under the influence of trade winds.
- They are **seasonal in nature and occur during a specific period of the year only.**

Naming of the Cyclone:

- Tropical cyclones originating in the **Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea are covered under the North Indian Ocean Region.**
- Countries in this region are India, Bangladesh, Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates.
- **The naming of tropical cyclones in this region started in 2004.**
- Here, the names are not repeated. Once used, the name will not be used again, and new names will be used.
- **In 2020, a new list of cyclone names was issued by IMD, following WMO guidelines.**
- The new list consists of 13 names each for the 13 member countries, totaling 169.
- The names from India include Gati, Tej, Murasu, Aag, Vyom, Jhar, Probaho, Neer, Prabhanjan, Ghurni, Ambud, Jaladhi and Vega.

GLOBAL BOND INDEX

Why in News?

India is poised to join the GBI-EM Global Index suite, a global bond index, although the RBI has expressed reservations about potential risks.

About:

- **Bonds represent debt securities wherein investors lend funds to issuers (such as governments or corporations).** In return, investors receive periodic interest payments and the repayment of the principal amount upon maturity.

- **Global bond indices, exemplified by JP Morgan and Bloomberg-Barclay's, monitor local currency bonds from developing nations.**
- These indices are pivotal for investors, serving as benchmarks for mutual funds and pension funds to monitor bond movements across jurisdictions.
- They facilitate relative comparisons and cover diverse bond categories, including high-yield risky bonds, emerging market bonds, and government bonds
- Inclusion in **global bond indices includes various criteria:**
 - market size,
 - country rating,
 - ease of access,
 - absence of restrictive capital movement laws,
 - forex availability,
 - hedging mechanisms,
 - tax laws, and
 - settlement of trade.
- Despite being the second-largest bond market among emerging markets, **India was excluded from global indices due to:**
 1. **High taxation laws** (20% on long-term capital gains, 15% on short-term capital gains)
 2. **India's unwillingness to favour foreign investors over domestic investors.**
- The inclusion of India in global indices will include benefits such as:
 - reduced pressure on commercial banks,
 - a bolstered foreign institutional investor base,
 - increased investment,
 - enhanced confidence in the Indian rupee,
 - higher equity inflows, and
 - stabilized exchange rate.
- The **potential risks tied to India's inclusion in global indices** include:
 - the risk of capital flight influenced by index weightage,



- dependency on foreign funds leading to susceptibility to political pressures,
- pressure on forex markets, potential rupee depreciation,
- implications such as inflation, increased current account deficit, and higher fiscal deficit,
- vulnerability to external shocks.

COP 28

Why in News?

Recently, the **28th Conference of Parties (COP-28)** took place in Dubai, UAE, with representatives from 197 countries presenting **their initiatives to curb global warming and engaging in discussions on future climate actions.**



About Conference of Parties (COPs):

- COPs are **gatherings held within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, a multinational treaty established in 1992.
- These meetings, denoted by the acronym COP, **serve as the official sessions of the Conference of the Parties.**
- During these sessions, **participating countries (Parties) evaluate global endeavors aligned with the primary goal of the Paris Agreement, aiming to restrict global warming to approximately 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.**
- They **adopt decisions and resolutions on various aspects of climate action**, such as mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology, and transparency.



OUTCOMES OF COP 28:

Global Stocktake Text:

- The **Global Stocktake (GST)** is a **periodic review mechanism established under the Paris Agreement in 2015.**
- The text proposes eight steps to keep the global temperature rise within the ambit of 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- It calls for tripling renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030.
- It calls for **substantially reducing non-CO2 emissions**, including, in particular, methane emissions globally by 2030.



Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels :

COP28 calls for transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly, and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, to achieve net zero by 2050.

Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA):

- Global adaptation goal focuses on enhancing adaptive capabilities, and minimizing vulnerability for sustainable development.
- At COP28, this text **calls for a doubling in adaptation finance** and plans for assessments and monitoring of adaptation needs in the coming years.
- Positively, an explicit 2030 date has been integrated into the text for targets on water security, ecosystem restoration, and health.

Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge:

- The Pledge stipulates that signatories commit to work together to triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 GW by 2030.
- It also calls for collectively double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around 2% to over 4% every year until 2030.

Climate Finance:

- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that wealthy nations owe developing countries USD 500 billion in 2025 under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance.
- **The goal is to set a new collective quantified goal before 2025.** The goal will start from a floor of USD 100 billion per year.
- This includes USD 250 billion for mitigation, USD 100 billion for adaptation, and USD 150 billion for loss and damage.

Loss and Damage Fund :

- Member countries reached **an agreement to operationalize the Loss and Damage (L&D) fund** aimed at compensating countries grappling with climate change impacts.
- A specific percentage is earmarked for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.
- **The World Bank will oversee the loss and damage fund in the beginning.**

The Global Cooling Pledge for COP 28:

- It includes 66 national government signatories committed to working together to reduce cooling-related emissions across all sectors by at least 68% globally relative to 2022 levels by 2050.

Declaration to Triple Nuclear Energy:

- The declaration launched at COP28 aims to triple global nuclear energy capacity by 2050.

Alterra

- The COP-28 Presidency unveiled ALTÉRRRA, **an investment program aiming to raise \$250 billion worldwide by 2030.**
- However, like all previous COPs, **it still remained an underachiever, unable to measure up to the expectations,** particularly in galvanising more ambitious climate action in the immediate term.

ENGAGEMENT OF INDIA IN COP 28:

Green Credit Initiative:

- The Green Credit Initiative has been conceptualized as **a mechanism to incentivize voluntary pro-planet actions,** as an effective response to the challenge of climate change.
- It **envisions the issue of Green Credits for plantations on waste/degraded lands and river catchment areas, to rejuvenate and revive natural ecosystems.**

Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA):

- It was **launched at COP 28, led by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.**
- GRCA **highlights India's role in sustainable river-centric development and climate resilience.**
- This **platform will facilitate knowledge exchange, river-city twinning, and dissemination of best practices.**

Quad Climate Working Group (QCWG) on Localised Climate Action :

- The event focused on recognizing and amplifying the role of local communities, and regional governments in supporting sustainable lifestyles.

India **did not sign the UAE declaration on Climate and Health.**

India **also did not sign the Global Methane Pledge (GMP).**

CULTURAL HERITAGE LIST

Why in News?

Garba, a traditional dance form from Gujarat, was included in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

About Garba:

- Garba is a **form of Gujarati dance which originates from the state of Gujarat, India.**
- It celebrates the victory of good over evil.
- The **name is derived from the Sanskrit term Garbha**, the Sanskrit word for **womb**, implying life and creation.
- Garba dances celebrate fertility, honor womanhood, and pay respect to any of an array of mother goddesses.
- Many traditional garbas are performed around a centrally lit lamp or a picture or statue of the Hindu goddess Shakti.
- Traditionally, **it is performed during the nine-day Hindu festival (Navratri).**
- Garba is **accompanied by rhythmic music, singing, and clapping.**
- The dance **can be performed by anyone, regardless of age, gender, or social status.**
- **Modern Garba is heavily influenced by Dandiya Raas**, a dance traditionally performed by men.
- The merger of these two dances has formed the high-energy Garba dance that is seen today.
- **Garba fosters social equality** by diluting socio-economic, gender, and rigid sect structures.



