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AN INITIATIVE BY PRADEEP KUMAR
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The information in this magazine is intended to provide users with resources and information which they may find useful and of interest.

We take all reasonable steps to keep this information current and accurate, but errors can occur.

We express our gratitude to all our team members and thankful to all the advisors for making first step in publishing a small magazine.

Our Methodology for this Magazine

We have used official website pib.nic.in to collect important press release important for Exam

The topics has been categorised subject wise so that is is easy for aspirants to read in flow and relate the topics

Background information has been provided so static related to current can be covered

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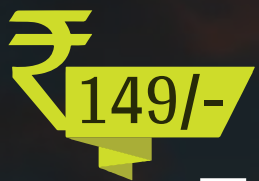
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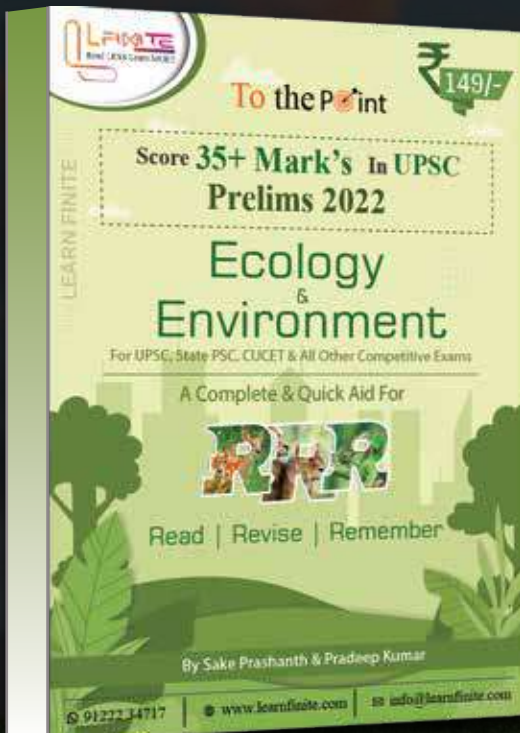
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An Initiative By Pradeep Kumar

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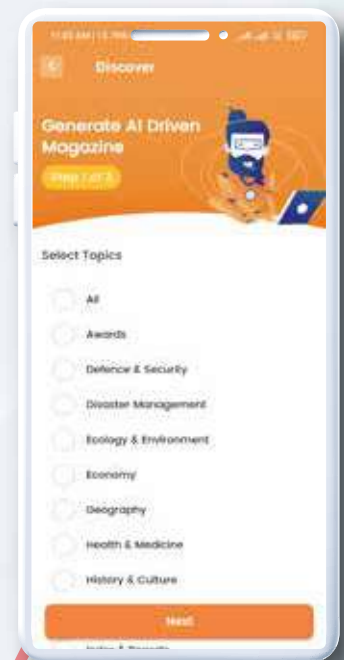
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History & Culture

Rani Velu Nachiyar

In News

PM remembers Rani Velu Nachiyar on her birth anniversary.

About Rani Velu Nachiyar

- Rani Velu Nachiyar is remembered as the first queen from India to fight against the British East India Company.
- She was a princess of Ramanathapuram.
- Born in 1730, Velu Nachiyar was the only child of Raja Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Sethupathy and Rani Sakandhimuthal of the Ramnad kingdom.
- She was trained in martial arts and was also a scholar with proficiency in many languages.
- She was drawn into battle when Company soldiers killed her husband, the king of Sivaganga.
- She sought an alliance with Hyder Ali of Mysore in order to launch a campaign against the East India Company.
- The queen arranged a suicide attack on a place where the Company stored its ammunition and blew them up.
- Her daughter succeeded her in 1790.
- She passed away in 1796.
- She is remembered as 'veeramangai'.

Jagannath Temple Act of 1954

In News

Recently, in a historic decision, the Odisha state cabinet has approved amendments to the Sri Jagannath Temple Act of 1954.

Provisions of the new act

- The power will now be delegated to temple administration and concerned officials for sale and lease of land in the name of Jagannath temple.
- Unlike earlier, no approval will be required from the state government for the process.
- The Section 16 (2) of the act states that no immovable property taken possession of by the temple committee shall be leased out, mortgaged, sold or otherwise alienated except with the previous sanction of the State Government.

Jagannath Temple

- The temple is believed to have been constructed in the 12th century by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
- Jagannath Puri temple is called 'Yamanika Tirtha' where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of 'Yama', the god of death has been nullified in Puri due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.
- This temple was called the "White Pagoda" and is a part of Char Dham pilgrimages (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram).
- There are four gates to the temple- Eastern 'Singhdwara' which is the main gate with two crouching lions, Southern 'Ashwadwara', Western 'Vyaghra Dwara and Northern 'Hastidwara'. There is a carving of each form at each gate.

Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala

In News

The Hoysala Temples of Belur, Halebid and Somnathapura in Karnataka have been finalized as India's nomination for consideration as World Heritage for the year 2022-2023.

Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala:

- The 'Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala' have been on UNESCO's Tentative List since 2014.
- The sacred ensembles of the Hoysalas were built in the 12th-13th centuries and represented here by the three components of Belur, Halebid and Somnathapura.
- The Hoysala temples have a basic Dravidian morphology.
- The Hoysala architecture made selections of features from other temple typologies which were modified and complemented with their own particular innovations.

Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebidu:

- Halebeedu (formerly known as Dwarasamudra) was the ancient capital of the Hoysalas just 17 km away from Belur.
- In the 14th century, the armies of Alauddin Khilji and Muhammad Tughlak defeated the Hoysalas and raided their empire. Halebeedu means "old house/old ruins".

Keshava Temple, Somanathapura:

- The Keshava temple at Somanathapura is another magnificent Hoysala monument, perhaps the last.
- This is a beautiful Trikuta Temple dedicated to Lord Krishna in three forms – Janardhana, Keshava and Venugopala.
- A commander of the Hoysala Army, Somanatha, constructed the Keshava Temple at Somanathapura.

Lala Lajpat Rai

In News

The Prime Minister of India rendered homage to the captivating personality of Lala Lajpat Rai on his birth anniversary.

Lala Lajpat Rai

- Lala Lajpat Rai was one of the greatest freedom fighters of India.
- He was also called 'Punjab Kesari' and 'Lion of Punjab'.
- He studied law at the Government College, Lahore.
- Was influenced by Swami Dayananda Saraswati and joined the Arya Samaj in Lahore.
- He believed that the ideals in Hinduism combined with nationalism will lead to the establishment of a secular state.
- Along with Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, he formed the Lal-Bal-Pal trio of extremist leaders.
- He was also involved with the Hindu Mahasabha.
- He fought against untouchability.

Stone idol of goat head Yogini

In News

A 10th century stone-headed Yogini idol had been returned to the state of Uttar Pradesh.

About the idol:

- The sculpture of a goat-headed Yogini idol belonged to a group of stone deities in sandstone and was installed in Lokhari temple.
- The Yogini cult and temples were studied by an Indian scholar at the National Museum in New Delhi and observed that this art form had surfaced in the art market in London in 1988.
- The India Pride project Singapore and Art Recovery International, London assisted the High Commission in the identification and requisite documentation of the statue.
- The statue has been handed over to the Archaeological Survey of India.

Kathakali Dance

In News

The Prime Minister expressed his grief over the demise of the noted Kathakali dancer Ms. Milena Salvini.

Kathakali Dance

- Chakiarkoothu, Koodiyattam, Krishnattam and Ramanattam are few of the ritual performing arts of Kerala which have had a direct influence on Kathakali in its form and technique.
- Kathakali is a blend of dance, music and acting and dramatizes stories, which are mostly adapted from the Indian epics.
- Heavy make-up and stunning costumes (elaborate masks, huge skirts and big head-dresses) are used.

Smart Cities and Academia Towards Action & Research

In News

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the National Institute of Urban Affairs took a joint step and collaborated with 15 premier architecture and planning institutes to document 75 urban projects under the Smart Cities Mission.

About SAAR

- AIM- to prepare a compendium of 75 urban projects that are innovative, multi-sectoral and have been implemented across geographies.
- SAAR acts as a platform that offers a real-time flow of information between urban practitioners and academia.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the National Institute of Urban Affairs will provide linkages between institutions and smart cities for specific landmark projects that are to be documented under the program.
- The institutes will document the outcomes of these projects and their impact on the lives of urban citizens.

Baba Iqbal Singh

In News

The Prime Minister expressed deep grief over the passing away of Baba Iqbal Singh Ji who was a promising educationist.

About Baba Iqbal Singh:

- He was an illustrious personality whose contributions towards education and society are of enormous importance.
- He was born in a village of Pathankot, Punjab.
- He became the President of Kalgidhar Society/Trust and chancellor of Eternal University which was run under the Baru Sahib Organization.

- He advocated the combination of modern education and spiritual knowledge with an aim to produce good global citizens.
- In 2018, Baba Iqbal Singh was awarded with Shiromani Panth Ratan which is a title of honor and distinction for his excellent services to the Sikh community.
- Recently, his name was listed for receiving the Padma Shri award for his relentless and remarkable social work.

Launch of Pandit Jasraj Cultural foundation

In News

The Prime Minister offered tribute to Pandit Jasraj on the occasion of his birth anniversary and addressed the launch of the Pandit Jasraj Cultural Foundation.

Pandit Jasraj:

- Pandit Jasraj is regarded as the doyen of Hindustani classical music and will be immortal for his path-breaking contributions towards the enrichment of classical music.
- He was born on the 28th of January 1930 at Hisar (At present, Fatehabad, Haryana) which was a part of Punjab under British rule.
- He devoted 75 years of his career to classical music that accorded him national and international fame.
- This maestro was a recipient of Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan.
- Pandit Jasraj died at the age of 90 on August 17, 2020.
- He belonged to the Mewati Gharana which is a school of Hindustani classical music.
- He is popularly known for his memorable performances of classical and semi-classical vocal music, devotional music and film soundtracks.

About Mewati Gharana:

- The Mewati Gharana is a musical family (Gharana) of Hindustani classical music founded in the late 19th century by Ustad Ghagge Nazir Khan.
- Ustad Ghagge Nazir Khan belonged to the kingdom of Jodhpur in the Mewat region in Rajasthan.
- This was the reason for which the evolved musical tradition under the patronage of Ustad Ghagge Nazir Khan became popular as Mewati Gharana.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

In News

The year 2022 marks the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

About the Event

- To pay tribute to Netaji, his grand statue will be installed on his birth anniversary which is on the 23rd of January at India Gate.
- This statue is made up of granite and symbolizes his indebtedness towards nation building.
- Netaji's birth anniversary is also regarded as the 'Parakram Diwas' devoted to the memory of the former commander of the erstwhile Indian National Army.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

In News

Prime Minister interacted with Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) awardees via video conference.

