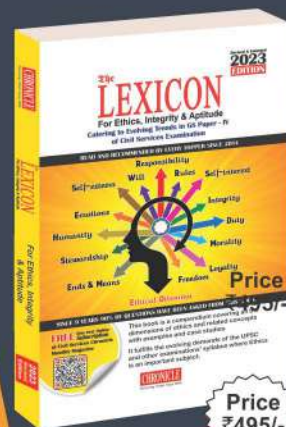


Civil Services

CHRONICLE

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- India-France Relations
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- FPOs in India
- Sustainable Forest Management
- National Multidimensional Poverty Index
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- Marine Heat Waves:
Threatening Ocean Ecosystems
- Coastal Aquaculture Authority
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India-France Relations

Heralding a New Era in Strategic Partnership

India and France have agreed to work within the framework of a partnership between equals, consistent with their respective sovereign and strategic interests. To further deepen their strategic partnership, and keeping in mind the universal values of liberty, equality, democracy and the rule of law, both countries have decided to enhance cooperation in areas that will enhance their commitment to strengthen sovereignty and decision-making autonomy.

■ Dr. Amarjeet Bhargava

On 13-14 July, 2023, India's Prime Minister visited France. During the visit, he attended the 'Bastille Day celebrations' in Paris as a guest of honour on the occasion of completion of 25 years of strategic partnership between the two countries. Also, Indian Prime Minister was awarded with the France's highest civilian and military honour- 'Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour'.

India and France are long-standing strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1947 and their up-gradation to the strategic level in 1998, the two countries have shared a high level of mutual trust, respect for the common principles and values enshrined in the UN Charter and international law and have consistently worked together keeping their commitment.

India and France are willing to work together in the interest of international peace and stability and reaffirm their commitment to a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and other extended regions. By this, the capabilities of both the countries will be developed in dealing with the global challenges and this development can be extended to other countries as well.

This year, India and France are celebrating 25 years of their strategic partnership. In this context, both the countries should consider strengthening mutual relations, introspect the shortcomings and work towards a better future. This special occasion is appropriate to reflect on the success and achievements of the relations between the two countries and to look forward to a bright and prosperous future.

Key Outcomes of the Visit

During the Indian prime minister's visit, the two countries agreed to adopt a specific roadmap under the following three pillars to guide bilateral cooperation till the year 2047:

Pillar-1: Partnership for Security and Sovereignty

- **Defence:** On-time delivery of 36 Rafale jets to the Indian Air Force, continuation of cooperation on fighter jets and submarines with the success of the P75 program (Six Scorpène-Class Submarine).

- **Space:** Agreed to promote scientific and commercial partnership through agreements between French National Center for Space Studies (CNES) of France and ISRO of India.
- This includes finalizing the Joint Earth Observation Satellite (TRISHNA), launching the first phase of the constellation of maritime surveillance satellites in the Indian Ocean and Protection of Indo-French Satellites in Orbit against the Risk of Collision.
- **Civil Nuclear Energy:** Launch of a cooperation program on small modular reactors and advanced modular reactors, with progress on the '6-EPR power plant project in Jaitapur, Maharashtra.
- **Indo-Pacific:** Adoption of a roadmap for joint action in the Indo-Pacific that covers all aspects of the overarching strategy for the region. Discussion on finalizing the Indo-French development fund for third world countries to enable joint financing of sustainable development projects in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Counter-Terrorism:** Strengthening cooperation between the 'National Gendarmerie of France' (GIGN) and India's National Security Guard (NSG).
- **Critical Technology:** Both countries have advocated strengthening cooperation on cutting-edge digital technology including supercomputing, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and quantum computing.
- An agreement for the supply of supercomputers worth over Rs 920 crore has been announced between Atos (a European multinational information technology services and consulting company) and India's Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Civil Aviation:** Signing of technical and safety agreements in the field of civil aviation to support the expansion of routes between France and India and the Indian civil aviation market.

Pillar-2: Partnership for the Planet

- **Plastic Pollution:** The commitment of France and India to adopt an international treaty to eliminate plastic pollution throughout the life cycle of plastic products has been emphasized.

FPOs in India

Leveraging Collective Strength to Empower Farmers

The agriculture sector in India has achieved significant momentum in the past decade. Mobilizing farmers into collectives in the form of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) has emerged as the most preferred institutional mechanism for farmers' prosperity by policy makers and development agencies. From modest beginnings, the FPO numbers have acquired impressive strength in many States. These initiatives have served as an example for FPO transition to become sustainable and achieve scale in the long-run.

■ Ranjeet Shah

Recently, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare informed that a total of 6319 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are registered across the country and added that government is providing financial assistance of Rs. 18 lakh per FPO for a period of three years along with credit guarantee facility and equity grant to farmers of the FPOs.

Farmer Producer Organisations have the potential to give better bargaining power to farmers, empower them, and lead to more transparent agri-markets. Since most FPOs are still in their incubation stage, they need handholding and financial support to take off.