About UNESCO'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE LIST:

- UNESCO established its Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage with the **aim of ensuring better protection of important intangible cultural heritages worldwide** and the awareness of their significance.
- Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) **refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and cultural spaces** that are recognized as part of the cultural heritage of a community, group, or individual.
- **In 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH),** signifying a commitment to protect, promote, and transmit the diverse expressions of human culture.
- **UNESCO'S list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was established in the year 2008.**
- Examples of ICH:
 - Languages, oral traditions, literature, and poetry.
 - Performing arts, such as music, dance, and theatre.
 - Social practices, rituals, and festive events.
 - Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.
 - Traditional craftsmanship, such as pottery, weaving, and metalwork.



unesco
Intangible Cultural Heritage

CRITERION FOR SELECTION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

There are **three criteria** for an intangible cultural heritage to be inscribed in the United Nations list.

1. It must be recognized by communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals as part of their cultural heritage,
2. It must be transmitted from generation to generation and be constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history and

3. It must provide them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

Sangeet Natak Akademi is the nodal organisation which looks after this function, and files nominations of intangible cultural entities from India, for evaluation by the international body.

ICG from India include **Kolkata's Durga Puja (2021), Kumbh Mela (2017), Navroz (2016), Yoga (2016)**, traditional brass and copper craft of utensil-making among coppersmiths of Punjab (2014), **Sankirtana**, a ritual musical performance of Manipur (2013), and the Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012).

WANGALA FESTIVAL

Why in News?

Wangala Festival was **recently celebrated by the Garo Tribe in Meghalaya.**

About Wangala Festival:

- Wangala is also called the festival of "The Hundred Drums".
- It is a **harvest festival celebrated by the Garo tribe**, who live in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Assam in India and Greater Mymensingh in Bangladesh.
- In this **post harvest festival, they give thanks to Misi Saljong the sun god**, for blessing the people with a rich harvest.
- The celebration of the Wangala Festival **marks the end of a period of toil, which brings good output of the fields.** It also signifies the onset of winter.
- Wangala is **celebrated in the months from September to December**, with different villages setting different dates for the occasion.
- The **ceremony performed on first day is known as "Ragula"** is performed inside the house of the chief. On the **second day is known as "Kakkat"**.



- People young and old dressed in their colourful costumes with feathered headgears dance to the tune of music played on long oval-shaped drums.
- While the men beat the drums, the line moves forward in rhythmic accord.
- The 'orchestra' of men includes drums, gong and flutes, punctuated by the sonorous music of an primitive flute made of buffalo horn.
- The popular dance forms are performed during the festival, itself has certain subtle variations, the main motif being a queue of two parallel lines - one of men and other of women clad in their festive fineries. Young and old join the festivities with equal enthusiasm.
- Basically, the Wangala Festival is a way to preserve and promote the cultural identity of Garos in Meghalaya.
- This is one way to exhibit the culture and tradition of the region.

EXPULSION OF MP FROM LOK SABHA

Why in News?

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra was expelled from the Lok Sabha after the House adopted the report of its Ethics Committee that held her guilty of indulging in “unethical conduct” and committing “serious misdemeanours”, and recommended her expulsion.

About:

- **The ‘cash-for-query’ case against Mahua Moitra was handed over to the Lok Sabha Ethics Committee.**
- The Committee conducted the enquiry into the matter, as per the rules.
- During the investigation, the Ethics Committee panel questioned Moitra and other parties in the case.
- **The Committee held Moitra guilty and recommended her expulsion from the Lok Sabha.**
- The recommendations of the Committee were presented in the form of a report, as the rules suggest. “The report of the Committee may also state the procedure to be followed by the House in giving effect to the recommendations made by the Committee

- The report by the Ethics Committee is presented to the Speaker who directed that the report be laid on the table of the House.
- After the report has been presented, the Chairperson or any member of the Committee or any other member may move that the report be taken into consideration whereupon the Speaker may put the question to the House.
- In this case, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi moved a motion to expel the TMC leader for “unethical conduct”.
- Expulsion from the House is the most serious punishment the House inflicts on its members.
- Traditionally, this punishment has been reserved for cases of serious and aggravated breaches of privilege or contempt of the House.
- A misdemeanour which does not amount to a breach of privilege does not attract the punishment of expulsion.

Parliamentary Etiquette and Rules:

- **Expected Conduct of MPs:** MPs must adhere to rules of parliamentary etiquette, such as not interrupting speeches, maintaining silence, and avoiding obstruction during debates.
- **Updated Rules for Modern Protests:** In 1989, rules were updated to include prohibitions against shouting slogans, displaying placards, tearing documents, and using electronic devices for protest in the House.
- **Rajya Sabha’s Similar Rules:** The Rajya Sabha, like the Lok Sabha, has similar rules to ensure smooth conduct of proceedings.

The House has the right to punish its members for their misconduct in the House or outside.

In cases of misconduct or contempt committed by the members, the House can impose punishment in the form of admonition, reprimand, withdrawal from the House, suspension from the service of the House, imprisonment and expulsion from the House.

In an extreme case of misconduct, the House may expel a member from the House.

CHALLENGING THE EXPULSION:

- She has the option of challenging the expulsion in the apex court.
- Normally, House proceedings cannot be challenged on the ground of procedural irregularity.
- Article 122 of the Constitution is clear. It gives immunity to the proceedings from a challenge from court.
- **Article 122 says “the validity of any proceedings in Parliament shall not be called (into) question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure”.**
- However, the **Supreme Court said in the 2007 Raja Ram Pal case** that “those restrictions are only for procedural irregularities. There may be other cases where judicial review may be necessary.”

Grounds for Challenging Expulsion

Examining Privilege and Procedure: The court can scrutinize whether the privilege cited for expulsion existed and if proper procedures were followed.

Functioning of Committees: The roles of the Privileges Committee and Ethics Committee are distinct, focusing on investigating misconduct and ensuring dignity in the House.

Investigative Procedures: Proper investigative procedures, including the right to depose and cross-examine, are essential for fairness and truth-finding.

In the case of lawmaker Moitra, who claims denial of natural justice, she alleges not being permitted to cross-examine individuals involved in the bribery accusations against her.

RAJA RAM PAL CASE 2007

- **Case Background:** Raja Ram Pal, a BSP leader at the time, was among the 12 MPs – 11 from the Lok Sabha and one from the Rajya Sabha – expelled for alleged involvement in the December 2005 cash-for-query scam.

- **Supreme Court's Stance:** The Court **upheld the expulsion** but noted that proceedings tainted by substantial illegality are open to judicial scrutiny.
- **Judicial Review of Parliamentary Actions:** The Court affirmed its role in scrutinizing legislative actions that infringe on fundamental rights.
- It also talked about **Article 105 of the Constitution.**
- Article 105 of the Constitution deals with the **powers and privileges of Parliament and of its Members and committees.**
- The Court recognized that the enforcement of privilege by the legislature can be subject to judicial review, within certain constitutional limits.

About Ethics Committee:

- The genesis of formation of the Ethics Committee in Parliament can be traced to a resolution adopted at the Presiding Officers Conference held in New Delhi in October, **1996.**
- **Each house of the parliament has its own ethics committee.**
- The committee is **reconstituted annually** and has a designated chairperson.
- Ethics Committee **focuses solely on MPs' misconduct.**
- Besides overseeing the moral and ethical conduct of members, ethics committee also prepares a Code of Conduct for members, which are amended from time to time.

Ethics committee in Rajya Sabha:

- It was **constituted in 1997.**
- Composition: It **consists of 10 members** nominated by the Chairman of Rajya Sabha.
- Term: They shall **hold office for a term not exceeding one year.**

Ethics committee in Lok Sabha:

- It was first **constituted in 2000.**
- Composition: It **consists of not more than fifteen members** and nominated by the Speaker.
- Members of the Ethics Committee are selected by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and typically **include MPs from various political parties.**
- Term: They shall **hold office for a term not exceeding one year.**

Functions of Ethics Committee:

- To oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the members.
- To examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of the Members.
- The 15-member Committee's function is to examine every complaint relating to unethical conduct of a Member of Lok Sabha referred to it by the Speaker and make such recommendations as it may deem fit.