About Awards

The Government of India awards the “Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar” in two categories:

- Bal Shakti Puraskar
- Bal Kalyan Puraskar

Bal Shakti Puraskar

- These awards are to be given as recognition to children with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievement in the fields of innovation, scholastic, sports, arts & culture, social service and bravery which deserves recognition.
- Each awardee will be given a medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/-, book vouchers worth Rs. 10,000/-, a certificate and citation.

Bal Kalyan Puraskar

- **For Individuals:**
 - These awards are given as recognition to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution towards service for children in the field of Child Development, Child Protection and Child Welfare for not less than 7 years.
 - The award consists of a medal, cash prize of Rs. 1, 00,000/- (one lakh), a citation and a certificate to each awardee.
- **For Institutions:**

The award for the institution consists of a medal, cash prize of Rs. 5,00,000/- each and a citation, and a certificate.

Veer Baal Diwas

In News

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on the auspicious occasion of the Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, has announced that 26th December shall be observed as ‘Veer Baal Diwas’ to mark the martyrdom of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji.

Guru Gobind Singh

- Guru Gobind Singh was born in Patna in 1666 as the only son of Guru Tegh Bahadur.
- Guru Gobind Singh born was installed as the Sikh Guru aged nine when his father and the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded on the orders of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb for refusing to embrace Islam.
- His notable contribution to Sikhism is the establishment of the Khalsa in 1699.
- He was educated in reading, writing, and also martial arts, archery and horse riding.

Battle of Chamkaur

- The Battle was fought in 1704 between the Khalsa group led by Guru Gobind Singh and The coalition forces of Mughals led by Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sirhind.
- While Guru Gobind Singh was crossing the Sarsa river with his disciples, the mughals and hill chiefs attacked, marking the start of the battle.
- The battle was fought for three days between 21st to 23rd of December, 1704.

Polity & Governance

Padhe Bharat

In News

A 100-day reading campaign has been launched by the Union Education Minister with an objective to promote the practice of reading among children.

Significance of the Campaign:

- The Padhe Bharat campaign will be a crucial step to improve the learning levels of students.
- This will develop creativity, critical thinking, vocabulary and the ability to express both verbally and in writing.
- It will be a 14 weeks programme with one activity per week per group and has been designed with an intention to build a lifelong association of students with the joy of reading.
- The campaign also forms conformity with the vision and goals of the foundational Literacy and Numeracy mission.

NEAT 3.0

In News

Union Education Minister launches NEAT 3.0.

About NEAT 3.0:

- NEAT 3.0 is a single platform to provide the best-developed ed-tech solutions and courses to students of the country.
- AICTE is the facilitator in the process.
- NEAT has 58 Education Technology Companies with 100 products that help to develop employable skills, capacity building, and bridge learning gaps.
- More than 12 lakh socially and economically disadvantaged students have received free ed-tech course coupons worth over ₹253 crores under NEAT 3.0.
- NEAT is expected to be a game-changer in bridging the digital divide in education.
- The minister also launched AICTE prescribed technical books in regional languages.

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis

In News

Cabinet approved the extension of tenure of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) for three years.

Background

- The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis recommends the government regarding specific programmes for welfare of the Safai Karamcharis.
- In accordance with the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, the NCSK has been tasked to monitor the implementation of the act.
- Despite the initiatives taken by the government to avert the socio-economic deprivation of the scavengers, hazardous cleaning of sewer and septic tanks continues to be a major issue.

About NCSK:

- The commission was established in 1993 and was valid till 1997 followed by the further extension of the tenure of the act.

- The commission was later extended as a non-statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- The tenure of the commission is extended from time to time through government resolutions.

New CCS (Pension) Rules

In News

A webinar was conducted to create awareness on the newly notified Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules and generation of Digital Life Certificates using Face Authentication Technology.

The CCS (Pension) Rules 2021:

- The government has amended the pension rules for Central Civil Services 1972. This was carried out by the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare.
- The CCS (Pension) rules apply to the civil servants who have been appointed before 1/1/2004.
- The civil servants appointed on or after 1/1/2004 are covered under the National Pension Scheme.
- These rules provided new restrictions for the officials of intelligence and security organisations.
- **Rule 8(3) (a):** Officials who retired from certain intelligence and security establishments will not be allowed to write anything about their organisation without permission. These organisations refer to those that are included in the second schedule of the RTI Act of 2005.
- It covers 26 organisations such as the Intelligence Bureau, R&AW, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation), NCB (Narcotics Control Bureau), BSF (Border Security Force), CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police) and CISF (Central Industrial Security Force).
- **Rule 9:** Restricts a government servant from making any statements of fact or opinion in writing or in a telecast that hold criticism against the existing policies of the government. Any misconduct might result in departmental proceedings against the official only until four years of the date of committing that misconduct.
- There is no rule to stop the government servants from joining politics after their retirement.

Global Center of Excellence in Affordable and Clean Energy (GCoE-ACE)

In News

A virtual function was held to mark the launch of the Global Center of Excellence in Affordable and Clean Energy (GCoE-ACE) in Karnataka.

Global Center of Excellence in Affordable and Clean Energy (GCoE-ACE)

- The GCoE-ACE aims to establish equipment for skill development, fabrication, and R&D.
- The centre is supported by the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) donation from HHSIF.

HSIF-

- The Honeywell Hometown Solutions India Foundation (HHSIF) is a not-for-profit organization that deploys efforts in several critical areas.
- **Aim:** To encourage innovation to support the solutions to the grass-root problem statements in the affordable and clean-energy domain.

ODF plus village

In News

South Maubuang, a village in Mizoram, has been declared as the first ODF (Open Defecation Free) plus village in the state having fulfilled all the criteria as per Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBM-G) Phase II guidelines.

ODF Plus Village

Village with sustained ODF behaviours along with access to solid and liquid waste management is recognised as an ODF plus village.

Key indicators assessed:

- ODF sustainability
- Biodegradable Waste Management
- Liquid Waste Management
- Plastic Waste Management
- Faecal Sludge Management

National Single Window System (NSWS)

In News

A review meeting of the National single window system was held with a prime focus on the simplicity of operations and transparency.

About NSWS

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched the national single window system for expanding the scope of Ease of Doing Business.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade in association with Invest India initiated this portal.
- It is aimed at making investments flexible and easy.
- This single window system acts as a portal that allows businesses to apply for clearances, track the process and address their queries.
- It ensures a one stop solution for states and central governments in carrying out businesses bringing more transparency and accountability.
- It offers a Know Your Approvals service which gives information about the required approvals, criteria and a common registration form. This speeds up the process of documentation in carrying out business.

National Air Sports Draft Policy

In News

The Ministry of Civil Aviation releases a draft of 'National Air Sports Policy', with a vision to make India one of the top sports nations by 2030.

Features of the Draft Policy

- The draft covers sports like aerobatics, aeromodelling, amateur-built and experimental aircraft, ballooning, drones, gliding, hang gliding and paragliding; microlighting and paramotoring; skydiving and vintage aircraft.
- An **Air Sports Federation of India (ASFI)** will be established as the apex governing body.
- ASFI shall represent India at Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) and other global platforms related to air sports.
- Domestic design, development and manufacturing of air sports equipment will be promoted in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- NASP 2022 places a strong focus on ensuring international best practices in safety.
- All persons and entities providing air sports services shall be required to register as members of the respective air sports associations.
- An airspace map of India has been published on DGCA's DigitalSky Platform. The map segregates the entire airspace of India into the red zone, yellow zone and green zone.
- Schools, colleges and universities will be encouraged to have air sports included in their curriculum.

- Long-term funding for the development of air sports in India shall come from corporate investors, sponsors, membership fees, events and media rights.
- To make air sports affordable to the common public, the Government will request the GST Council to consider rationalising the GST rate on-air sports equipment to 5% or less.

National Commission for Women

In News

The Prime Minister will address the 30th National Commission for Women (NCW) Foundation Day programme on 31st January, 2022.

National Commission for Women

- The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up as a statutory body in 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- **Objectives:**
 - Review the Constitutional and Legal safeguards for women
 - Recommend remedial legislative measures
 - Facilitate redressal of grievances
 - Advise the Government on all policy matters affecting women
- **Key Functions:**
 - Investigate and examine matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution and other laws.
 - Make recommendations for the effective implementation of safeguards for improving the conditions of women.
 - Review the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting women and recommend amendments
 - Take up cases of violation of the provisions of the Constitution and of other laws relating to women with the appropriate authorities.

GIS-based automated water connection

In News

Water connection has been granted under an automated water supply system that is GIS (Geographical Information System) enabled for the residents of cantonments.

About GIS:

- The GIS-based 'Automatic Water Supply System' has been developed by Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics under the guidance of the Defense Secretary and Director General of Defense Estates.
- It is completely an automated system that provides the citizens with the nearest water pipeline.
- Under the GIS, no manual intervention is required for the clearance and sanction of the water connection.

About E-Chhawani portal:

- It is a unified portal for 62 cantonment boards which will enable the citizens to have ready access to information regarding their cantonment board.
- This portal also helps the citizens to avail the civic services delivered by cantonment boards.
- It is planning to provide an online property tax payment facility. Online building plan facility, community hall booking, school admission facility along with fee payment in the coming future.

Services E-Health Assistance And Teleconsultation (Sehat)

In News

As part of the Government's commitment to Digital India and e-Governance, the Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh launched SeHAT.

About SeHAT

- SeHAT is the tri-services teleconsultation service of the MoD designed for all entitled personnel and their families.
- SeHAT stay home OPD is a patient-to-doctor system where the patient can consult a doctor remotely through the internet using his Smartphone, laptop, Desktop or Tablet.
- It aims to provide quality healthcare services to patients from the comfort of their homes.

African Swine fever

In News

Recently, Thailand has detected African Swine Fever in a surface swab sample collected at a slaughterhouse.

About Fever

- It is a highly contagious and fatal animal disease that infects and leads to an acute form of hemorrhagic fever in domestic and wild pigs.
- Other manifestations of the disease include high fever, depression, anorexia, loss of appetite, hemorrhages in the skin, vomiting and diarrhoea among others.
- It was first detected in Africa in the 1920s.
- Historically, outbreaks have been reported in Africa and parts of Europe, South America, and the Caribbean.