What are Farmer Producer Organisations?

A large number of fragmented holdings characterize Indian agriculture. About 80 per cent to 85 per cent of these holdings belong to small and marginal farmers. Being highly unorganized, these farmers are not capable of earning a good value of their farm produce.

As regards India's agricultural communities, these problems of farmers can be resolved by organizing their business through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). FPOs are producer organizations that support farmers, right from enabling input procurement to having market connections. FPOs facilitate member farmers to get advantages of economies of scale in processing as well as the marketing their agriculture produce.

Farmer Producer Organizations have been recognized as the most appropriate institutional form which mobilize farmers and put together their capabilities to cooperatively leverage their agriculture production, promotion, and marketing strengths.

Current Status of FPOs in India

Several studies have been conducted by many researchers in India which gave different estimates about the total number of FPOs in India. Since the FPOs are promoted by different agencies, there is no single unified source of information about all the existing registered FPOs in the country.

These FPOs are registered under different legal structures, mostly under Companies Act or Co-operative Societies Act. Some are also registered as Mutually Aided Cooperative Society (as Trust). The list of FPOs registered under the Companies Act can be found with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Government of India. However, the list includes all producer companies (PCs) registered which may include non-farm producer companies as well.

In case the FPO is registered as a Trust or a Society under section 12AA of the Act, or in the case of Sec 8 Company, the income earned cannot be distributed to its members. Therefore, majority of the FPOs are registered either under Companies Act or under Cooperative Societies Act.

Role & Significance

FPOs play a crucial role in addressing various challenges faced by farmers and contributing to the overall development of agriculture and rural areas. Following are the key aspects of their role and significance:

- ◆ **Empowering Farmers:** FPOs empower farmers, particularly small and marginal ones, by providing them with collective strength and bargaining power. By coming together, farmers can access resources, markets, and services that would be difficult to obtain individually.
- ◆ **Market Access and Price Realization:** FPOs help farmers overcome market-related challenges by aggregating their produce. This enables them to access better markets and negotiate for fair prices, leading to improved income and reduced exploitation by intermediaries.
- ◆ **Value Addition and Processing:** FPOs promote value addition and processing of agricultural produce, which helps farmers capture a greater share of the value chain. Value-added products fetch higher prices, leading to increased profitability for farmers.
- ◆ **Access to Finance and Inputs:** FPOs facilitate access to financial services, such as credit and loans, which are essential for investing in agricultural inputs, technology, and infrastructure. They also help members procure inputs at bulk rates, reducing costs.

Green Financing Ecosystem in India

Role in Ensuring a Sustainable Future

Green financing has emerged as a crucial mechanism to drive sustainable development and combat climate change. With a focus on funding environmentally friendly projects such as renewable energy initiatives and sustainable infrastructure, India is leveraging green financing to build a greener and more resilient future. This financial approach aligns with the country's commitment towards a clean environment and contributes to the global efforts in creating a low-carbon economy.

■ Chandrakant Singh

Recently, the World Bank approved USD 1.5 billion in financing to accelerate the development of India's low-carbon energy sector. This will help India promote low-carbon energy by developing green hydrogen, scaling up renewable energy, and stimulating climate finance for low-carbon energy investments. It will also support the successful implementation of the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Also, Reserve Bank of India's report on Currency and Finance (RCF) for the year 2022-23 highlights that the country's goal of achieving the net zero target by 2070 would require an accelerated reduction in the energy intensity of GDP by around 5 per cent annually and a significant improvement in its energy-mix in favour of renewables to around 80 per cent by 2070-71. India's green financing requirement is estimated to be at least 2.5 per cent of GDP annually till 2030.

The above-mentioned instances highlight the crucial role that green financing plays in promoting the transition to a carbon neutral and sustainable economy. By supporting projects that prioritize resource efficiency, healthy ecosystems and promote the circular economy, it helps reduce waste generation, promotes recycling and reuse, and protects ecosystems. Thus for a country like India, green financing assumes great significance.

What is Green Finance?

- ♦ Green finance refers to financial products, services, and investments that are specifically designed to support environmentally sustainable projects and initiatives.
- ♦ It encompasses a wide range of financial instruments and mechanisms aimed at promoting sustainable development, addressing climate change, and protecting the environment.
- ♦ The concept of green finance emerged as a response to the growing recognition of the need to shift towards a more sustainable and low-carbon economy.

Objectives

- ♦ The main objectives of green finance are to:

- ♦ **Fund Environmentally Friendly Projects:** Green finance channels funds towards projects and initiatives that have positive environmental impacts, such as renewable energy projects, energy-efficient buildings, sustainable agriculture, waste management, and clean transportation.
- ♦ **Reduce Carbon Emissions:** By directing investments into low-carbon technologies and projects, green finance aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change.
- ♦ **Encourage Sustainable Practices:** Green finance promotes sustainable business practices and responsible corporate behaviour by considering environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors in investment decisions.