GI TAGS

Why in News?

Geographical Indication (GI) tag awarded to **Meghalaya's Lakadong turmeric**, along with other traditional products such as **Garo Dakmanda (traditional dress)**, **Larnai pottery**, and **Garo Chubitchi (alcoholic beverage)**.

1) LAKADONG TURMERIC

- Lakadong turmeric is **specifically from the Lakadong area of Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya.**
- This variety of turmeric is considered **one of the best globally**, known for its high curcumin content (around 6.8 to 7.5 per cent).
- It has a **darker colour** and is **grown organically without the use of fertilizers.**
- The GI tag is expected to aid farmers in marketing and provide customers with access to an authentic product.
- It serves as a unique selling point and can contribute to fetching better market prices for the farmers.



2) GARO DAKMANDA

- This is a handwoven ankle-length lower garment and is part of the traditional attire of Garo women in Meghalaya.
- It consists of a thick, unstitched cloth with a 6–10-inch border at the bottom.
- It was traditionally woven from a long-staple cotton “khildig”, which is native to the Garo hills.
- With time, it was made from fibres such as acrylic yarn or silk, particularly Mulberry, Eri and Muga silks.



3) LARNAI POTTERY

- This type of pottery is made of black clay from Larnai village. The art form has been passed down through generations.
- The Larnai pottery is a traditional pottery produced in Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya.
- It is locally known as khiew larnai or khiew ranei.
- The 2 kinds of clay used are khyndew long (black Clay) which is obtained from Sung valley and khyndew khluit.
- The clay is mixed and then pounded using a wooden pounder known as synrai.
- The clay is then moulded and sundried.
- When the pots are ready, they are fired, after which they are coloured using the bark of the “Sohliya” tree.



4) GARO CHUBITCHI

- It is a rice-based fermented drink of the Garo tribe of Meghalaya.
- This is an alcoholic beverage consumed by the Garo community during feasts and ceremonies.



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.

KAMBALKONDA WLS

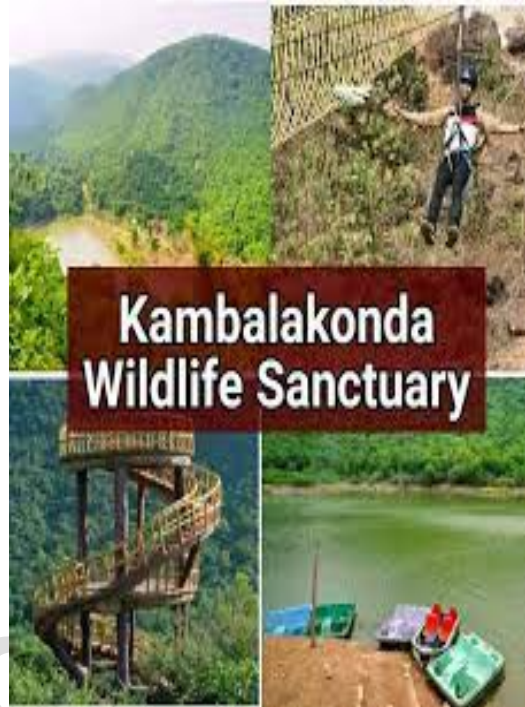
Why in News?

The **Eastern Ghats Nature Interpretation Centre** is being opened in the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary.

About Kambalkonda WLS:

- The **Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary** is a forest located near Visakhapatnam.

- It has been **under the control of Andhra Pradesh Forest Department** since 10 March 1970.
- Earlier the land was under the control of Maharajah of Vizianagaram.
- It was **named after the local hillock Kambalakonda.**
- It is a **dry evergreen forest mixed with scrub and meadows** and covers an area of 70.70 square kilometers.
- The **indicator species is the Indian leopard.**
- **Flora:** Indian screw tree, Bush plum tree, Jungle berry bunches
- **Fauna:** Mammals like Leopard, Barking Deer, Jackal and Avifauna include Paradise flycatcher, Tree pie, Quails, Partridges, etc.



What is the Eastern Ghats Nature Interpretation Centre?

- Eastern Ghats Nature Interpretation Centre (EG-NIC) is a **unique project located in the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.**
- The center offers an **immersive experience highlighting the diverse ecosystems of the Eastern Ghats stretching from Odisha to Tamil Nadu**.
- It aims to **inform, educate and inspire visitors to care about the rich biodiversity of the Eastern Ghats mountain range.**
- The center is a **collaboration between wildlife artists, illustrators, sculptors, architects, wildlife biologists, translators and content creators.**



DRESS SYNDROME

Why in News?

The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) has issued a drug safety alert about the common painkiller, saying its constituent, mefenamic acid, triggers severe allergic reactions like the DRESS syndrome, which affects your internal organs.

About DRESS Syndrome:

- Drug rash with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms (DRESS), is a rare reaction to certain medications.
- It is also known as Drug-Induced Hypersensitivity Syndrome (DIHS).
- It involves primarily a widespread skin rash, fever, swollen lymph nodes, and characteristic blood abnormalities such as an abnormally high level of eosinophils, low number of platelets, and increased number of atypical white blood cells (lymphocytes).
- However, **DRESS is often complicated by potentially life-threatening inflammation of internal organs** and the syndrome has about a 10% mortality rate.
- Treatment consists of stopping the offending medication and providing supportive care.
- **DRESS Syndrome can be triggered by a wide array of drugs**, although some medications are more commonly associated, including antiepileptic drugs, antibiotics, allopurinol (used for gout), and NSAIDs (like Mefenamic acid).
- Unlike immediate allergic reactions, **symptoms of DRESS Syndrome appear after a few weeks of initiating the drug.**
- DRESS is **classified as one form of severe cutaneous adverse reactions (SCARs).**



About Meftal:

- **Meftal is an over-the-counter medication used to treat pain and inflammation.**
- It contains the active ingredient **mefenamic acid**, which belongs to a class of drugs known as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- It is **often prescribed for conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, menstrual pain, dental pain, inflammation, fever, etc.**
- Other commonly used NSAIDs include ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin.
- Meftal is commonly prescribed for conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, dysmenorrhoea, mild to moderate pain, inflammation, fever, dental pain, muscle and joint pain, period pain, sore throats, nerve pain, and muscle aches.
- **Prolonged use of Meftal and similar drugs may increase the risk of stomach ulcers, bleeding, and adverse effects on the cardiovascular system.**



BUDGETT'S FROG

Why in News?

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Science's (IISc.) molecular biophysics unit in a study **have identified that peptides (short protein) produced from Budgett's frog can combat enzymes of disease causing pathogens.**

About:

- The peptides (short proteins) produced from the skin of amphibians have long been studied because of **their ability to counter unfavourable conditions in the environment, including harmful pathogens.**
- Researchers have found a peptide called LL-TIL in the skin secretions of Budgett's frog.
- This peptide can block the action of two important enzymes called subtilisin carlsberg and proteinase K produced by harmful pathogens.

- These enzymes play a pivotal role in promoting infections by degrading specific protective proteins of the infected person.

About Budgett's Frog:

- Budgett's Frog is a **species of frog in the family Ceratophryidae**, discovered by John Samuel Budgett.
- **Scientific Name: *Lepidobatrachus laevis***
- It is **often kept as a pet.**
- It has acquired a number of popular nicknames, including hippo frog, Freddy Krueger frog, and escuerzo de agua.
- This frog has become popular in pet stores due to its **comical flat appearance and intelligent behavior.**
- Characteristics:
 - The size of females is larger than males.
 - They are primarily nocturnal, spending most of the day submerged in water or mud.
 - During the dry season, they burrow in the mud and cocoon themselves until the rains return.
 - They are highly intelligent and very aggressive.
- They are **mostly found in the Gran Chaco region of South America which spans across Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina.**
- **IUCN Status: Least Concern**



SECURITY BREACH IN PARLIAMENT

Why in News?