Henley Passport Index

In News

India has been ranked 83rd in the most powerful passport report 'Henley Passport Index 2022'.

India's passport power has improved this quarter compared to 2021 climbing seven places from 90th rank last year.

About the Index:

- The Henley Passport Index is the original ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
- Originally created by Dr. Christian H. Kaelin (chairman of Henley & Partners), the ranking is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which maintains the world's largest and most accurate database of travel information.
- It was launched in 2006 and includes 199 different passports.

Global Rankings:

- Japan and Singapore top the index
- Germany and South Korea held onto the joint second spot on the latest ranking, while Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, and Spain shared third place.
- Afghanistan and Iraq continue to be in the 'worst passports to hold' category.

The 50th Statehood Day

In News

Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya celebrated their 50th statehood day upholding the values of the indestructible Indian Union of destructible states.

About the Celebration:

- The 50th foundation day of the three North Eastern states was celebrated with the announcement of several welfare programmes that intend to improve the livelihood opportunities for the people of North East and head towards the overall development of the region.
- Over a period of time, there have been several connectivity and infrastructure projects in the North-East region which will experience further progress in the upcoming years.

Scenario after Independence

- Post Independent India witnessed the existence of more than 560 princely states.
- These princely states were provided with choices of either to join the territory of India or Pakistan or retain their sovereignty as per the provisions of the Indian Independence Act of 1947.
- Tripura and Manipur were erstwhile princely states that merged with the Indian Union in October 1949.
- Tripura and Manipur became full-fledged states on the 21st of January, 1972. On the same day Meghalaya was accorded statehood which was a part of Assam.
- All the three states were accorded statehood under the provisions of the North Eastern Region (Reorganization) Act, 1971.

District level Governance Index

In News

Jammu & Kashmir will soon become the first Union Territory in the country to have a district level Good Governance Index, modeled on the Good Governance Index 2021 launched on 25 December 2021.

District Good Governance Index (DGGI)

DGGI will enable each of the 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir to rise to the level of some of the best-administered districts of the country, with

- Time-bound disposal of office files and other matters
- Increased transparency
- Increased accountability
- Increased citizen participation

The DGGI Framework has **58 Indicators** drawn from different aspects of development and district administration distributed in **10 sectors** that include,

- Agriculture & allied sector
- Commerce & Industry
- Human Resource Development
- Public Health
- Public Infrastructure & Utilities
- Economic Governance
- Welfare & Development
- Public Safety
- Judiciary
- Citizen-Centric Governance

About GGI

The Good Governance Day is observed on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee (25th December). It was observed for the first time in 2014.

Economy

Year of Major Transformation for Indian Railways

In News

The year 2021 witnessed significant growth in the development of infrastructure, innovation, capacity expansion of network and freight diversification.

Highlights of the Achievements:

- There has been enhanced safety that reported zero passenger fatalities.
- Freight loading has been the highest ever in 2021.
- Massive progress has been made in railways infrastructure which includes railway electrification progress and doubling gauge conversion.
- The Gati Shakti cargo terminal policy was launched to speed up the process of approvals and to ease out the establishment of Cargo terminals which resulted in the increase in the freight loading share of Indian railways.
- About 1806 Kisan rails ran out on 153 routes that carried around 5.9 lakh tons of agricultural products. Besides, the 100th Kisan rail was launched in 2021 to improve the logistics of farm produce.
- The stations have been commissioned with Wi-Fi and have been made more passenger-friendly with medical facilities in Railway hospitals.
- RDSO became the first Standard developing Organization in India to be granted recognition by the SDO recognition scheme in 2021.
- AYUSH facilities have been started in 5 zonal railway hospitals in New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Guwahati.
- To expand the tourist potential, Indian Railways launched theme-based trains under the programme of **Bharat Gaurav**.

Community Based Organizations

In News

North Eastern Community Resource Management Society (NERCRMS) as society formed by NEC, MDoNER is involved in value addition of spice crops by Community Based Organizations (CBOs) of Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh to boost the marketability of the products and to further improve the income of the farmers.

About CBOs

- The Community Based Organizations have been formed under the Ministry of DoNER to replace the vicious cycle of middlemen in the promotion of agricultural products from the North-East region.
- These organizations will also address the challenges of marketing and transport assisting to improve the income of farmers.
- This will ensure to provide the right price for agricultural produce which is a major challenge for the farmers.
- The spice crops produced by the farmers are processed by the CBO at the centralized processing and packaging unit.
- The products are then branded under the label of Namdapha Goodness along with special attention to standard quality and food safety measures by the CBO members.

Mandate for vehicles of M1 Category

In News

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has released a mandate for vehicles of M1 category, manufactured after 1st of October 2022, to be fitted with two side torso airbags and two side tube airbags.

Vehicles of M1 category:

- This category includes motor vehicles that carry passengers.
- These vehicles have not more than eight seats in addition to the driver's seat.
- The Ministry mandated the driver airbag for M1 category vehicles manufactured on and after 1st July, 2019 to ensure the safety of the driver.
- The inclusion of a front airbag for the person in the front seat other than the driver has been made compulsory with effect from the 1st of January 2022.
- The new rules will enhance the safety of the passengers and prevent the harmful implications of road accidents.

National Technical Textiles Mission

In News

The Ministry of Textiles cleared 20 strategic research projects in the areas of Specialty fibres and Geotextiles which fall under the Flagship Programme '**National Technical Textiles Mission.**'

National Technical Textiles Mission

- It was approved in 2020 by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) with the aim to position the country as a global leader in technical textiles and increase the use of technical textiles in the domestic market.
- It aims at taking the domestic market size from USD 40 billion to USD 50 billion by 2024.

One District One Product' (ODOP) Initiative

In News

A State Conference was held to boost Centre and State collaboration in promoting products under the One District One Product (ODOP) Initiative.

About ODOP

- ODOP is basically a Japanese business development concept, which gained prominence in 1979.
- It is aimed at promoting a competitive and staple product from a specific area to push sales and improve the standard of living of the local population. Over time, it has been replicated in other Asian countries as well.

Green ports and green shipping in India

In News

The progress of green initiatives undertaken for the development of green ports and green shipping, has been reviewed.

About the initiative:

- The development of green ports has been planned under the Maritime India Vision 2030.

- The major objective is to promote a green ecosystem in the maritime sector which is in alignment with the International Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy 2030 of International Maritime Organization and its Green-House Gas Strategy for 2050.
- This will reduce the carbon footprint and ensure sustainable use of ports.
- The major ports of India aims to increase the share of renewable energy to more than 60% by 2030 accompanied by the setting up of solar power plants, availing shore power supply to the vessels through multi-clean fuel adoption within the port.
- In a collective decision, the major ports of India are planning to phase out diesel locomotives at ports.

World Economic Forum's

In News

The Prime Minister delivered a 'State of the World' special address at the World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda via video conferencing.

Mission Life

- LIFE i.e. 'Lifestyle for Environment', is a vision of a resilient and sustainable lifestyle that will come in handy in dealing with the climate crisis and other unpredictable challenges of the future.
- The Prime Minister at COP26 called for making 'Lifestyle for Environment' (LIFE) a global mission.

About WEF

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a Swiss nonprofit foundation established in 1971, based in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Recognized by the Swiss authorities as the international institution for public-private cooperation.
- Founder and Executive Chairman: Klaus Schwab.

State of Dam's in India

In News

According to a new Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report, Gandhi Sagar Dam on Chambal River (Madhya Pradesh) is in need of immediate repair.

Gandhi Sagar Dam

- It is one of the five water reservoirs of national importance.
- Gandhi Sagar Dam was constructed in 1960 to provide drinking water to several districts of Rajasthan and generate 115 megawatts of electricity.
- It has been breached several times in recent years, causing flooding in downstream areas.

India's Position in Dam

- India is ranked third in the world in terms of building large dams.
- Of the over 5,200 large dams built so far, about 1,100 large dams have already reached 50 years of age and some are older than 120 years.
- The number of such dams will increase to 4,400 by 2050.
- This means that 80% of the nation's large dams face the prospect of becoming obsolete as they will be 50 years to over 150 years old.

Need of the Dam Safety

- Safety of dams is also important for safeguarding the huge public investment in this critical physical infrastructure, as also, for ensuring continuity of benefits derived from the dam projects and national water security.

- Indian dams are very old and built according to the rainfall pattern of the past decades. Erratic rainfall in recent years has left them vulnerable.
- But the government is equipping the dams with information systems like rainfall alerts, flood alerts, and preparing emergency action plans to avoid all sorts of mishaps.
- As dams age, soil replaces the water in the reservoirs. Therefore, the storage capacity cannot be claimed to be the same as it was in the 1900s and 1950s.
- **Dam safety bill, 2019** provides for surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of the specified dam, for prevention of dam failure related disaster, and also makes provision for institutional mechanisms to ensure their safe functioning.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

In News

Recently, former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Urjit Patel has been appointed vice-president of the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

About AIIB

- It is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia.
- It aims to connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future by investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors.
- It is established by the AIIB Articles of Agreement (entered into force December 2015) which is a multilateral treaty.
- It is headquartered in Beijing (China) and began its operations in January 2016.

India and AIIB

- The AIIB has approved more loans for India than any other member of the bank.
- China is its biggest shareholder and India is the second-largest.
- The AIIB has funded 28 projects in India amounting to USD6.7 billion.
- It has recently emphasised green projects and supporting public health initiatives during the Covid-19 pandemic, besides infrastructure.
- In October 2021, India applied for loans from the AIIB and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to procure 667 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines with the ADB expected to lend USD1.5 billion and the AIIB around USD500 million, under the ADB's Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX) initiative.

Sweet Revolution

In News

Recently, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched the country's first Mobile Honey Processing Van at Village in Uttar Pradesh.

Sweet Revolution

- Mobile Honey Processing Van that will process beekeepers' honey at their doorsteps and thus save them the hassle and the cost of taking the honey to processing plants in far off cities for processing.
- This initiative is taken in pursuance of "Sweet Kranti" (Sweet Revolution).
- It is an ambitious initiative of the Government of India for promoting apiculture, popularly known as 'beekeeping'.
- To provide a booster shot to Sweet Revolution, the government launched the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission in 2020 (under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare).
- It aims to accelerate the production of quality honey and other related products.