GREEN FINANCING INSTRUMENTS

Green finance encompasses various financial instruments and mechanisms, including but not limited to:

- **Green Bonds:** These are bonds issued to raise funds for projects that have clear environmental benefits. The proceeds from these bonds are used exclusively for green projects.
- **Green Loans:** Similar to green bonds, green loans are specifically dedicated to financing sustainable projects and initiatives.
- **Climate Funds:** These are investment funds that focus on financing climate change-related projects and activities.
- **Carbon Markets:** These enable companies to trade carbon credits, encouraging emission reduction and offsetting activities.
- **Green Insurance:** These are insurance products that support and incentivize environmentally friendly practices and projects.

Need for Green Financing in India

Green financing is of utmost importance in India due to several pressing reasons:

- ♦ **Climate Change Mitigation:** India is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and changing monsoon

Sustainable Forest Management

Key to Preserving the Future of Forests

Globalization is changing the context for sustainable forest management (SFM) profoundly. Regions that are better integrated in a globalized economy face increased pressure to adjust the forest sector to become more responsive and innovative in order to stay competitive.

■ Sharmila Senthil Kumar

The 18th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) took place in New York in May 2023. During the session, delegates discussed the contributions of sustainable forest management (SFM) to energy security, livelihoods, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UNFF session discussed the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) highlighting synergies with other global efforts on forests, land degradation, biodiversity, climate change and many other aspects of sustainable development.

The delegates also discussed regenerative agriculture; the role of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Adaptation Fund, and regional development banks; and the forests-energy-livelihoods nexus. The Forum also heard and discussed a special presentation on the potential of carbon markets for forest finance.

Since the Earth Summit of 1992, the need to manage forests sustainably has been well-recognized by the international community. The principal focus of the UN forest-related forums since then has been to implement the aims of the Summit through promoting sustainable forest management (SFM).

What is Sustainable Forest Management?

Sustainable forest management offers a holistic approach to ensure forest activities deliver social, environmental and economic benefits, balance competing needs and maintain and enhance forest functions now and in the future.

- ◆ It is about protecting the future of our biosphere, making sure we have fresh air to breathe, and clean water to drink. It is also about adopting strategies that promote replenishment, jobs and a healthier greener environment, offering more forest space for biodiversity. It is also about ensuring the future of our forests, enhancing our wildlife habitat, and protecting water.
- ◆ According to the **International Tropical Timber Organization**, sustainable forest management is the process of managing forests to achieve one or more clearly specified objectives of management with regard to the production of a continuous flow of desired forest products and services without undue reduction of its inherent values and future productivity as well as any undesirable effects on the physical and social environment.

- ◆ The **United Nations General Assembly** in 2007 recognized SFM as a dynamic and evolving concept that aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests for the benefit of the present and future generations, considering the following seven thematic elements as a reference framework:

- Extent of forest resources;
- Forest biodiversity;
- Forest health and vitality;
- Productive functions of forest resources;
- Protective functions of forest resources;
- Socio-economic functions of forests; and
- Legal, policy and institutional framework.

Importance of SFM

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), forests cover approximately 31 % of the world's land area, of which only half is relatively intact. Forest degradation, largely due to deforestation, is proceeding at an alarming rate, with a significant impact on biodiversity loss.

- ◆ The world is currently a long way from meeting the target of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests, which calls for a 3 % increase in forest area by 2030. One way to correct this trajectory is through sustainable forest management.
- ◆ **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** SDGs also emphasize the need of SFM which helps to achieve other developmental goals. The following two SDGs place forest management and sustainability into the international development framework and underscore the importance of these objectives in both developing and developed countries:
 - **Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
 - **Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- ◆ **Natural Ecosystem:** Forests are extremely important natural ecosystems and habitats for flora and fauna but they also serve humans in more ways than one.

- [Coastal Aquaculture Authority \(Amendment\) Bill, 2023](#)
- [Chandrayaan-3 Mission: Reaching for the Moon](#)
- [National Multidimensional Poverty Index](#)
- [Marine Heat Waves: Threatening Ocean Ecosystems](#)

Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023

On 21st July, 2023, the Standing Committee on Agriculture Animal Husbandry and Food Processing submitted its report on the Coastal Aquaculture Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

The Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha in April, 2023, seeks to amend the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, 2005.

Salient Features

Regulation of Allied Coastal Aquaculture Activities

- It adds that any facility that is engaged in coastal aquaculture or any allied activity will be regulated as a coastal aquaculture unit.
- Allied activities include nucleus breeding centres, hatcheries, brood stock multiplication centres and farms.
- The Bill provides for the registration and regulation of such units.

Allied Activities in Certain Protected Areas

- It prohibits coastal aquaculture activities in:
 - i) ecologically sensitive areas or in geo-morphological features such as mountains, valleys, or volcanoes,
 - ii) no-development zones in seas and buffer zones in creeks, rivers, and backwaters, and
 - iii) creeks, rivers, and backwaters within Coastal Regulation Zones.