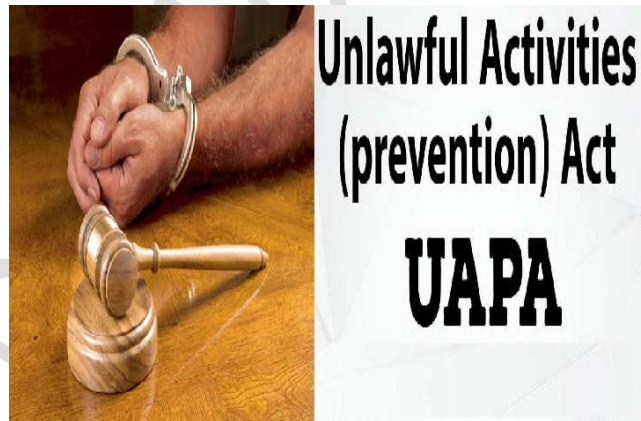
- A shocking incident happened in the Parliament wherein **two people jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour, released yellow gas from canisters, and shouted slogans before being overpowered by the MPs.**

- A case under anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) was registered against all of them.
- The matter is being investigated by anti-terror unit special cell.
- The **accused were carrying visitors' passes issued to them** during the attack.



About Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)

- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is an Indian law aimed at prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- Its **main objective was to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.**
- The most recent amendment of the law, the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019 (UAPA 2019)** has made it possible for the Union Government to designate individuals as terrorists without following any formal judicial process.
- **UAPA is also known as the "Anti-terror law".**
- It was **first enacted in 1967** to deal with secessionist movements and anti-national activities.
- It **was amended several times, most recently in 2019**, to include provisions related to terrorist financing, cyber-terrorism, individual designation, and seizure of property.
- It **empowers the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to investigate and prosecute cases under UAPA across the country.**
- It provides for the **death penalty and life imprisonment as the highest punishments** for terrorist acts.



- It allows for the detention of suspects without charge or trial for up to 180 days, and for the denial of bail to the accused unless the court is satisfied that they are not guilty.
- It defines unlawful activity as any action that supports or incites the cession of any part of India, or that questions or disrespects its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Rules for Parliament Visitors:-

- **Rule 386 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha** governs the "admission, withdrawal, and removal" of visitors (referred to as "strangers" in parliamentary terms) during the sittings of the House.
- **Rule 387** grants the Speaker the power to withdraw "strangers" from any part of the House if deemed fit.
- **Rule 387A**, authorized by the Speaker, empowers a Secretariat officer to remove or take into custody any stranger within House precincts reserved for members.
- This includes strangers admitted who misbehave, violate Speaker's regulations (under Rule 386), or fail to withdraw when directed under Rule 387 during House sittings.
- **Members can apply for visitors' cards** only for individuals well-known to them personally.
- **Certification is required**, stating, "The above-named visitor is my relative/personal friend/known to me personally, and I take full responsibility for him/her."
- **Cards for admission to visitors' galleries are ordinarily issued for a single sitting, generally for one hour.** These cards are not transferable and are issued subject to the holder observing the conditions endorsed thereon.
- **For security reasons, visitors are mandated to carry photo identification along with the certification.**
- Similar rules are in force for visitor entry into the Rajya Sabha.



- **Members are advised to exercise utmost care**, especially when facilitating the entry of individuals introduced by someone personally known to them.
- Members bear responsibility for any untoward incident or undesirable activity in the galleries resulting from cardholders.

SUSPENSION OF MPs IN LOK SABHA

Why in News?

In a major escalation of tensions between the Opposition and the government, **78 MPs were suspended from both Houses of Parliament**, taking the total number of suspended MPs in this session to 92, both figures unprecedented in the history of the Indian Parliament.

About:

- The **MPs were suspended for disrupting Parliamentary proceedings during protests related to a security breach in the Parliament.**
- In the Lok Sabha, the Opposition demanded a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah, waved placards, and some even climbed onto the Speaker's podium.
- In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition raised slogans on the security breach, leading to disruptions.
- The general principle is that **it is the role and duty of the Presiding Officer — Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha — to maintain order so that the House can function smoothly.**
- To ensure that proceedings are conducted in the proper manner, **the Speaker/Chairman is empowered to force a member to withdraw from the House.**



Rules for suspension of MPs in Parliament:

The **Presiding Officers** — the Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha **plays the major role in suspensions of Members of Parliament (MPs).**

In Lok Sabha, the Speaker acts in accordance with **Rules 373, 374, and 374A** of the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.**

In Rajya Sabha, the Chairman acts as per **Rules 255 and 256** of the Rules.

1) **Rule 373 and Rule 255:** The presiding officers can direct an MP to withdraw from the House for any disorderly conduct.

2) **Rule 374 and Rule 256:** The presiding officer can “name” the legislator if the MP continues to disrupt the House proceedings. After that, the House can move a motion to suspend the MP until the end of the session.

3) **Rule 374A:** It was **incorporated in the Rule Book of Lok Sabha in 2001.** It empowers the Speaker to deal with grave and disorderly conduct.

As per this rule, **an MP “named” by the Speaker shall automatically stand suspended for a period of five days or the remaining part of the session.** This rule removes the need for the House to pass a motion for suspension.

Terms of Suspension:

- The **maximum period of suspension is for the remainder of the session.** The **House can reinstate a suspended member at any point by passing a motion.**
- **Suspended MPs are prohibited from entering the premises of the House during the period of suspension.** This means they cannot participate in debates, discussions, or voting.
- **Suspended MPs may lose certain parliamentary privileges during the suspension,** such as the right to attend committee meetings or participate in other parliamentary activities.
- He will **not be eligible to give notice for discussion or submission.**
- He **loses the right to get a reply to his questions.**

Article 122 of the Constitution says parliamentary proceedings cannot be questioned before a court.

In some cases, however, courts have intervened in the procedural functioning of legislatures.

PANGOLAKHA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Why in News?

A tiger has been spotted at an elevation of 3,640 meters in the Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in Sikkim.

This marks the **highest elevation in India where tigers have been observed**, surpassing the previous record of 3,630 meters in Arunachal Pradesh.

About Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary:

- Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary is a **wildlife reserve in the Pakyong District of the state of Sikkim** in India.
- It is about 28 kilometres east of Rorathang and about 40 kilometres by road from Rangpo city.
- The **total notified area of the park is around 124 square kilometres** while inside the wildlife sanctuary there are a few hamlets: Aritar, Dakline Lingtam, Phadamchen, Dzuluk, Gnathang Monastery Kupup.
- This wildlife sanctuary is **linked to the forests of Neora Valley National Park of West Bengal** as well as forests of **Samtse, Bhutan and Haa district Bhutan.**



- The area that comes under this biosphere has been **declared in 1999 as a wildlife sanctuary** under biogeographic province category 2C.
- The sanctuary is **situated at the tri-junction of Sikkim, Bengal and Bhutan.**
- It is the **largest wildlife sanctuary in Sikkim.**
- **Some high altitude lakes are present there, including Lake Tsongmo,** which act as a biodiversity hotspot for migratory birds.
- Rivers and their tributaries from the north are frozen from December to March; whereas they all flow with an enormous volume of water during the rainy season from mid-April to mid-October.
- **Rangpo River and Jaldhaka River are the major rivers originating from the nearby lakes,** which occur in this sanctuary.
- This wildlife sanctuary **supports a large variety of species,** since it falls at the junction of the Palearctic realm and the Indomalayan realm.
- Mammals: Some of the exotic species from North-East India are present in this wildlife sanctuary. **The red panda, the state mammal of Sikkim and one of the most elusive creatures from northern forests lives here.**
- Birds in Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary include kalij pheasant, Oriental honey buzzard, blood pheasant, white-crested laughingthrush, striated laughingthrush, chestnut-crowned laughingthrush, bar-throated minla etc.
- It **encompasses various ecoregions,** including the Terai-Duar savanna, Eastern Himalayan broadleaf forests, Himalayan subtropical pine forests, Eastern Himalayan subalpine conifer forests, and Eastern Himalayan alpine shrub and meadows.