Benefits

- The transportation of honey to processing plants is an expensive affair for small farmers and beekeepers.
- To avoid high transportation and processing costs, a majority of beekeepers would sell their raw honey to the agents at their farms themselves at a very low price.
- The Processing Van will reduce the honey extraction and processing cost to the beekeepers.
- This will also eliminate any scope for adulteration of honey as the processing will be done at the doorsteps of the beekeepers and farmers.

Bamboo Shoot Processing and Preservation

In News

A training programme on bamboo shoot processing and preservation was organised by the North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC).

Benefits of bamboo shoots:

- The young bamboo shoots are rich in proteins, carbohydrates, minerals, fibres and are low in fat and sugars.
- They also consist of phytosterols and high content of fibres that are considered for nutraceutical (Natural medicines) properties that opens an avenue of research on such components.
- The shoots are devoid of toxicity and can grow without the fertilisers.
- Bamboo shoots have various health benefits such as they help in digestion, weight loss, cure of cardiovascular diseases and cancer.
- These shoots have antioxidant capacities due to the presence of phenolic compounds.
- The shoots of bamboo are resistant to diseases, insects and climate change.

India – UK Free Trade Agreement Negotiations

In News

The ambitious launch of a free trade agreement negotiations between India and the United Kingdom took place with the objective of doubling the bilateral trade.

Outcomes of the Agreement

- The eventful agreement aims to double the bilateral trade by 2030 and it has been considered as a partnership that is built on shared history and rich culture.
- This free trade agreement has been recognised, so far, as the deepest trade deal.
- The bilateral partners agreed to collaborate on the areas such as the service sectors, innovation and technology.
- There were discussions on transitions from fintech to green-tech and automation to Artificial Intelligence.
- India expects to gain from tariff reduction in labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, jewellery apart from cereals and pharmaceuticals.

Free Trade Agreement:

- A free trade agreement is a pact between two or more countries to reduce trade barriers facilitating imports and exports.
- The goods and services can be brought within the purview of free trade policy.
- It involves trade across international borders with little or no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies or any inhibition in the exchange of goods and services.

Sela Tunnel Project

In News

The final blast for the 980 metres long Sela Tunnel has been conducted by the Border Roads Organisations (BRO).

About the Tunnel

- The Sela tunnel is located in the west Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The project is divided into Tunnel 1 and Tunnel 2.
- Tunnel 1 is a 980 metre long single tube tunnel and Tunnel 2 which is a 1555m long twin tube tunnel.
- Tunnel 2 is provided with one bi-lane tube for traffic and one escape tube for emergencies.
- This project also includes the construction of a road that links the two tunnels.

Significance of the tunnel

- The Sela tunnel will be one of the longest tunnels to be constructed above an altitude of 13,000 feet.
- Once it is completed, it will facilitate an all weather connectivity to Tawang.
- The Sela tunnel will allow faster deployment of weapons and soldiers ensuring winter connectivity and shorter travel time.

India emerges as the largest exporter of cucumber and gherkins in the world

In News

India has exported cucumber and gherkins to the tune of 1,23,846 Metric Tonnes with a value of USD 114 million during April-October, 2021.

Details

- India exported USD 200 million worth of agricultural processed product, – pickling cucumber, which is globally referred to as gherkins.
- In 2020-21, India exported 2,23,515 Metric Tonnes of cucumber and gherkins with a value of USD 223 million.

Gherkins

- Gherkin cultivation, processing and exports started in India during the early 1990s in Karnataka and later extended to the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- About **15%** of the world's gherkin requirement is grown in India.
- Cucumbers and gherkins are prepared and preserved by vinegar or acetic acid.
- In India, around 90,000 small and marginal farmers with an annual production area of 65,000 acres carry out the cultivation of gherkins under contract farming.

International Customs Day, 2022

In News

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) observed the International Customs Day on the 26th day of January 2022.

About International Customs day:

- The International Customs day is celebrated all across the world with the United Nations as the host.
- It is an annual event that acknowledges the efforts of custom officials and agencies towards the smooth movement of goods across the borders globally.

- The Customs Cooperation Council announced the observance of International Customs Day on 26th of January 1953 for the first time. It was attended by 17 European countries and the inaugural ceremony was held in Brussels, Belgium.

Importance of the Day

- This day is celebrated with the objective to offer impetus to leadership, guidance and support to customs administrations.
- According to WCO, the borders divide the countries whereas 'customs' develop connections between the countries.

Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport

In News

The Prime Minister inaugurated the New Terminal Building of Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in Agartala to strengthen connectivity.

Importance of Airport

- The airport is a blend of Tripura's culture, natural beauty and modern facilities that would expand the air connectivity in the North East.
- This is an exemplary step to make Tripura the gateway to the northeast and turn it into a new hub of business and industry as well as a trade corridor.

About Maharaja Bir Bikram

- Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman was the revered ruler of Tripura belonging to the Manikya dynasty.
- He was born on August 19th 1908.
- He became the 184th and the second last Maharaja of the Kingdom of Tripura in 1923 and ruled till 1947.
- He is regarded as the Modern Architect of Tripura as he played a pioneering role in the establishment of higher educational institutions.
- He introduced proper planning for the entire state of Tripura during his rule.

Jan Shatabdi Express

In News

The first Jan Shatabdi express trains between Manipur and Tripura were inaugurated to provide a boost to connectivity, trade and tourism in the North Eastern Region. The inaugural ceremony took place virtually.

Importance of the train

- The long-standing demand of the people of Manipur, Tripura and South Assam was fulfilled by the launch of this special train.
- Enormous priority given to North-Eastern states by doubling the budgetary allocations in the last 7 years.
- The Jan Shatabdi trains will act as a crucial link to important towns resulting in passenger connectivity ensuring the development of the North-Eastern region.
- This initiative is in line with the HIRA (Highways, Internet, Railways and Airways) model of development.

Air India strategic disinvestment

In News

The Air India strategic disinvestment transaction has been completed between the government and the strategic partner (Talace Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata sons Pvt Ltd).

About the transaction:

- Under the strategic disinvestment process, the shares of Air India have been transferred to the strategic partner in exchange for a certain amount received by the government.
- The Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) was signed in October 2021 satisfying the criteria of approvals from antitrust bodies, regulators, lenders, third parties and other stakeholders.
- Share Purchase Agreement is a legal contract between two parties involving the buyer and seller. This acts as a document of proof that the terms and conditions of sale have been mutually agreed upon.

Green Energy Corridor Phase II

In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved Phase-II of the Green Energy Corridor for Intra-State Transmission System.

About the Scheme

- **AIM** – To achieve the target of 450GW installed renewable energy capacity by 2030.
- The Intra – State Transmission System under the GEC scheme will provide an additional transmission line with a transformation capacity of 27,500 Megavolt-Amperes (MVA) of the substations.
- The green corridor project is monitored by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy through a Project Appraisal Committee and implemented by the respective State Transmission Utilities.
- The scheme will enable grid integration and power evacuation of 20 GW of renewable energy power projects in seven states namely, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- 33% of the project cost will be funded through Central Financial Assistance which will also help in the offsetting of Intra-State Transmission charges. This will ensure low power costs benefiting the end-users.

Launch of six One District One Product Brands

In News

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) launched six One District One Product brands under the Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme.

About the scheme

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries has signed an agreement with NAFED for the development of 10 brands selected under One District One Product.
- To benefit the consumers all the products are packed in a unique way that is attractive, ensuring a longer shelf life of the products and keeping the moisture content and sunlight at bay.
- All products will be available at NAFED bazaars, e-commerce platforms and all retail stores across India.
- Each brand would be supported with investments in brand communication in relevant markets and a strong push on digitization in the value chain.
- This initiative will enable the promotion of local products, encouraging the micro food processing enterprises across the country towards the vision, efforts of the government to make them self-reliant.

Vice President calls for making India self-reliant in all areas

In News

The Vice President of India called for making India fully self-reliant in all areas, including strategic domains.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan – Self Reliant India Scheme

- Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission focuses on improving the Indian economy by improving manufacturing, supply, and demand. It is the mission started by the Government of India on 13th May 2020, aimed towards making India Self-reliant.
- The Prime Minister announced that an Atmanirbhar Bharat or a self-reliant India should stand on the following **five pillars**:
- Economy
- Infrastructure
- 21st-century technology-driven arrangements and system
- Demand
- Vibrant Demography

Advantages of Indigenisation

- Through indigenization, there will be a 20% to 75% savings in the national expenditure.
- The systems can be upgraded periodically with improvements as per requirements.
- Problems of users can be resolved in a quick and efficient manner.
- India is still one of the largest importers of defence equipment, the Vice President said, the contribution of a small lab like **Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL)** in empowering the nation in its defence needs is commendable.

One Nation-One Grid-One Frequency- National Grid.

In News

Recently, the Power Grid Corp. of India Ltd (PGCIL) celebrated the anniversary of operationalization of One Nation-One Grid-One Frequency i.e National Grid.

About National Grid

- The national grid management on a regional basis started in the sixties.
- The Indian Power system for planning and operational purposes is divided into five regional grids.
- The integration of regional grids, and thereby establishment of National Grid, was conceptualised in the early nineties.
- Initially, State grids were interconnected to form a regional grid and India was demarcated into 5 regions namely Northern, Eastern, Western, North Eastern and Southern region.
- In 1991 North Eastern and Eastern grids were connected. Further, in 2003, Western region grid was connected with it.
- In August 2006 North and East grids were interconnected thereby 4 regional grids are synchronously connected forming a central grid operating at one frequency.
- On 31st December 2013, the southern Region was connected to the Central Grid. Thereby achieving 'One Nation, One Grid, One Frequency'.

Benefits

- Synchronisation of all regional grids will help in optimal utilization of scarce natural resources by transfer of Power from Resource centric regions to Load centric regions.
- Further, this shall pave the way for establishment of a vibrant Electricity market facilitating trading of power across regions

Science & Technology

Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences launches eOffice

In News

The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences under the Ministry of Ayush took an initiative to set up an eOffice for its official purpose.

Operation of the eOffice:

- **Aim:** The council intended to become a paperless organization and collaborated with the National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to set up the eOffice.
- The eOffice platform is a digital workplace solution that consists of a suite of products and features that results in efficient and transparent governance.
- This will streamline all workflow and make the procedures paperless.
- It has been informed by the IT cell at CCRAS that an integrated software SPARROW (Smart Performance Appraisal Report Recording Online Window) will enable it to process the annual performance report of the officials.