Expanding Scope of Coastal Aquaculture Authority

- The Bill adds that the Authority shall:
 - i) fix standards or prohibit coastal aquaculture inputs, such as probiotics, in order to prevent harm to coastal aquaculture/environment,
 - ii) fix standards, monitor, and regulate such units to prevent diseases, and
 - iii) fix standards for emission/discharge of effluents from coastal aquaculture units.

New Composition of the Authority

- It adds a representative from the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying as a member.

Penalties

- It specifies that if coastal aquaculture in contravention with the provisions of the Act is carried out:
 - i) the activity may be suspended,
 - ii) the structure may be removed/demolished,
 - iii) the standing crop may be destroyed,
 - iv) the registration may be cancelled, and/or
 - v) a penalty may be imposed.
- It provides for different penalties for different contraventions. For instance, non-registration of a coastal aquaculture farm will attract a penalty of Rs 10,000/hectare for the first offence.

Key Issues identified by the Committee

Regulating Environmental Impact of Coastal Aquaculture

- The Act regulates the environmental impact of coastal aquaculture.
- However, intensive coastal aquaculture activities may have adverse impacts on the environment such as salinisation of land/wells and obstruction of natural flood water drainage.
- Hence, there may be a need to find a balance between promoting aquaculture activities and minimising the environmental damage from such activities.

Incompetency of Coastal Aquaculture Authority

- In 2020, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) noted that since 2016, the Coastal Aquaculture Authority has not carried out most of its functions adequately.
- It could not carry out these functions due to a deficiency in skilled manpower and infrastructure facilities.

Financial Constraint

- The Committee noted that a large chunk of Fish Farmers are poor and financially weak who undertake Aquaculture and Allied activities which are meant only for their survival.



Polity & Governance

- Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill 2023
- Zero FIR
- Rule 176 vs Rule 267 of Rajya Sabha
- Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000

Polity & Governance

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill 2023

On 27th July, 2023, the Lok Sabha passed the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023. It seeks to redefine the regulatory landscape of the country with decriminalisation of minor offences under 42 Acts to reduce compliance burden and promote ease of living and doing business in the country.

Need

- For the micro, small and medium-scale businesses to make a shift to the formal sector and generate jobs and income, there must be effective and efficient business regulations in place that eliminate unnecessary red tape.
- Currently, there are 1,536 laws which translate into around 70,000 compliances that govern doing business in India. These excessive compliances have proved onerous for business enterprises, especially MSMEs.
- Discrepancies among existing laws can lead to unnecessary and even contradictory compliance requirements.
- Moreover, the lengthy processing times for the needed approvals can escalate costs and dampen the entrepreneurial spirit.

Salient Features

Decriminalization

- A total of 183 provisions are being proposed to be decriminalized in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments.

Adjudicating Officers

- The Bill amends some Acts to provide for the appointment of Adjudicating Officers to decide penalties.
- It also specifies the appellate mechanism.
- Environmental Protection Fund

- ECI Introduces Digital Time Voucher System for Political Parties
- No-Confidence Motion
- Central Board of Film Certification
- Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2023
- The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023

Judiciary

- New Guidelines for Designation of Senior Advocates

Plans/Policies

- Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme
- All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Amendment Rules, 2023

- The Bill seeks to create an Environmental Protection Fund for education, awareness, and research on environmental protection.

Penalties

- Fines and penalties for certain offences in specified Acts are being increased. These fines and penalties will be increased by 10% of the minimum amount every three years.

Expected Impact

- **Efficient Operation:** It will contribute to rationalizing criminal provisions and ensuring that citizens, businesses and the government departments operate without fear of imprisonment for minor, technical or procedural defaults.
- **Reducing Pressure on the Justice System:** It would go a long way in reducing undue pressure on the justice system, reduce the pendency of cases and help in efficient and effective justice dispensation.
- **Bolstering Growth of Businesses:** The enactment of this legislation would be a landmark in the journey of rationalizing laws, eliminating barriers and bolstering growth of businesses.

Zero FIR

Recently, in Manipur violence incidents, nearly 30% of First Information Reports (FIRs) were 'Zero FIRs', filed suo-motu by the police, irrespective of jurisdiction.

About Zero FIR

- A Zero FIR, unlike regular FIRs, can be filed at any police station across the country by the victim, their family members, a relative, or any other person who is aware of the facts related to the matter.
- In such cases, the police cannot refuse to register the FIR by claiming that the crime did not occur within their jurisdiction, as it allows for cross-jurisdictional reporting.
- While regular FIRs are assigned serial numbers, Zero FIRs are given the number 0, hence the name.
- After a zero FIR is registered at a police station, it is later transferred to the police station having jurisdiction to investigate the matter.