SARHUL FESTIVAL

Why in News?

Sarhul is a regional public in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand on Chaitra Shukla Tritiya, the third day of the waxing moon (after the new moon) in the Hindu month of Chaitra which usually means it falls in March or April in the western calendar.

About Sarhul:

- Sarhul is a **spring festival in the Indian state of Jharkhand.**

- It is a **symbol of commencement of the new year.**
- The festival is **celebrated for three days**, from the 3rd day of Chaitra month in Sukla Paksh to Chaitra Purnima.
- In the festival, the **village priest Pahan offers sacrifice of flowers, fruit, vermilion, rooster and tapan (liquor) in Sarna to Sun**, village deity and ancestor for good fortune of the village.
- Then the **locals dance holding flowers of the sal tree.**
- According to the tradition, **it also symbolises marriage between the Earth and the Sun.**
- It is an **important festival observed by the Kurukh and Sadan.**
- Among Kurukh it is known as **Khaddi** (lit. 'flower') in Kurukh.
- It is known as **Hadi Bonga** among the Bhumijis, Mundas.
- It is known as **Baha parab** among the Ho and Santal people.



INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

Why in News?

Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace 2023, jointly conferred upon renowned **classical pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim and Palestinian peace activist Ali Abu Awwad.**

Barenboim is an Argentine-born distinguished classical pianist, and Awwad is an eminent Palestinian peace activist who has been working for a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

About Indira Gandhi Peace Prize:

- The Indira Gandhi Prize, or the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize, also known as **Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development**, is the **prestigious award accorded annually by Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.**

- It was **established in 1986** in memory of **Indira Gandhi**, the former Prime Minister of India.
- It is **awarded to individuals or organisations** in recognition of
 - creative efforts toward promoting international peace, development and a new international economic order;
 - ensuring that scientific discoveries are used for the larger good of humanity, and
 - enlarging the scope of freedom.
- The **prize carries a cash award of 2.5 million Indian rupees and a citation.**
- A written work, in order to be eligible for consideration, should have been published.
- **UNICEF, ISRO (2014), Pratham NGO (2021)** are among the past recipient of this award.



BARRACUDA

Why in News?

- **Barracuda" refers to a solar-electric boat developed by students at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras,** making headlines due to its innovation and being recognized as the fastest solar-electric boat in India.
- **Developed by Navalt Solar and Electric Boats,** the 14-meter-long vessel embodies efficiency and sustainability, **capable of ferrying up to 12 passengers and cargo even in rough seas.**
- **Engineered to navigate waves as tall as four meters,** it operates silently without noise, vibration, or air pollution.



KRUTRIM

Why in News?

- Indian ride-hailing firm **Ola** has unveiled its own homegrown large language model called **Krutrim** that's aimed at dominating the local market.
- This AI system, designed to support 10 Indian languages, will operate independently from Ola's mobility and EV businesses.
- The system, trained on proprietary datasets, aims to address India's linguistic diversity and cultural context.
- **Krutrim** is a sanskrit word meaning 'artificial'.
- Krutrim is India's first complete AI computing stack.
- Krutrim will have two classifications:
 - **Krutrim AI base model:** It will be available as an application programming interface (API) for enterprises and developers)
 - **Krutrim AI Pro:** It will have advanced capabilities for problem-solving and task execution)



NOMA DISEASE

Why in News?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has officially added NOMA to its list of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

About NOMA Disease:

- Noma (also known as gangrenous stomatitis or cancrum oris) is a **rapidly progressive and often fatal infection of the mouth and face.**

- This disease predominantly affects children between the ages of two and six years old in the least developed countries around the world, primarily in the "noma belt" of sub-Saharan Africa.
- Noma has also been seen in severely immunocompromised people in the developed world.



Symptoms:

- The disease, which **manifests as gum inflammation**, is thought to be caused **by bacteria in the mouth.**
 - It **rapidly progresses into extensive tissue destruction and bone damage if untreated.**
 - It often **starts as an ulcer on the mucous membrane**, frequently after measles or other illnesses.
 - **Survivors may face facial disfigurement, jaw muscle spasms, oral incontinence, and speech problems.**
- Early detection is crucial as therapy effectiveness diminishes in later stages.
 - Basic hygiene, antibiotics, and nutrition rehabilitation slow its spread, but access to adequate treatment remains a challenge due to poverty.
 - The disease, also known as the 'face of poverty,' was common in the Western world in the past, disappearing with economic progress.
 - Noma's inclusion in the WHO's list of neglected tropical diseases is seen as a significant step toward eradication, prompting calls for increased attention and resources.

About Neglected Tropical Disease:

- Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a diverse group of tropical infections that are common in low-income populations in developing regions of Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

- NTDs are especially common in tropical areas where people do not have access to clean water or safe ways to dispose of human waste, sanitation and access to healthcare.
- They are **caused by a variety of pathogens**, such as viruses, bacteria, protozoa, and parasitic worms (helminths).
- These diseases are contrasted with the "big three" infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria), which generally receive greater treatment and research funding.
- Examples of NTDs are: snakebite envenomation, scabies, yaws, trachoma, Leishmaniasis and Chagas disease etc.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, the effect of neglected tropical diseases as a group is comparable to that of malaria and tuberculosis.
- NTD co-infection can also make HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis more deadly
- London Declaration on NTDs:
 - It was **adopted on 30th January, 2012 to recognise the global burden of NTDs.**
 - **Twenty neglected tropical diseases are prioritized** by the World Health Organization (WHO).
 - Chromoblastomycosis and other deep mycoses, scabies and other ectoparasites, and snakebite envenomation **were added to the list in 2017.**
- **India has the world's largest absolute burden of at least 10 major NTDs**, including hookworm, dengue, lymphatic filariasis, leprosy, visceral leishmaniasis or kala-azar and rabies.
- Lymphatic Filariasis is endemic in 328 districts across 21 states/Union territories.
- Kala-Azar is endemic in 54 districts across four states of India and together, these diseases affect 650 million and 140 million people in the country, respectively.
- **The Government of India is 100 percent committed to ending NTDs** like Lymphatic Filariasis and Kala-Azar, in line with global elimination and control targets.

ACT NOW. ACT TOGETHER
INVEST IN
NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES



What are neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)?

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of disease conditions that are widespread in the world's poorest regions, where **water safety, sanitation and access to health care** are substandard. NTDs cost developing communities billions of dollars each year in

direct health costs, loss of productivity and reduced socioeconomic and educational attainment.

NTDs are also responsible for **stigmatization, social exclusion, disability, discrimination**, and place considerable strain on both patients and their families.