Solid State Batteries

In News

Car manufacturer Volkswagen plans to have production running for solid-state batteries by 2025 via the partnership with Quantum Scape.

About Solid State Batteries

- A solid-state battery has higher energy density than a Lithium-ion battery that uses liquid electrolyte solution. It doesn't have a risk of explosion or fire, so there is no need to have components for safety, thus saving more space. Then we have more space to put more active materials which increase battery capacity in the battery.
- A solid-state battery can increase energy density per unit area since only a small number of batteries are needed. For that reason, a solid-state battery is perfect to make an Electric Vehicle (EV) battery system of module and pack, which needs high capacity.
- The energy density of lithium-ion cells used in today's mobile phones and electric vehicles is nearly four times higher than that of older-generation nickel-cadmium batteries.
- Despite improvements in technology over the last decade, issues such as long charging times and weak energy density persist. While lithium-ion batteries are seen as sufficiently efficient for phones and laptops, they still lack the range that would make EVs a viable alternative to internal combustion engines.

Advanced Chemistry Cell Battery Storage

In News

The government has approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell Battery Storage.

About the programme

- This programme aims at achieving the manufacturing capacity of 50 GW (GigaWatt) hour that would enhance India's manufacturing potential boosting the vision of self-reliance.
- The government is all set to emphasise more on greater domestic value addition at same time ensure that the levelized cost of battery manufacturing in India is globally competitive.

- It will also promote fresh industry investments in indigenous supply chain for battery manufacturing in the country.

Advanced Light Helicopter MK III

In News

The Commander-in-chief, Andaman and Nicobar Command at Port Blair inducted the indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter MK III at INS Utkrosh.

About MK-III

- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) manufactures this advanced light helicopter and it exemplifies a major leap of the defense sector in India towards self-reliance or Atma Nirbharta.
- The MK III is equipped with a glass cockpit, shakti engines (manufactured by HAL), advanced maritime patrol radar, electro-optical payload and a night vision device.
- This will act as a force multiplier in retaining the safety of India's far eastern seaboard and island territories.
- It is provided with state of the art sensors and weapons that add to India's preparedness in terms of maritime security.
- The advanced light helicopter is capable of carrying out maritime surveillance, offering support to the special forces, medical evacuations and delivering rescue roles.

Perovskite solar cells

In News

Indian scientists have devised a new process for increasing the efficiency and stability of Titanium dioxide (TiO₂) nanorods based on Perovskite Solar Cells (PSC).

Perovskite solar cells

- Perovskites are a family of materials with a specific crystal structure, named after the mineral with that structure.
- When used to create solar cells, they have shown potential for high performance and low production costs.

Nanorods

- Nanorods are one-dimensional structures that provide a directed path for electrical transport.
- They are used to control the band gap by varying the radius of rods and using the quantum size effect.
- Nanorods are nanostructures that are the object of fundamental and applied research.
- They may be prepared from carbon, gold, zinc oxide, and many other materials.

Sub-Mission on Agriculture mechanisation (SMAM)

In News

The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare have released guidelines to promote drone technology in agriculture in order to boost precision farming in India.

About the Programme:

- Grant up to Rs 10 lakhs will be offered to the agricultural institutes for the purchase of drones.
- Custom hiring centres will be set up by the Cooperative Society of Farmers, FPOs and rural entrepreneurs to obtain financial support for purchasing purposes.
- The entire programme intends to make technology accessible to common people and enhance domestic drone production.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Director General of Civil Aviation are permitting the drone operations.

- The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has introduced the Standard Operating Procedures for the use of drone applications.

About SMAM:

- This sub-mission operates under the aegis of the National Mission on Agricultural Extension & Technology (NMAET) which aims to incorporate new institutional arrangements for technology dissemination in agriculture.
- There are four sub-missions under the NMAET of which SMAM is also a part.

Application of Drones

- This technology helps the farmers in data collection related to planting and in treatments to achieve best possible crop yields.
- It can be beneficial for precision agriculture.
- Drones are beneficial in monitoring the plant health
- It is also beneficial for examining field conditions.
- It enables spray applications which are extensively used in countries like south-east Asia and South Korea.

Open Data Week'

In News

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) announced the initiation of the Open Data Week.

Open Data Week

- Open Data Week includes the celebration of a Data Day by all smart cities on 21st January 2022.
- The Data Day aims to provide a platform that offers ample opportunities on how to continue creating and promoting the use of data that addresses complex urban issues.
- The Open Data Week is part of a series of pre-event initiatives being undertaken by MoHUA to promote awareness and use of open data.

Centre to organize the FIRST EVER Startup India Innovation Week from 10th -16th of January 2022

In News

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is organizing the first-ever Startup India Innovation Week from 10th -16th of January 2022.

Start-up India Innovation Week

- India is emerging as a global innovation hub, and is the world's third-largest startup ecosystem.
- The primary goal is to bring together the country's key startups, entrepreneurs, investors, incubators, funding entities, banks, policymakers, and other national/international stakeholders to celebrate entrepreneurship and promote innovation.
- DPIIT has recognised more than 61,000 startups till date.
- India's startups represents 55 industries, spread across 633 districts with at least one startup from every State and UT of the country.

A star with a heartbeat

In News

A group of Indian Scientists has spotted a peculiar binary star that shows a heartbeat but no pulsations.

Major Findings of the study

- The star spotted has been named HD73619 in Praesepe (M44), located in the Cancer constellation, which is one of the closest open star clusters to the Earth.
- There are 180 stars known to have heartbeats.
- These heartbeat stars are binary systems where each star travels in a highly elliptical orbit around the common centre of mass.
- The scientists inferred that the pulsation activity of these stars is due to the oscillations in the component stars when they are closest to each other. Chemically this makes it evident that such oscillations happen due to the abundance of heavier elements on their surface.
- The newly discovered heartbeat star is accompanied by a weak magnetic field or no magnetic field.

Importance of the Discovery

- This research has been a result of the Nainital-Cape survey which is one of the longest ground-based surveys to search and study the pulsation variability of the stars. This study was carried out in collaboration with the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) in Cape Town.
- This is an exemplary step that reveals India's progress in the field of space sciences and its growing engagement with international communities in the same context.

CSIR – National Physical Laboratory: Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

In News

The CSIR – National Physical Laboratory commemorated its 75th year of foundation.

About the Event

- A special commemorative postage stamp was released to begin the occasion along with the establishment of the LED Photometry Laboratory that envisages developing energy-efficient illumination technology.
- This will save foreign exchange spent on availing the testing and calibration services from abroad and reduce turn-around time pertaining to LED lighting products.
- Certification for Indian made Ambient Ozone Analyzers was also launched.
- The calibration facility for Infusion Pump Analyzer was launched to test infusion pumps along with the certification process for Indian made Low Volume PM2.5 Sampler to fight pollution.
- With the aim to propagate awareness about the metrology related activities of CSIR-NPL, a fully responsive website has been created.

About CSIR-NPL

- The governing body of CSIR conceptualized the National Physical Laboratory in 1943. The Foundation stone was laid on the 4th of January, 1947.
- It is situated in New Delhi.
- It acts as the premier laboratory with the responsibility of the dissemination of measurements to the needs of the country.
- Mandated as India's National Measurement Institute, the NPL acts as the custodian of maintaining the National Standards, for example, the Indian Standard Time.

INS Khukri

In News

The decommissioned naval ship INS Khukri was handed over to the Diu administration so that it can be transformed into a full-scale museum.

INS Khukri

- This missile corvette was decommissioned after 32 years of service and it had been a part of the western and eastern fleets.
- The Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders, according to the Indian Navy, built it.
- This missile corvette was commanded by 28 commanding officers and travelled over 6,44,897 nautical miles.
- The museum will be located in the same location as the existing Khukri Memorial where the scaled-down version of the first INS Khukri (F 149) was placed. The F 149 was a blackwood class anti-submarine frigate.
- The first INS Khukri was lost during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 off the coast of Diu.
- It is the second INS Khukri that was recently handed over to the Diu administration for revamping the Khukri Memorial.

Environment & Ecology

Concerted worldwide efforts needed to limit global temperature levels to save islands

In News

The Vice President of India urged all countries to put in consolidated efforts to limit global temperature levels so that smaller islands and the homes of the islanders do not get displaced.

Need for Limiting the Rise of Global Temperature to 1.5°C

- Limiting global warming to 1.5°C instead of 2°C could result in less exposure to extreme heat waves, floods, drought, and changes in the global mean surface temperature of the earth.
- The Risk of heavy precipitation and tropical cyclones will be limited if global warming is limited to 1.5°C.
- Limiting global warming to 1.5°C is expected to substantially reduce the probability of drought and risks associated with water availability i.e. water stress in the world.
- The rise in mean sea level will be around 0.1 m less by the end of the century in a 1.5°C world as compared to a 2°C warming.
- Risks of food shortages, heat-related mortality particularly in urban areas because of urban heat islands. Risks are projected to change for some vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever with positive or negative trends depending on the disease, region, and extent of change will be lower at 1.5°C than at 2°C.
- At 2°C of global warming, coastal tourism will be at the margin line at the same time salinity of coastal groundwater will also increase and the degradation of beach and coral reef assets.
- Global warming of 1.5°C has the potential to limit economic damages of many developed and developing countries and of the small island, low-lying coasts and deltas.

147th foundation day of India Meteorological Department (IMD)

In News

Salient contributions of IMD were acknowledged on the occasion of the 147th foundation day of the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Important Highlights:

- IMD has played a crucial role in extending the weather and climate services to South Asian, South-East Asian and Middle East countries.
- Discussions included the usage of drone-based observation technology to strengthen localized forecasting.
- Four doppler weather radars were dedicated to the nation at Leh, Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai to improve the research of weather forecasting and climate studies along with a better understanding of operational analysis.
- A new platform for crowd searching for the collection of observation through the public was inaugurated which opens a new chapter in citizen science. This will ensure to bridge the gap between science and society.
- IMD to minimize the loss of lives and properties due to natural calamities by monitoring a wide range of weather conditions launched the web GIS services.

e-DNA

In News

According to some studies, DNA floating in the air (i.e. e-DNA) can boost biodiversity conservation efforts across the world.

About e-DNA

- Environmental DNA (e-DNA) is nuclear or mitochondrial DNA that is released from an organism into the environment.
- Researchers from two teams have independently shown that environmental DNA (e-DNA) can potentially identify and monitor terrestrial animals.
- Animals shed DNA through their breath, saliva, fur or faeces into the environment and these samples are called e-DNA.
- Airborne e-DNA sampling is a biomonitoring method that is rising in popularity among biologists and conservationists as it provides abundant information.