Social Justice

- Parliamentary Panel on Persons with Disabilities

Social Issues

- Manual Scavenging

Indian Society

- Hindu Undivided Family & Uniform Civil Code

Committees/Commissions

- Pronab Sen Committee to Review Conduct of Surveys

Plans/Policies

- Registration of Births and Deaths Bill 2023
- Mission Shakti- Hub for Empowerment of Women
- National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2023
- National Dental Commission Bill, 2023
- Mission Vatsalya

Reports

- The Paths to Equal: Twin Indices on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality
- Estimates of National Immunisation Coverage for 2022

News Snippets

Social Justice

Parliamentary Panel on Persons with Disabilities

Recently, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment pulled up the Union Government for failing to accurately estimate the current population of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the country.

Issues Raised

- There is dissent over dropping disability-related questions in the sixth round of the National Family Health Survey.
- The Department of Social Justice & Empowerment has issued 94.09 lakh Unique Disability ID (UDID) cards whereas the PwDs population before 10 years was more than double that number.

Recommendations Made

- The Union government shall use maximum resources to collect accurate data on the population of PwDs until the Census 2021 data were published by using the methods such as:
 - ◆ Collaboration with State governments
 - ◆ Data from conducted surveys
 - ◆ Consultation with experts
 - ◆ Sensitising surveyors of the Ministry of Statistics.
- The Department of Social Justice & Empowerment must explore other avenues and collaborate with departments or organisations engaged in implementation of schemes for PwDs.
- This would lead to a realistic assessment of the PwD population in the country.

Important Facts

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

- As per United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, PwDs include those who

have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- The Act replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- It fulfils the obligations to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD), to which India is a signatory.
- Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.
- The types of disabilities covered are 21 and the Central Government has the power to add more types of disabilities.
- The Act provides for penalties for offences committed against persons with disabilities and also for violation of the provisions of the new law.
- Special Courts will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning the violation of the rights of PwDs.

Social Issues

Manual Scavenging

According to data provided by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 26th July, 2023, a total of 530 districts (out of total 766) across the country have so far reported themselves to be free of manual scavenging.

Key Points

- While 100% of districts in States like Bihar, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and a few others have declared themselves free of manual scavenging, in several States and Union Territories, only about 15% to 20% of the districts have reported so.



Heritage Art & Culture

Art & Culture

- GI Tags to Crafts from Rajasthan and U.P.
- Meri Maati Mera Desh Campaign
- Kui language

Art & Culture

GI Tags to Crafts from Rajasthan and U.P.

On 2nd August, 2023, the Geographical Indications Registry granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag to various crafts from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Jalesar Dhatu Shilp

- It is a metal craft famous in the Jalesar in Etah district, Uttar Pradesh.
- It includes ghungrus (anklets), ghantis (bells) and other decorative metal craft and brassware.
- The bells casted in Etah district's soil ring better.
- The Thatheras community, which resides in Hathras, involved in making of these products.

Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft

- Udaipur Koftgari Metal Craft originated in Udaipur city of Rajasthan.
- It is also known as Damascening or Inlaying.
- It is a technique of decorating metal objects with fine wires or strips of gold or silver.
- It was widely used by the Gadi-Lohars, the traditional armourers of Rajasthan, to create a range of weaponry and armour for the use of their Rajput clientele.

Bikaner Kashidakari Craft

- Bikaner Kashidakari is an exclusive women-oriented embroidering made by putting traditional skills.
- Bikaner Kashidakari crafts are practiced as gift items.
- The gift items are made by the women of the Meghwal community of Bikaner and are often a testament to the skills learnt by the new bride.

Jodhpur Bandhej Craft

- Bandhej is a tie-die technique evolved in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

- Chachin Grazing Festival
- Bengaluru joins 'World Cities Culture Forum'
- Namda Art
- Lambani Embroidery
- Ker Puja

Plans/Policies

- Dedicated Cultural Heritage Squad

Personality

- Sushruta

News Snippets

- Bandhej craft is a highly skilled process and an excellent example of the human skill with the color combination and minute work with passion.
- Main Centers-Jodhpur, Nagaur, Churu and Barmer in Rajasthan.

Bikaner Usta Kala Craft

- Bikaner Usta Kala Craft is a painting craft that originated in Bikaner city of Rajasthan. It is also known as Naqqashi or Nakashi.
- It is a form of painting that uses gold or silver foil to create intricate designs on various surfaces such as wood, metal, marble, ivory and leather.
- The craft involves applying a layer of lacquer or varnish on the surface and then pasting the gold or silver foil on it.
- The craft also uses colours such as red, green, blue and black to fill in the gaps between the foil.
- The craft is mainly used to decorate objects such as boxes, vases, trays, furniture and other decorative items.

Meri Maati Mera Desh Campaign

On 30th July, 2023, in the 103rd edition of his monthly radio address, Prime Minister announced the launch of a new campaign 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' to honour the country's martyred bravehearts.