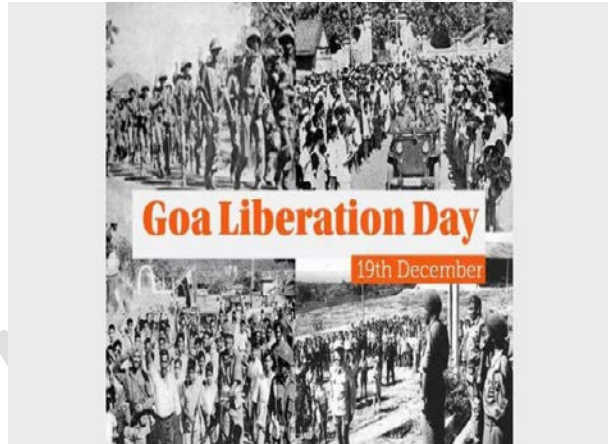
GOA LIBERATION DAY

Why in News?

The '**Goa Liberation Day**' is celebrated on **December 19** to commemorate the liberation of the state from Portuguese rule in the year 1961.

About:

- The Goa Liberation Day is **celebrated in commemoration of the Indian armed forces annexing Portuguese-ruled Goa.**
- Also, **India was completely free from European rule on this day.**
- Goa was annexed by the Indian Army on 19 December 1961, from around 451 years of Portuguese rule.
- The **Portuguese refused to leave Goa even after India got independence from the British in 1947,** stating that Goa was culturally and religiously distinct from the rest of India.
- The **Indian government didn't take any military action then,** as it was more concerned with assimilating the independent Princely States, so it held a series of diplomatic talks with the Portuguese.
- **After the talks failed, the then-Government of India chose the military option for the annexation of Goa.**
- The Indian government waited for 14 years after independence to move troops to Goa because it was a sensitive issue and the government did not want to risk a war with Portugal.
- **In 1961, the Indian Government launched Operation Vijay and annexed Daman and Diu and Goa with the Indian mainland on 19th December.**
- As a result, **Goa, Daman, and Diu became Union Territories of India.**
- **Goa continued to be a Union Territory till 1987** and then was **given statehood by becoming the 25th state of India.**
- 30th May is celebrated as the Statehood Day of Goa.



NAMDAPHA FLYING SQUIRREL

Why in News?

The Namdapha flying squirrel, **missing for 42 years, has been sighted again in Arunachal Pradesh.**

The Namdapha flying squirrel was last described in 1981 based on a single individual found in the Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district.



About Namdapha Flying Squirrel:

- The Namdapha flying squirrel is a flying squirrel endemic to Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India.
- Scientific Name: **Biswamoyopterus biswasi**.
- Its scientific name commemorates Biswamoy Biswas, director of the Zoological Survey of India.
- The Namdapha flying squirrel has reddish, grizzled fur with white above and a pale grey crown; its patagium is orangish and its underparts are white.
- Its cheek teeth are simple, and its incisors are unpigmented.
- The Namdapha flying squirrel first described in 1981, based on a single zoological specimen collected in Namdapha National Park.
- Habitat: The **known habitat is tall Mesua ferrea jungles, often on hill slopes in the catchment area of Dihing River** (particularly on the western slope of Patkai range) in northeastern India.
- It is **threatened by poaching of animals** for food within the park, and possibly by **habitat destruction**.



- It is **among the 25 "most wanted lost" species** that are the focus of Re: wild's "Search for Lost Species" initiative.
- Conservation Status:
 - **IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered**
 - Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972: **Schedule I**

SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD

Why in News?

- Sahitya Akademi has **announced its annual Sahitya Akademi Awards in 24 languages.**
- **9 books of poetry, 6 of novel, 5 of short stories, 3 Essays and 1 Literary Study have won the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023.**
- The books were selected on the basis of recommendations made by a Jury of three members in the concerned languages in accordance with the procedure laid down for the purpose.

About Sahitya Akademi Award:

- The Sahitya Akademi Award is a literary honour in India is also called as the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters.
- It annually confers on writers of the most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the 22 languages of the 8th Schedule to the Indian constitution as well as in English and Rajasthani language.
- The award was established in 1954.
- The award comprises a plaque, a shawl and a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000.
- The Sahitya Akademi award is the second-highest literary honour by the Government of India, after the Jnanpith award.



- The award's purpose is to recognise and promote excellence in Indian writing and also acknowledge new trends.

RAMP PROGRAMME

Why in News?

- Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (**MoMSME**) has launched three **sub-schemes under the RAMP programme**, to encourage the adoption of sustainable technology in business, boost the circular economy and address delayed payments issue.
- The **ministry has also made its ZED scheme**, which aims to promote manufacturing without any negative impact on the environment, **completely free for women-led MSMEs.**

About RAMP (Raising & Accelerating MSME Productivity) Programme:

- It is a **World Bank assisted Central Sector Scheme**, supporting various CoronaVirus Disease 2019 (Covid) Resilience and Recovery Interventions of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME).
- **Objectives:**
 - To accelerate center-state collaboration in MSME promotion and development.
 - Improving access of MSMEs to market and credit, technology upgradation.
- 3 Sub schemes which are launched under this RAMP Programme are:



1) MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme (MSE GIFT Scheme) –

- Intends to help MSMEs adopt green technology with interest subvention and credit guarantee support.
- Implementing agency – Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)

2) MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme) –

- 1st ever scheme to support circular economy projects through credit subsidy and will lead to realizing the dream of the MSME sector towards zero emissions by 2070.
- Implementing agency – Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)

3) MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments (MSE ODR scheme) –

- To synergize legal support with modern IT tools and Artificial Intelligence to address the incidences of delayed payments for MSME.
- Implementing agency – National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICSI)

About ZED scheme:

- It means Zero Defect and Zero Effect (ZED) scheme.
- It promotes manufacturing without negative impact on environment.
- It guarantees payment of 100 percent financial support for the certification cost.

PROJECT PRAYAS

Why in News?

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** has launched **Project PRAYAS (Promoting Regular & Assisted Migration for Youth and Skilled Professionals)** in **collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs.**

About Project Prayas:

- The Project Prayas is a **joint collaboration between the IOM (Indian Organization of Migration) India and the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).**

- It is one of the first attempts to consolidate all the state-level initiatives for safe, orderly, and well-managed international migration.
- Aim: To facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration for aspiring Indian migrant workers and students through policy recommendations in collaboration with the MEA and state governments, thus strengthening international migration governance.



- The **project involves studying migration trends, understanding migrants' needs, and launching initiatives to raise awareness about safe migration processes.**
- It aims to undertake a study, capturing the key migration trends, the needs and aspirations of migrants, and the major international migration and mobility initiatives taken by the union, as well as the state governments sharing the analysis with the ministry.
- Project Prayas is aligned **with Goal 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people.**
- The project **also adheres to the objectives of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF).**
- The Project Prayas envisages the development of a roadmap for improved coordination between Central and State Governments to encourage the sharing of best practices between States.

PALNA SCHEME

Why in News?

- The **Union Women and Child Development Ministry** aims to establish 17,000 creches in Anganwadi centres across the country out of which 5,222 have been approved to date.
- The Ministry also plans to depute two additional creche workers in Anganwadis along with the existing staff.
- These initiatives are being taken under the 'Palna' scheme.

About PALNA Scheme:

- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** which was earlier called as National Creche Scheme.
- This initiative aims to provide safe day-care facilities, enhancing the cognitive, nutritional, and health development of children.
- Aim of the scheme :
 - To address the urgent need for quality day-care facilities /creches for the children of working women.
 - To improve nutrition and health status of children.
- **Nodal Ministry : Ministry of Women and Child Development.**
- It is a **part of the Samarthya sub-component of Mission Shakti, starting from April 2022.**
- It will enable more women to take up gainful employment amongst all socio-economic groups both in the organized and unorganized sector, irrespective of their employment status.
- With an increased participation rate of women in the workforce, reaching 37% in 2022, this expansion of creches signifies a concerted effort to support women while nurturing the development of future generations.
- In July 2022, the Ministry of Women and Child Development revamped the National Creche Scheme into the Palna Scheme under 'Mission Shakti.'