Importance

- It can help understand the composition of animal communities and detect the spread of non-native species.
- This method will work with the current techniques to monitor endangered species after some fine-tuning.
- Typically, biologists observe animals in person or by picking up DNA from animals' footprints or faeces, which demand extensive fieldwork.
- Spotting animals can be challenging, especially if they inhabit inaccessible habitats.
- It can aid in tracking long-distance migratory birds and other birds' flying patterns. It can also capture DNA from smaller animals including insects.

Red Sanders

In News

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) recently categorised the Red Sanders (or Red Sandalwood) again into the 'endangered' category in its Red List. It was classified as 'near threatened' in 2018.

About Red Sanders

- The species, *Pterocarpus santalinus*, is an Indian endemic tree species, with a restricted geographical range in the Eastern Ghats.
- The species is endemic to a distinct tract of forests in Andhra Pradesh.
- Red Sanders usually grow in the rocky, degraded and fallow lands with Red Soil and hot and dry climate.

Chilika Lake

In news

As per the water bird status survey-2022 conducted in the Chilika lake, nearly 11 lakhs water bird and wetland dependent species visited the lake.

About Chilika Lake

- Chilika is Asia's largest and world's second largest lagoon.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- Major attraction at Chilika is Irrawaddy dolphins which are often spotted off Satapada Island.
- The large Nalabana Island (Forest of Reeds) covering about 16 sq km in the lagoon area was declared a bird sanctuary in 1987.
- Kalijai Temple - Located on an island in the Chilika Lake.
- Chilika lake hosts birds migrating from thousands of miles away from the Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, Aral Sea, remote parts of Russia, Kirghiz steppes of Mongolia, Central and South East Asia, Ladakh and the Himalayas.

The birds find the vast mud-field and abundant fish stock here suitable to congregate

State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities

In News

A new system of Star Rating of SEIAAs has been introduced for encouraging the efficiency, transparency and accountability in the functioning of SEIAAs.

SEIAA

- SEIAAs are a very important arm of the Environment Ministry for implementation of EIA Notification at the State level.
- They have been delegated powers to consider and grant environmental clearance (EC) for all proposals under Category B.

Star Rating system

- The ranking system is based on the provisions of EIA Notification 2006 and various guidelines issued by the Ministry from time to time.
- It aims to encourage the SEIAAs to increase their efficiency in decision making without diluting any regulatory safeguards.

Forest Survey Report 2021

In News

The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 prepared by the Forest Survey of India has been released.

Major findings of the ISFR

- The total forest and tree cover of the country has been estimated as 80.9 million which is 24.62% of the total geographical area of the country. There has been an increase in forest cover (to 1540 sq km) and tree cover (to 721 sq km).
- Andhra Pradesh followed by Telangana and Odisha are the top three states showing an increase in forest cover.
- Based on the area, Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- About 17 states/UTs have above 33% of the geographical area under forest cover.

- Total mangrove cover has been estimated as 4,992 sq km, which indicates an increase of 17 sq km in mangrove cover.
- Odisha followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka have shown an increase in mangrove cover.
- Total carbon stock in the country's forests is 7, 204 million tonnes, indicating an increase of 79.4 million tonnes in carbon stock. There is an annual increase in the carbon stock which is about 39.7 million tonnes.

Significance of ISFR

- The Forest Survey of India included a new chapter related to the assessment of forest cover in tiger reserves, corridors and lion conservation areas of India. It is based on a decadal assessment of change in forest cover in those areas between the period of 2011 and the current cycle of 2019-2020.
- Above Ground Biomass is a new chapter that is added. This study was carried out at a pan-India level using Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) data. The study is still continuing and a detailed report will be submitted after its completion.

FSI, in collaboration with Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani, carried out a study on climate change hotspots in Indian forests.

National Water Awards

In News

The third edition of the National Water Awards (2020) was announced in order to provide impetus to better water management in the country.

About the Awards

- This award was launched by the Jal Shakti Ministry in 2018 to provide opportunities to start-ups as well as leading organizations to engage with policymakers on how to adopt the best water resources management practices in India.
- In the best state category, Uttar Pradesh has been awarded the first prize followed by Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.
- India's current water requirement is estimated to be 1100 billion cubic meters per year which is going to rise up to 1447 billion cubic meters by 2050. Therefore, it becomes imperative to establish a meticulous water management system.
- The intentions behind organizing such awards are in alignment with the mission of 'Har Ghar Jal' to all rural households by 2024 under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

In News

The 19th meeting of NTCA was conducted to formulate an action plan for the introduction of the Cheetah in India and strengthen tiger conservation.

About Action Plan

- The action plan that was discussed in the meeting emphasized the introduction of 50 Cheetahs in various parks in 5 years.
- The experts await the 5th cycle of All India Tiger Estimation which is at present underway and will guide policy decisions.
- There are 51 tiger reserves in the country and efforts are made to expand the network as 35 rivers originate from these areas, it becomes crucial in terms of water security.
- Poaching activities in the northeastern states, excessive visits to core areas of the reserves by the tourists are some major challenges that need to be addressed and regulated.

- 14 tiger reserves have been accredited under CA|TS (Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards) categories. The CA|TS is a set of criteria that examines the management of tiger sites to gauge the success rates of tiger conservation.
- A water atlas has been launched to map the water bodies in the tiger bearing areas of India.

About CATS

- This has been a tiger reserve accreditation tool developed by the global coalition of Tiger Range Countries (TRC) including the inputs of the tiger and protected area experts.
- There are 13 Tiger Range Countries such as India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.
- The Global Tiger Forum (an NGO working on tiger conservation) and the World Wide Fund are the two implementing partners of NTCA for CA|TS assessment in India.

Carbon sequestration

In News

India's pledge to set a net zero target by 2070, at the COP26 summit, Glasgow, has again highlighted the importance of forests as an undisputed mechanism to help mitigate the challenges of climate change.

Degradation of forests

- As per the State of Forests Report (1989), the country had 7.83% of its geographical area under the open forest category, having a density of 10% to less than 40%.
- In 30 years (2019) this has been increased to 9.26%.
- Having diverted nearly 1.5 million hectares of forests since 1980 for developmental activities and losing nearly 1.48 million hectares of forests to encroachers coupled with an intricate link between poverty and unemployment, India is witnessing enormous degradation of forests and deforestation.

Measures to increase forest cover

- Participation of people is an essential and effective route to achieve the desired target of carbon sequestration through the restoration of forests.
- The efforts to make this participatory approach operative resulted in the formation of nearly 1.18 lakh JFMCs managing over 25 million hectares of forest area.
- Most of these became active and operative while implementing various projects financed by external agencies such as the World Bank, the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) Japan, the Department for International Development (DFID) United Kingdom and the European Union (EU).
- The similar system of joint management in the case of national parks, sanctuaries and tiger reserves, which existed in the name of eco-development committees initially, proved effective.
- However, the completion of the project period and lack of subsequent funding affected their functionality and also the protection of forests due to a lack of support from participating local communities including associated non-governmental organisations.

Way Forward

- India will have to 'focus much more on climate change and devise strategies and programmes to achieve the net zero target'.
- Besides reducing the quantum of emissions in a phased manner — itself full of challenges — the approaches for carbon storage and offsetting through natural sinks such as forests need to be given equal priority.
- To achieve net zero targets there is a need to revisit our existing legal and policy mechanisms, incentivise the local communities appropriately and ensure fund flow for restoration interventions, duly providing for the adequate participation of local people in planning and implementation through local institutions.

International Relation

The Indo US Trade and Commerce

In News

The Department of Agriculture and farmer welfare (DAC&FW) and the US Department of Agriculture signed an agreement for implementing the “2 Vs 2” Agri market access issues.

About the framework agreement:

- The framework agreement on 2 Vs 2 Agri market access would emphasize issues related to inspection and transfer for Indian mangoes along with the market access for pomegranate arils from India and market access for US cherries and alfalfa hay.
- This will promote the export of Indian agri-products easing access to the US market.
- It has been notified by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying that it is ready to open up the market for US pork.
- This framework agreement will offer a possibility to restore India’s trade benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) of the US. The same issue was raised in the US- India Trade Policy Forum.

Joint Development Agreement between India and Africa

In News

A joint development agreement was signed between Power Grid Corporation of India Limited and Africa50, the pan-African infrastructure investment platform to continue to develop the Kenya Transmission Project through Public Private Partnership.

About the Project:

- The project involves the development, financing, construction and operation of transmission lines.
- Followed by its completion, the project will be Kenya’s first Independent Power Transmission and will set a reference point in Africa as the first financing of transmission lines on a PPP basis.
- The technical operational support would be provided by POWERGRID, which is one of the world’s leading electric transmission utility companies.
- **Africa50** will assist the project by bringing its expertise on development and finance bridging the gap between the Kenyan government and private investors.

About Africa50

It is an infrastructure investment platform that contributes to Africa’s economic growth by developing and investing in bankable infrastructure projects, catalysing public sector capital and mobilising private sector funding.

Global Risks Report 2022

In News

Recently, the World Economic Forum released the Global Risks Report 2022, an annual report. It tracks global risk perceptions among risk experts and world leaders in business, government, and civil society.

Findings of the report

- The societal and environmental risks have worsened the most since the start of the pandemic.
- “Social cohesion erosion”, “livelihood crises” and “mental health deterioration” are three of the five risks seen as the most concerning threats to the world in the next two years.

- Apart from this, it has significantly contributed to “debt crises”, “cybersecurity failures”, “digital inequality” and “backlash against science”.
- In the longer-term horizon, geopolitical and technological risks are of concern too—including “geoeconomic confrontations”, “geopolitical resource contestation” and “cybersecurity failure”.
- Artificial intelligence, space exploitation, cross-border cyberattacks, misinformation, migration, and refugees were rated as the top areas of international concerns.
- Growing insecurity in the forms of economic hardship, worsening impacts of climate change and political persecution will force millions to leave their homes in search of a better future.
- The prospect of 70,000 satellite launches in coming decades, in addition to space tourism, raises risks of collisions and increasing debris in space, amid a lack of regulation.

Other reports by WEF

- Energy Transition Index.
- Global Competitiveness Report.
- Global IT Report
- WEF along with INSEAD, and Cornell University publishes this report.
- Global Gender Gap Report.
- Global Risk Report.
- Global Travel and Tourism Report.