About 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' Campaign

- Under the campaign, soil collected from different parts of the country in August, 2023 will be used to develop a garden along the Kartavya Path in Delhi.
- Events have been planned at the panchayat, village, block, urban local body, and State and national levels, respectively.
- Young volunteers and others will collect soil from every panchayat and bring it to the block, from where the 'Mitti Kalash' will be transported to Delhi.
- In urban areas, events will be organised at local bodies, notified area councils, Cantonment Boards, and town panchayats, municipalities and municipal corporations in sequence.

ECONOMY WATCH

Agriculture

- BHARAT Campaign

Banking & Finance

- Corporate Debt Market Development Fund
- Guarantee Scheme for Corporate Debt
- Offer for Sale
- Expected Credit Loss Framework

- External Commercial Borrowings
- E-Way Bill
- Total Expense Ratio

Plans/Policies

- Advance Authorisation Scheme
- Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region

Infrastructure

- Logistics Data Bank Project
- SWAMIH Investment Fund
- Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

Industry

- National Digital Nagrik Forum
- PM-MITRA Scheme

Reports

- Export Preparedness Index 2022

Agriculture

BHARAT Campaign

On 12th July, 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has launched the BHARAT (Banks Heralding Accelerated Rural & Agriculture Transformation) campaign.

- This campaign is part of the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF).

Key Points

- **Aim:** To get active involvement and support of members of commercial Banks in the public and private sector, Regional Rural Banks, Small Finance Banks, NBFCs and select cooperative Banks in promoting the Scheme of Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.
- **Duration:** It is a one month-long Campaign with a target of Rs 7200 crore.

Impact

- **Accelerating Rural and Agricultural Transformation:** The campaign marks a significant step forward in accelerating rural and agricultural transformation in India.
- **Development of Essential Agricultural Infrastructure:** With the active involvement and support of banking institutions, the Agri-Infra Fund is poised to drive the development of essential agricultural infrastructure across the nation.

About Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)

- It is a Central Sector Scheme which was launched in 2020.
- **Aim:** To provide a medium to long-term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.
- **Time-period:** FY2020 to FY2032 (10 years).

Scheme Beneficiaries

- Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), Marketing Cooperative Societies, Joint Liability Groups (JLG), Self-Help Groups, Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Startups, Agri entrepreneurs, Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public-Private Partnership projects.
- In July 2021, the government approved extending the scheme to Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs)/State Agencies, National & State Federations of Cooperatives, Federations of Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) and Federations of Self Help Groups (SHGs).



The poster features the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare logo on the left and the 75th Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav logo on the right. The central text reads 'Agriculture Infrastructure Fund' in large, bold letters. Below this, it states: 'To mobilize a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee'. The background of the poster shows a rural landscape with a field and trees.

Important Facts

Agriculture Accelerator Fund

- It was announced in the Union budget 2023-24.
- It will be set up to encourage agri-startups by young entrepreneurs in rural areas.
- It aims at bringing innovative and affordable solutions for challenges faced by farmers.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Space Science

- ISRO's PSLV-C56/DS-SAR Mission
- Scientists Detect Low-Frequency Gravitational Waves

Space Science

ISRO's PSLV-C56/DS-SAR Mission

On 30th July, 2023, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved a successful launch of the PSLV-C56 rocket, carrying Singapore's DS-SAR satellite and six other co-passenger satellites, placing them into their intended orbits from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

Key Points

- **Successful Orbit Placement:** The mission achieved its objective, placing all seven satellites, including the primary satellite DS-SAR, into their designated orbits successfully.
- **New Space India Limited (NSIL) Mission:** This PSLV mission was carried out for New Space India Limited (NSIL), and the launch was sponsored by the Government of Singapore.
- **Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) Payload:** DS-SAR carries a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) payload developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI).
- This feature enables all-weather day and night imaging at a high resolution of 1m at full polarimetry.
- **Co-Passenger Satellites:** The mission included several co-passenger satellites, namely VELOX-AM, ARCADE, SCOOB-II, NuLiON, Galassia-2, and ORB-12 STRIDER, each serving various technology demonstration and research purposes.

Significance

- **Advancements in Space Technology:** ISRO's successful launch of PSLV-C56 carrying Singapore's DS-SAR satellite and other co-passenger satellites showcases India's capabilities in space technology and satellite deployment.
- **Enhanced Imaging and Satellite Services:** DS-SAR satellite, equipped with a Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) payload, offers state-of-the-art imaging capabilities, including all-weather day and night coverage at a high resolution.