- The **scheme focuses on children of 6 months to 6 years, of working women in rural and urban areas who are employed for a minimum period of 15 days in a month, or six months in a year.**
- The scheme focuses on two types of crèches:
 1. **Anganwadi-cum-Crèches:** These centers combine existing Anganwadi services with dedicated crèche facilities. This approach aims to holistically address the needs of both mothers and children in one convenient location.
 2. **Stand-alone creches:** The crèches which were running under the erstwhile National Creche Scheme have been included as Stand Alone Creches.

MEDTECH MITRA

Why in News?

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya virtually launches 'MedTech Mitra': A Strategic Initiative to Empower MedTech Innovators and Advance Healthcare Solutions.

About Medtech Mitra:

- MedTech Mitra is a platform that will help young talents of country in shaping their research, knowledge, logic and help them in getting regulatory approval.
- **MedTech refers to "Medical Technology,"** which encompasses a wide range of technological innovations, devices, equipment, and solutions used in the field of healthcare.
- **Examples of MedTech include devices like MRI machines, pacemakers, insulin pumps and surgical instruments, among others.**



- It's a **web platform** with an aim to foster development of affordable and accessible indigenous Medical devices/ In-vitro diagnostics.
- The goal is to harness innovation to enhance healthcare delivery and address healthcare challenges.
- It is **designed to provide strategic handholding support to MedTech innovators** with assessing clinical viability, regulatory facilitation, and adopting new products.
- The initiative aims to support and collaborate with technology innovators and startups in the medical technology sector.
- **MedTech Mitra will address the queries of the innovators and provide personalized guidance** in consultation with the Regulator and other relevant stakeholders.
- MedTech Mitra is part of the government's efforts to promote innovation in the health sector and improve healthcare services in the country.
- The **portal will be coordinated collaboratively by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO),** under the guidance of NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission.
- It will enable the indigenous development of cost-effective, high-quality MedTech devices and diagnostics, thereby **reducing the current import dependence of around 80% in MedTech.**
- It will facilitate innovation and research and development (R&D) for emerging startups in the field of medical technology.

NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK

Why in News?

The Central Zoo Authority has allowed the Odisha government to carry out the planned transfer of a cheetah, African lion and Chimpanzee from Dubai Safari Park (DSP) to Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZN), Bhubaneswar.

The NZN, in exchange, will provide various animals including Hippopotamus, blackbuck, hog deer, gaur, red junglefowl, and gharial.

About Nandankanan Zoological Park:

- Nandankanan Zoological Park is a 437-hectare zoo and botanical garden in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.
- Nandankanan, literally meaning **The Garden of Heaven**, is located near the capital city, Bhubaneswar, in the environs of the Chandaka forest, and includes the 134-acre Kanjia lake.
- It was **established in 1960 and it was opened to the public in 1979.**
- It became the first zoo in India to **join World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) in 2009.**
- It also contains a botanical garden and part of it has been declared a sanctuary.
- Unlike other zoos in the country, **Nandankanan is built right inside the forest and set in a completely natural environment.**
- It is recognized as a **leading zoo for the breeding of the Indian pangolin and white tiger.**
- The first zoo in India where endangered Ratel was born in captivity.
- The second largest heronry for Open Billed Storks in Odisha.
- It was the world's first captive crocodile breeding centre, where gharials were bred in captivity in 1980.
- The State Botanical Garden of Nandankanan is one of the pioneering plant conservation and nature education centres of Odisha.



VEER BAL DIWAS

Why in News?

Veer Bal Diwas is observed on 26th December every year to commemorate the martyrdom of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh the tenth and last Sikh guru.

This day was officially designated as Veer Bal Diwas by the Indian government in January 2022.

About Veer Bal Diwas:

- Veer Bal Diwas is a solemn **occasion to pay tribute to the immense sacrifices made by Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh.**
- These young sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji played a crucial role in shaping the legacy of courage and resilience in the face of adversity.
- The **four sons of Guru Gobind Singh** were named Zorawar Singh, Fateh Singh, Jai Singh and Kulwant Singh who fought against the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and his army.
- In December 1704, during the battle of Chamkaur, the Mughals and hill kings attacked Anandpur Sahib.
- Guru Gobind Singh's family was separated during the chaos, with the elder sons sacrificing their lives in Chamkaur.
- Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were captured by the Mughals at the age of six and nine respectively after they had defended their fort of Anandpur Sahib from a siege.
- They were taken to Sirhind, where they refused to convert to Islam and were sentenced to death by being bricked alive in 1705.
- Jai Singh and Kulwant Singh were also captured at Anandpur Sahib, but they managed to escape from Sirhind with the help of some loyal followers.
- They joined their father in his final battle at Sirhind, where he was wounded by a musket shot.
- **Guru Gobind Singh's sons sacrificed their lives for the cause of Sikhism** and their courage inspired generations of Sikhs.



About Guru Gobind Singh:

- **Guru Gobind Singh** (22 December 1666 – 7 October 1708) **was the tenth and last human Sikh Guru.**
- He **was a warrior, poet, and philosopher.**
- Gobind Singh was the **only son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, and Mata Gujri.**
- **In 1675, at the age of nine he was formally installed as the leader of the Sikhs after his father Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed by Emperor Aurangzeb.**
- His father was the ninth Sikh Guru.
- His four biological sons died during his lifetime – two in battle and two executed by the Mughal governor Wazir Khan.
- Among his notable contributions to Sikhism are founding the Sikh warrior community called Khalsa in 1699 and introducing the Five Ks, the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear at all times.
- Guru Gobind Singh is credited with the Dasam Granth whose hymns are a sacred part of Sikh prayers and Khalsa rituals.
- He is also credited as the one who finalized and enshrined the Guru Granth Sahib as Sikhism's primary holy religious scripture and the eternal Guru.



ANGOLA EXITS OPEC

Why in News?

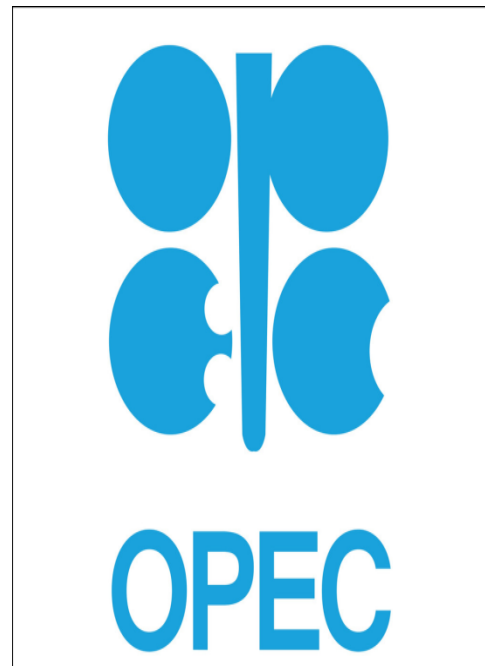
Angola has decided to leave OPEC, a setback for the Saudi-led oil producer group.