India & Nepal

In News

Recently, the Union Cabinet has cleared a plan to build a new bridge connecting India and Nepal over the Mahakali river and link Dharchula in Uttarakhand with Nepal's Dharchula.

About Bridge

- The bridge will be completed within three years. It will strengthen the relationship between the two countries.
- India and Nepal share unique ties of friendship and cooperation.
- The construction of the bridge will help people living in Dharchula in Uttarakhand and in the territory of Nepal.

Mahakali River

- It is also known as Sharda river or Kali Ganga in Uttarakhand.
- It joins Ghagra river in Uttar Pradesh, which is a tributary of Ganga.
- River Projects: Tanakpur hydro-electric project, Chameliya hydro-electric project, Sharda Barrage.

Homeland Security Dialogue

In News

Recently, a Homeland Security Dialogue was held between the officials of India and US.

About Dialogue

- The Indo-US homeland security dialogue was launched in 2010 as the mechanism to a sequel to the signing of the India-US counter-terrorism initiative.
- First Homeland Security Dialogue was held in May 2011.
- The latest virtual meeting came after in March 2021, the US President Joe Biden administration had announced the re-establishment of the Homeland Security Dialogue which was discontinued by former US President Donald Trump's administration.

- There are six sub-groups formed under the Indo-US homeland security dialogue which cover the areas of:
- Illicit finance, Financial fraud and counterfeiting.
- Cyber information.
- Megacity policing and sharing of information among federal, state and local partners.
- Global supply chain, transportation, port, border and maritime security.
- Capacity building.
- Technology upgradation.

United Nations Security Council

In News

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) got five new non permanent members (Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates).

New Members

- Estonia, Niger, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam finished their terms recently.
- Albania is joining for the first time while Brazil is taking an 11th turn. Gabon and Ghana each have been on the council three times before and the UAE once.
- More than 50 of the UN's 193 member countries have never been elected to the council since its formation.

About UNSC

- The Security Council was established by the UN Charter in 1945. It is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- The other 5 organs of the United Nations are—the General Assembly (UNGA), the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.
- Its primary responsibility is to work to maintain international peace and security.
- The council is headquartered at New York.
- The council has 15 members: the five permanent members and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.
- India, for the eighth time, has entered the UNSC as a non-permanent member last year (2021) and will stay on the council for two years i.e 2021-22.
- Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of ten in total) for a two-year term. The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis.
- The council's presidency is a capacity that rotates every month among its 15 members.

China New Border Law

In News

China's new law on land borders came into effect from 1st January, 2022. It comes at a time when border standoff in eastern Ladakh remains unresolved and several places in Arunachal Pradesh have been renamed recently by China as part of its claim on the Indian state.

About New Law

- The new law lays down that the People's Republic of China (PRC) shall set up boundary markers on all its land borders to clearly mark the border.
- The law prohibits any party from indulging in any activity in the border area which would "endanger national security or affect China's friendly relations with neighbouring countries".
- Even citizens and local organisations are mandated to protect and defend the border infrastructure.

- Finally, the law provides for the border to be sealed in the event of a war, armed conflict, incidents which threaten the security of border residents such as biological and chemical accidents, natural disasters, and public health incidents.
- The law also stipulates that PRC should abide by the treaties on land borders that it has signed with the respective countries and all border issues are to be settled through negotiations.

China Border Disputes

- China has a 22,100-kilometer land border with 14 countries.
- It has resolved the boundary disputes with 12 neighbours.
- India and Bhutan are the two countries with which China is yet to finalise the border agreements.

Dalai Lama

In News

Recently, the last surviving member of a small troop of Indian soldiers who escorted the Dalai Lama as he fled from Tibet in 1959 has died.

Dalai Lama

- The Dalai Lama belongs to the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, which is the largest and most influential tradition in Tibet.
- There have been only 14 Dalai Lamas in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, and the first and second Dalai Lamas were given the title posthumously.
- The 14th and current Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso.
- The Dalai Lamas are believed to be manifestations of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet.
- Bodhisattvas are realized beings inspired by a wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help humanity.

Process to Choose Dalai Lama:

- Following the Buddhist belief in the principle of reincarnation, the current Dalai Lama is believed by Buddhists to be able to choose the body into which he is reincarnated.
- That person, when found, will then become the next Dalai Lama.
- According to Buddhist scholars it is the responsibility of the High Lamas of the Gelugpa tradition and the Tibetan government to seek out and find the next Dalai Lama following the death of the incumbent.
- If more than one candidate is identified, officials and monks drawing lots in a public ceremony find the true successor.
- Once identified, the successful candidate and his family are taken to Lhasa (or Dharamsala) where the child studies the Buddhist scriptures in order to prepare for spiritual leadership.
- This process can take several years: it took four years to find the 14th (current) Dalai Lama.

India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022

In News

The 2nd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting with India was held on a virtual platform.

About ADGMIN:

- The ASEAN(Association of South-East Asian Nations) Digital Ministers meeting is annually conducted in order to ascertain ways to expand the digital widespread promoting the usage of Information and communication technology.

- The India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022 has been approved for larger collaboration in the areas of emerging digital technologies.
- This involves the telecom ministers from ten ASEAN countries namely, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- The dialogue partner countries of the ASEAN were also present in the meeting.
- The discussion centered around strengthening regional digital cooperation in the spirit of digital inclusion and integration.

The India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022

- The work plan includes a system for combating the use of stolen and counterfeit mobile handsets.
- It will also work towards nationwide public internet access.
- Larger emphasis will be given on capacity building and knowledge sharing in emerging areas of Internet of Things, 5G, Advanced Satellite Communication, Cyber Forensics and so on and so forth.

China is building a new bridge on Pangong Tso

In News

Recently, it was found that China is building a new bridge on Pangong Tso which will provide an additional axis to deploy troops faster between the north and south banks of the lake, and closer to the LAC (Line of Actual Control).

About Bridge

- The bridge is being constructed more than 20 km east of Finger 8 on the lake's north bank – India says Finger 8 denotes the LAC.
- The Lake is overlooked by the Finger Area - a set of eight cliffs extending out of the Sirijap range (on the northern bank of Lake).
- Pangong Tso, an endorheic lake, is 135 km long, of which more than two-thirds is under Chinese control.
- The bridge site is just east of Khurnak Fort in Rutog county where the PLA (People's Liberation Army) has frontier bases.
- Historically a part of India, Khurnak Fort has been under Chinese control since 1958.
- From Khurnak Fort, the LAC is considerably west, with India claiming it at Finger 8 and China claiming it at Finger 4.

India and France S&T Cooperation

In News

India and France signed an MoU to expand their science and technology cooperation with the major objective of advancement in human health.

Highlights of the MoU

- The MoU on science and technology cooperation has been signed between CSIR and Institut Pasteur. Institut Pasteur is a french non-profit private foundation that deals with the study of biology, micro-organisms, diseases and vaccines.
- The agreement aims to enhance collaboration between India and France in the area of health research and in the study of infectious diseases.
- Both the countries will jointly work for providing effective and affordable healthcare solutions not only for the people of India and France but also for the global good.
- This MoU includes provisions that are intended to develop potential scientific and technological cooperation and networking between scientists from CSIR and Institute Pasteur.

I4F Programme

In News

The 8th Governing body meeting was held virtually and involved the experts from India and Israel to widen the scope of the India-Israel Industrial R&D & Technological Innovation Fund (I4F).

About I4F programme

- The India- Israel collaborative ecosystem has been broadened with the approval of 3 joint R&D giving new directions to boost research and innovation.
- The projects include centrally monitored IoT nanosensors for molecular diagnostics in healthcare and screening applications, mosquito control biological solutions and IoT enabled satellite communication for real-time collection of agriculture and environment data across the country.
- The experts recommended focusing on Partnership Development Activities that result in the increase of more business activities between Indian and Israeli companies and startups through online events.
- The I4F fund is a cooperation between the Department of Science and Technology, the Government of India and the Israel Innovation Authority, Government of Israel.
- **The Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA)** has been appointed to implement the I4F programme in India whereas Israel Innovation Authority is the implementing agency in Israel.

India-Central Asia Virtual Summit

In News

The Prime Minister of India in virtual format hosted the first India-Central Asia summit.

About the Summit

- Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan attended the Summit.
- Central Asia is a crucial region for the promotion of India's interests especially in terms of trade and connectivity.
- The leaders conveyed their strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan with a representative and inclusive government. This comes in favour of India's interest concerning its national security.
- India agreed to extend humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.
- In a historic decision, the leaders agreed to institutionalize the Summit mechanism by holding it every 2 years.
- A secretariat will be set up soon in New Delhi for India-Central Asia taking the relationship further.
- Efforts have been made from both sides to embolden the cultural ties and enhance people-to-people contact.

BRICS STI Steering Committee

In News

The 15th meeting of the BRICS Science Technology Innovation Steering Committee was organized and attended by representatives from BRICS scientific ministries.

About the Committee

- India will host a series of five events in 2022 namely:
 - BRICS startups forum meeting
 - Working groups meeting on Energy, Biotechnology and Biomedicine
 - ICT and High-Performance Computing

- Science, Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Partnership (STIEP) Working Group Meeting
- Launch of BRICS innovation launchpad as a microsite (Knowledge hub)
- A number of sectoral events and meetings have been planned along with Ministerial Summits.

India-Mauritius Developmental Projects

In News

The Governments of India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated the social housing units project taking the developmental partnership to the next level.

About the project

- A state of the art Civil Service College along with a 8 MW(megawatt) solar photovoltaic farm , both supported by India, have been established as a part of the developmental partnership.
- The need to expand the learnings of Mission Karmayogi has been emphasized in order to revamp civil services that aim to meet the demands of changing needs of the nation.
- The establishment of the solar farm reflects India's commitment towards adopting renewable energy with its landmark vision of ISA.
- Other developmental projects that were facilitated by India include the Metro Express Project, Supreme Court building, ENT hospital and supply of digital tablets to primary school children.

Defence & Security

INDIAN NAVY PASSEX WITH RUSSIAN NAVY

In News

The Indian Navy's indigenously designed and built guided-missile destroyer, INS Kochi, exercised with Russian Federation Navy's RFS Admiral Tributs in the Arabian Sea.

About Passex Exercise

- The Indian Navy conducts PASSEX exercises regularly with units of friendly foreign navies.
- The exercise showcased cohesiveness and interoperability between the two navies and included tactical maneuvers, cross-deck helicopter operations and seamanship activities.
- The Exercise reflects the strong long-term strategic relationship between the countries and particularly in defence cooperation in the maritime domain.
- India has conducted PASSEX Exercises with the US, Russia, the UK, Indonesia and others.