- OneWeb to Establish First Satellite Network Portal Site in Gujarat
- Euclid Space Telescope to Explore 'Dark Universe'

Defence Technology

- India to Boost Naval Capabilities

New Technology & Innovations

- India's Scientists Develop Stable Perovskite Cells 68
- CSIR-CRRI Pioneers World's Latest Steel Road Technology

News Snippets

- **Strengthening Bilateral Relations:** The launch of DS-SAR and co-passenger satellites signifies a significant milestone in India-Singapore space collaboration.
- The partnership between DSTA and ST Engineering reflects the strengthened ties between the two nations in the field of space research and technology.
- **Space Technology for Societal Applications:** The deployment of co-passenger satellites like NuLiON, designed to enable seamless IoT connectivity, and SCOOB-II, serving as a technology demonstrator, reflects ISRO's commitment to utilizing space technology for societal applications and advancing research and innovation.
- **Pioneering in Satellite Technology:** ISRO's successful launch of PSLV-C56 marks the 58th flight of PSLV and the 17th flight with Core Alone Configuration.
- This highlights ISRO's prowess in consistently achieving precise and reliable satellite placement, establishing India's position as a leader in satellite launch capabilities.

Scientists Detect Low-Frequency Gravitational Waves

Recently, scientists announced a ground-breaking discovery, presenting evidence that the universe is teeming with low-frequency gravitational waves.

- The study focused on pulsar observations and their implications for gravitational waves, providing key findings that advance the understanding of these cosmic phenomena.
- Gravitational waves are undulations in the fabric of space-time that are generated by the movement, collisions, and mergers of massive celestial objects, as first predicted by Albert Einstein in his General Theory of Relativity over a century ago.

Key Points

- **Telescopes:** Six of the world's most powerful and large radio telescopes – uGMRT, Westerbork Synthesis Radio Telescope, Effelsberg Radio Telescope, Lovell Telescope, Nançay Radio Telescope and Sardinia Radio Telescope — were deployed to study 25 pulsars over a period of 15 years.



ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change

- Batagaika Crater Poses a Warning Sign for Earth

Biodiversity

- Invasive Weed Threatens Elephant Habitats

- Cheetah Deaths at Kuno National Park
- Ecological Concerns Rise in Western Ghats

Sustainable Development

- Sand and Dust Storms: UN Issues Global Alert
- Deep-Sea Mining Endangers Pacific Tuna
- Groundwater Extraction Affects Earth's Axis

Disaster Management

- New Manual for Disaster Management Plan

Government Policies/Initiatives

- Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023
- Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021

News Snippets

Climate Change

Batagaika Crater Poses a Warning Sign for Earth

A recent study has revealed that the Batagaika crater, the world's largest permafrost crater, is expanding at an alarming rate. This has raised concerns about the impact of thawing permafrost on the environment.

- **Permafrost** is a permanently frozen layer below Earth's surface. It consists of soil, gravel, and sand, usually bound together by ice. Permafrost remains frozen at or below 32°F (0°C) for at least two years. It is common in high mountain regions and Earth's higher latitudes.

Key Points

- **Largest Permafrost Crater:** The Batagaika crater is a one-kilometer-long gash in Russia's Far East and is the world's biggest permafrost crater.
- **Formation:** The crater began to form in the 1970s after the surrounding forest was cleared in the 1960s, leading to the melting of the permafrost underground, causing the land to sink.
- **Location:** The crater, located in the Sakha Republic, has deepened up to 100 meters and expanded over the years due to the melting of underground permafrost after deforestation.
- **Impact of Global Warming:** Russia is warming about 2.5 times faster than the global average, leading to the melting of the country's long-frozen Tundra, releasing potent greenhouse gases like methane.

Significance of the Findings

- **Environmental Consequences:** The release of greenhouse gases stored in the thawed soil can further exacerbate global warming, contributing to climate change on a global scale.

- **Infrastructure Vulnerability:** Thawing permafrost has already caused damage to roads, houses, and pipelines in northern and north-eastern Russia.
- The vulnerability of infrastructure in these regions necessitates urgent measures to address the impact of permafrost degradation.
- **Ecosystem Disruption:** The expansion of the crater has disrupted local ecosystems, affecting wildlife habitats and natural resources. The loss of swamps and grasslands in the area could lead to negative interactions between humans and wildlife.
- **Climate Feedback Loop:** The release of organic carbon into the atmosphere from the thawing permafrost creates a feedback loop, where increased warming leads to further permafrost thawing - intensifying climate change.
- **Mitigation and Adaptation:** The rapid growth of the Batagaika crater calls for enhanced efforts in climate change mitigation and adaptation. It emphasizes the need for global cooperation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement sustainable practices to protect vulnerable regions.

Biodiversity

Invasive Weed Threatens Elephant Habitats

Currently, the invasion of *Ludwigia peruviana*, an aquatic weed native to Central and South America, is posing a threat to elephant habitats and foraging areas in Tamil Nadu's Valparai, leading to potential human-elephant conflicts in the region.

- Valparai, located within the Annamalai Tiger Reserve, serves as a key habitat for elephants moving between Tamil Nadu and Kerala.



WORLD WATCH

International Relations

- First BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Meeting
- India and Sri Lanka to Boost Bilateral Cooperation

International Relations

First BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Meeting

On 17th July 2023, Thailand hosted the first BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' meeting in Bangkok.