About:

- **Angola, a significant oil-producing nation, has declared its decision to exit the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) with effect from January 1, 2024.**
- This move follows the footsteps of Ecuador in 2020 and Qatar in 2019, reflecting a trend of nations with relatively small oil output distancing themselves from the influential oil-exporting organization.
- **Angola argues that OPEC no longer serves its interests, following a dispute over its output quota.**
- Angola's exit, joining Ecuador and Qatar as former members, further challenges OPEC's market share, which has been decreasing due to production cuts and rising output from non-OPEC countries.
- **OPEC and 10 allied nations decided to further slash oil production in 2024** to prop up volatile global prices, which Angola said goes against its policy of avoiding decline and respecting contracts.
- **Angola joined the group in 2007 .**
- Angola's exit from OPEC will leave it with 12 members

About OPEC : Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries :

- The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** is an organization enabling the co-operation of leading oil-producing countries in order to collectively influence the global oil market and maximize profit.
- It was **founded on 14 September 1960** in **Baghdad** by the **first five members (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela).**
- **Headquarter: Vienna, Austria.**
- The 12 member countries account for an estimated 30 percent of global oil production.
- The formation of OPEC marked a turning point toward national sovereignty over natural resources.



- OPEC decisions have come to play a prominent role in the global oil-market and in international relations.
- It plays a significant role in influencing global oil production levels to meet market demand and maintain the economic interests of its member nations.
- Decisions about matching oil production to expected demand are taken at the meeting of the OPEC conference
- **Current OPEC members are Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.**
- Meanwhile, Angola, Ecuador, Indonesia, and Qatar are former OPEC members.

About Angola:

- Angola, **officially the Republic of Angola**, is a **country on the west-central coast of Southern Africa**.
- It is the **second-largest Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) country** in both total area and population and is the **seventh-largest country in Africa**.
- It is **bordered by Namibia to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north, Zambia to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west**.
- The capital and largest city of Angola is **Luanda**.



AMMONIA GAS LEAK

Why in News?

- Nearly 60 people were hospitalised in Chennai after **ammonia gas leaked from the Ennore facility of Coromandel International Ltd**, a fertiliser manufacturing company, said officials.
- The southern bench of the NGT has taken suo moto cognizance of the incident.
- People from Periakuppam and neighboring areas reported breathlessness, and eye and skin irritation.

About:

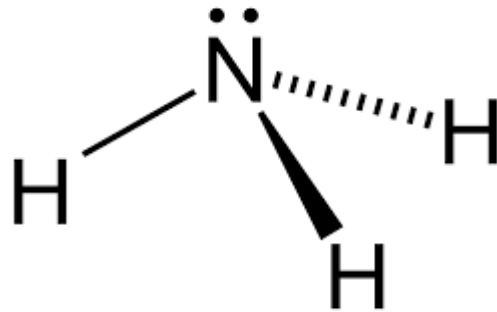
- Coromandel International Limited, an industrial unit in Ennore receives and unloads around 3000 to 8000 tonnes of ammonia from Iran or Saudi Arabia once a month.
- The **ammonia is received in liquid form at -33°C, stored in a storage tank, and then transferred through an eight-inch flexible High-Density Polyethylene pipeline laid underneath the sea bed.**
- The pipelines are generally maintained at 2 kg/cm² vapor pressure when no transfer of ammonia occurs.
- Around 36 hours before the transfer of ammonia from the ships, a pre-cooling process of the pipeline is carried out to pump ammonia in its liquid condition.
- **On 26th December 2023, a pressure drop and gas bubbles were observed in the pipeline during the pre-cooling process.**
- **As a result, the pipeline began to depressurize and the ammonia vapor was diverted.**
- The **level of ammonia in the air was five times the standard level.**
- The **level of ammonia in the sea was 10 times the standard level.**
- Ammonia gas is immediately harmful to life or health at concentrations of 300 ppm.
- According to the TNPCB, locals in Ennore were exposed to extremely high levels of ammonia for four hours.



- Initially, residents began to notice a pungent odor in areas through which the pipelines passed.
- People also reported experiencing eye and skin irritation, and breathlessness.
- 52 individuals were admitted to the hospital due to health issues.
- Fish were found dead in the water near the site of the leak as ammonia concentration of more than 1 ppm in water is toxic to fish.

About Ammonia:

- Ammonia is an **inorganic chemical compound of nitrogen and hydrogen with the formula NH₃**.
- Ammonia is a **colourless gas with a distinct pungent smell**.
- It's made up of hydrogen and nitrogen. In its **aqueous form, it's called ammonium hydroxide**.
- It is a common nitrogenous waste, and it contributes significantly to the nutritional needs of terrestrial organisms by serving as a precursor to fertilisers.
- It can be produced both through natural means as well as anthropogenically.
- **Around 70% of ammonia produced industrially is used to make fertilizers** in various forms and composition, such as urea and diammonium phosphate.
- Ammonia, either directly or indirectly, is also a building block for the synthesis of many pharmaceutical products and is used in many commercial cleaning products.
- **Ammonia is a natural byproduct and respiratory stimulant.** It's produced naturally in the human body and in nature, including in water, soil, and air. In human health, ammonia and the ammonium ion are important components of metabolic processes.
- In its concentrated form, ammonia is dangerous and caustic.
- Signs and symptoms of ammonia exposure include:
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Abdominal pain
 - Burns of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, and stomach



MSP COPRA

Why in News?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister, has approved the **Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for Copra for the 2024 season**.

The decision is in line with the government's commitment to fixing MSPs at a level of at least 1.5 times the all-India weighted cost of production, as announced in the Union Budget of 2018-19.

About:

- This move aims to provide better returns to coconut growers, encourage copra production, and meet the growing demand for coconut products.
- The MSP is a form of government intervention to protect farmers from steep declines in the prices of their goods.
- The MSP is based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.

About Copra:

- **Copra** is the dried, white flesh of the **coconut** from which coconut oil is extracted.
- Traditionally, the coconuts are sun-dried, especially for export, before the oil, also known as copra oil, is pressed out.
- **The oil extracted from copra is rich in lauric acid**, making it an important commodity in the preparation of lauryl alcohol, soaps, fatty acids, cosmetics, etc. and thus a lucrative product for many coconut-producing countries.
- Milling copra is used to extract oil.
- Ball/edible copra is consumed as a dry fruit and used for religious purposes.



- Kerala and Tamil Nadu are major producers of **milling copra**.
- Karnataka is a predominant producer of **ball copra**.

ARGENTINA REJECTS BRICS MEMBERSHIP

Why in News?

The membership of Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates was due to take effect from January 1, 2024.

Argentina has formally rejected the invitation to join the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) group of major emerging economies.

Reason for Argentina's Rejection:

- In August 2023, BRICS announced its expansion.
- The **bloc planned to add six new members, namely Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, effective from January 1, 2024.**
- **Argentina, one of the prospective members, decided to withdraw from BRICS.**
- **New Argentinian President Milei**, during his election campaign, Milei had expressed a geopolitical alignment with the United States and Israel, emphasizing a reluctance to ally with communists.
- **President Milei's rejection was grounded in the assertion that Argentina's membership was "not considered appropriate at this time."**
- The letters emphasized a departure from the foreign policy approach of the previous administration, indicating a comprehensive review of decisions made earlier.

About BRICS:

- **BRICS is an intergovernmental organization comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.**

- Originally identified to highlight investment opportunities, the grouping evolved into a cohesive geopolitical bloc, with their governments meeting annually at formal summits and coordinating multilateral policies since 2009.
- **Bilateral relations among BRICS are conducted mainly on the basis of non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit.**
- **The founding countries of Brazil, Russia, India, and China held the first summit in Yekaterinburg in 2009, with South Africa joining the bloc a year later (2010).**
- Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joined the organization on 1 January 2024.
- Combined, the BRICS members encompass about 30% of the world's land surface and 45% of the global population.
- **The chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members.**
- During the Sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (Brazil) in 2014, the leaders signed the Agreement establishing the New Development Bank (NDB - Shanghai, China).



CLASSIC IAS ACADEMY