The BrahMos Supersonic cruise missile

In News

The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile with increased indigenous content and improved performance was successfully test-fired from an integrated test range.

About Brahmos Missile

- BrahMos is a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organisation of India (DRDO) and the NPOM of Russia.
- BrahMos is named on the rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva
- It is a two-stage (solid propellant engine in the first stage and liquid ramjet in second) missile.

- It is a multiplatform missile i.e it can be launched from land, air, and sea and multi capability missile with pinpoint accuracy that works in both day and night irrespective of the weather conditions.

Pashchim Lehar

In News

A joint military exercise named Pashchim Lehar was conducted by the Indian Navy off the west coast and has been concluded.

About the Exercise:

- The exercise was carried out with an objective to validate the operational plans of the Western Naval Command accompanied by the increase in inter-service synergy among the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, Indian Army and Coast Guard.
- It was supported by the Flag Officer Commanding-in-chief of the Western Naval Command.
- This intra-theatre exercise included the mobilisation and participation of over 40 ships and submarines of the Indian Navy.
- The Indian Air Force deployed SU 30 MKI & Jaguar maritime strike aircraft, Flight Refuelling Aircraft.
- The maritime reconnaissance aircraft P8I, Dorniers, IL 38 SD, unmanned aerial systems and MiG 29K (Russian all-weather carrier-based multirole fighter aircraft) strike aircraft were also deployed.

AFSPA Extended in Nagaland

In News

The Konyak Civil Society Organizations, the guardian umbrella of organizations of the Konyaks, has slammed the extension of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 (AFSPA).

About AFSPA

- A reincarnation of the British-era legislation that was enacted to quell the protests during the Quit India movement, the AFSPA was issued by way of four ordinances in 1947.
- The ordinances were replaced by an Act in 1948 and the then Home Minister, G.B. Pant, introduced the present law effective in the Northeast in Parliament in 1958.
- It was known initially as the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958.
- The AFSPA gives unfettered powers to the armed forces and the Central armed police forces deployed in “disturbed areas” to kill anyone acting in contravention of law and arrest and search any premises without a warrant and with protection from prosecution and legal suits.
- The law first came into effect in 1958 to deal with the uprising in the Naga Hills, followed by the insurgency in Assam.

Disturbed Areas:

- The Act was amended in 1972 and the powers to declare an area as “disturbed” were conferred concurrently upon the Central government along with the States.
- Currently, the Union Home Ministry issues periodic “disturbed area” notification to extend AFSPA only for Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

INS Vikrant

In News

The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, visited India’s indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant in Kochi. Calling the carrier a ‘great icon for our drive towards Atma Nirbhar Bharat’, Shri Naidu said the INS Vikrant is a realisation of the nation’s dream of an indigenous carrier.

INS Vikrant

- INS Vikrant, is likely to be commissioned in 2022. At present, India has only one aircraft carrier, the Russian-origin INS Vikramaditya.
- It will have an air component of 30 aircraft, comprising MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 airborne early warning helicopters and the soon-to-be-inducted MH-60R multi-role helicopter, besides the indigenous Advanced Light Helicopters.
- It is expected to have a top speed of 30 knots (approximately 55 kmph) and is propelled by four gas turbines. Its endurance is 7,500 nautical miles at 18 knots (32 kmph) speed.
- The shipborne weapons include Barak LR SAM and AK-630, while it has MFSTAR and RAN-40L 3D radars as sensors. The vessel has a Shakti EW (Electronic Warfare) Suite.

Sea Dragon 22 exercise

In News

Recently, the US Sea Dragon 22 exercise began along with the navies of India, Australia, Canada, Japan and South Korea in the Pacific Ocean.

About Sea Dragon Exercise

- Sea Dragon is a US-led multi-national exercise designed to practice and discuss Anti-submarine warfare tactics to operate together in response to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It is an annual exercise.
- The exercise assumes significance in the face of strained relations that some countries have with China and the growing forays of the PLA-Navy into the Indian ocean region.
- The Indian Navy has recently inducted two more Poseidon 8I maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft, which would further boost its ability to keep an eye over the Chinese ships and submarines in the region.

'Beating Retreat' Ceremony 2022

In News

The Beating retreat ceremony culminated the Republic Day week at the national capital.

About the Beating Retreat Ceremony:

- This ceremony has been an integral part of the celebrations which are of national importance.
- The event was held at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi and was addressed by the President of India and Supreme Commander of the armed forces.
- The Beating retreat ceremony in 2022 will be marked on a grand scale to commemorate 75 years of Independence which is famous as 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'.
- It is a centuries-old military tradition that dates back to the days when troops disengaged from the battle at sunset.

Schemes & Policies

Agri-Nutri Garden Week

In News

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) has observed the Agri-Nutri Garden week.

About the Agri-Nutri garden week:

- This is an awareness campaign to set up the Agri-Nutri gardens in rural households.
- It is in line with a mission to fulfill the nutritional needs of rural people along with income generation.
- This initiative will ensure strengthening of the rural economy and mitigate the issue of malnutrition that is prevalent in rural areas.

NERCORM Phase-III Project

In News

Recently a carpenter from Manipur who had endured a lot of suffering was chosen as a carpentry beneficiary and received financial support of Rs. 18000/- under the NERCORM Phase-III Project.

About NERCORM

- NERCORMP is a livelihood and rural development project aimed to transform the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in North East(NE) India.
- NERCORMP is a joint developmental initiative of the North Eastern Council (NEC), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- The project is being implemented in four states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya, running under the North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Society (NERCRMS).

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

In News

Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (in the Institutional category) and Professor Vinod Sharma (in the Individual category) have been selected for Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar, 2022.

Details

- Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar has been instituted by GOI, to recognize and honour the invaluable contribution by individuals and organizations in India in the field of disaster management.
- The award is announced every year on 23rd January, on account of the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- The award carries a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh and a certificate in case of an institution and Rs. 5 lakh and a certificate in case of an individual.

National Water Awards

In News

Recently, Uttar Pradesh bagged the first prize for efforts towards water conservation in the National Water Awards (NWA) 2020 organised by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu bagged the second and third prizes, respectively, in the best state category.

About Awards

- The awards are organised by the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- The Jal Shakti Ministry had launched the first 'National Water Award' in 2018.
- They facilitate a good opportunity for the start-ups as well as the leading organisations to engage with the senior policymakers on adopting the best water resources management practises in India.

India Skills 2021

In News

India Skills 2021 Nationals, the country's biggest skill competition, concluded recently.

About India Skills

- It is designed to demonstrate the highest standards of skilling and offers a platform to young people to showcase their talent at national and international levels.
- India Skills Competition is held every two years with the support of state governments and industry.
- It has the potential to reach grassroot level and make an impact.
- Odisha topped the chart followed by Maharashtra and Kerala.
- The winners of India Skills 2021 Nationals will get a chance to represent the country at WorldSkills International Competition to be held in Shanghai, China in October 2022.

Ayush Aahaar

In News

Recently, the Ministry of Ayush made a new beginning by making 'Ayush Aahaar' available at its canteen at Ayush Bhawan (Delhi). It aims to promote a nutritional diet and a healthy living.

Ayush

- Traditional & Non-Conventional Systems of Health Care and Healing which Include Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy etc.
- The positive features of the Indian systems of medicine namely their diversity and flexibility; accessibility; affordability, a broad acceptance by a large section of the general public; comparatively lesser cost and growing economic value, have great potential to make them providers of healthcare that the large sections of our people need.

National Ayush Mission:

- Government is implementing the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Mission through States/UTs for development and promotion of Ayush system of medicine.
- The government has decided to continue till 2026.

Multi-dimensional adventure sports expedition

In news

Recently, the Defence Minister flagged-in India's first multi-dimensional adventure sports expedition conducted by National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS) in France.

About Expedition

- The expedition was conducted in November 2021 and Director NIMAS comprising 12 people - eight Army personnel and four youths of Arunachal Pradesh, led the team.

- The expedition team carried out over 250 kilometres of winter trekking in the Alps Mountain Ranges, which included Tour De Mont Blanc trek covering the French, Swiss and Italian Alps.

National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports:

- Training institute located an advanced sports in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It operates under the control and superintendence of the Ministry of Defence.
- The institute offers training across land, air and water, a first of its kind that allows civilians to experience challenges across a variety of outdoor surfaces as well as pursue a career in adventure sports.

Miscellaneous

PM lays foundation stone of Major Dhyan Chand Sports University in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

In News

The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of Major Dhyan Chand Sports University in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh.

About the University

- The Sports University will be equipped with modern and state-of-the-art sports infrastructure including synthetic Hockey ground, Football ground, Basketball, Volleyball, Handball, Kabaddi ground, Lawn tennis court, Gymnasium hall, Synthetic running stadium, Swimming pool, Multipurpose hall, and a Cycling Velodrome.
- The university will also house facilities for Shooting, Squash, Gymnastics, Weightlifting, Archery, Canoeing, and Kayaking, among other facilities.
- The University will have the capacity of training 1080 sportspersons including 540 female and 540 male sportspersons.

Initiatives taken to promote sports in India

- The central government has named the country's biggest sports award after the sporting icon Major Dhyan Chand.
- Target Olympics Podium (TOPS) Scheme – providing all support to top sportspersons to compete at the highest level.
- Khelo India Abhiyan – recognizing talent very early and all support is being given to groom them for the international level.

Kathak

In News

Recently, the famous Kathak dancer Pandit Munna Shukla died.

About Pandit Munna Shukla

- His most noted works include the dance-drama Shan-e-Mughal, Inder Sabha, Ameer Khusro, Anga Mukti, Anvesha, Bahar, Tratak, Kraunch Badh, Dhuni, among others.
- His contribution to the world of dance was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2006), Sahitya Kala Parishad Award (2003) and the Saraswathi Samman (2011).

Kathak

- The word Kathak has been derived from the word Katha which means a story. It is primarily performed in Northern India.
- It was primarily a temple or village performance wherein the dancers narrated stories from ancient scriptures. It is one of the classical dances of India.
- Kathak began evolving into a distinct mode of dance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the spread of the Bhakti movement.
- The legends of Radha-Krishna were enacted in folk plays called rasa lila, which combined folk dance with the basic gestures of the kathak story-tellers.