Key Highlights

- **Renewed Resolve for Stronger Cooperation:** The Ministers expressed their commitment to building a stronger, more resilient, and more relevant BIMSTEC grouping.
- **Strengthening Organizational Framework:** The Retreat emphasized the need to enhance BIMSTEC's organizational framework and collaborative mechanisms to promote growth and prosperity in the region.
- **Key Discussion Areas:** It included food security, public health, energy, financial security, trade, economic cooperation, digital payment systems, cyber security, and prevention of transnational crimes.
- **Coordination on Global Issues:** Emphasis on the significance of exchanging views and coordinating on global issues, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate change.
- **BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection and Technology Cooperation:** The session also discussed BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection, agriculture technology, cultural cooperation, youth exchange, and diplomatic training.
- **India to Host Next Ministerial Meeting:** India offered to host the next BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on the side-lines of the forthcoming UNGA in September 2023.

Significance of BIMSTEC for India

- For India, BIMSTEC represents a common space for peace and development, aligning with its "Neighbourhood First" and "Act East" foreign policy priorities.
- BIMSTEC serves as a means for India to address Chinese influence in the Bay of Bengal region and promote cooperation based on international norms.

- India Hosts SCO Summit
- India-Japan Meeting on Steel Sector and Decarbonisation

World Issues

- UK Formally Signs CPTPP Trade Bloc Agreement
- Russia withdraws from Black Sea Grain Initiative
- China-ASEAN Non-Aggression Pact
- European Sky Shield Initiative

Reports/Indices

- Henley Passport Index 2023

News Snippets

- The region's largest economy, India sees BIMSTEC as a platform to foster regional connectivity and cooperation.

Important Facts

BIMSTEC

- **BIMSTEC's Establishment:** BIMSTEC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, was established in 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.
- **Members:** Initially known as BIST-EC, it comprises seven member countries: Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bhutan.
- **Headquarter:** Leadership is rotated in alphabetical order of country names. The permanent secretariat is in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Economic Significance and Growth:** The seven BIMSTEC countries account for around 22% of the world's population and have a combined GDP close to \$2.7 trillion.

India and Sri Lanka to Boost Bilateral Cooperation

On 21st July, 2023, Indian Prime Minister met Sri Lankan President for talks during which the two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest.

- Sri Lanka is an important partner in India's Neighbourhood First Policy and Vision SAGAR.

Key MoUs Signed

- Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) in the field of Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- MoU on cooperation in the field of renewable energy.
- Memorandum of Cooperation for economic development projects in Trincomalee district of Sri Lanka.
- Network to Network Agreement between NIPL and Lanka Pay for UPI application acceptance in Sri Lanka.
- Energy Permit for Sampur Solar Power Project.

General Studies Paper I-IV

100 Mains Topics Part-2 with Questions & Answers

A careful analysis of previous three years Civil Services Main Examination General Studies question papers reveals that the questions are issue-based, open-ended, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary in nature. The questions demand analytical and critical answers.

Accordingly, in this special section, we have come up with curated content on a select list of 100 topics for the upcoming Mains examination along with questions & answers.

- *The topics included herein have been prepared keeping in mind those aspects from which questions are expected in the Mains examination.*
- *The topics comprise those issues which have multiple facets to them and many types of questions could be asked from them.*
- *The issues covered under questions and answers are those from which direct questions could be asked.*
- *The answers to the questions represent the ideal answer writing technique.*

We hope you find this material helpful in your preparation for the Civil Services Main Examination.

We encourage you to send us your feedback at cscenglish@chronicleindia.in

Happy reading!

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Indian History & Culture

Evolution of Coinage System in India

Evolution

- **Ancient Period (6th century BCE - 6th century CE)**
 - ♦ The earliest coins in India were punch-marked coins, made of silver and copper, and featured symbols and markings that denoted their weight and value.
 - ♦ The Mauryan Empire (circa 322-185 BCE) introduced the first standardized coinage system under Emperor Ashoka. The coins featured inscriptions in Brahmi script and symbols such as the Lion Capital.
- **Classical Period (6th century CE - 12th century CE)**
 - ♦ The Gupta Empire (circa 4th to 6th centuries CE) is known for its gold coins, often featuring the image of the ruling king and various deities.
 - ♦ Gupta coins were well-crafted and symbolized the empire's economic prosperity and cultural achievements.
- **Medieval Period (12th century CE - 17th century CE)**
 - ♦ During the Delhi Sultanate (circa 13th to 16th centuries CE), the Islamic rulers introduced their coinage system, predominantly using silver and copper coins. The coins bore Arabic inscriptions and the names of the ruling sultans.
 - ♦ The Vijayanagara Empire (circa 14th to 17th centuries CE) issued its own coins, which were characterized by intricate designs and artistic craftsmanship.
- **Mughal Period (16th century CE - 19th century CE)**
 - ♦ The Mughal rulers introduced a well-organized and standardized coinage system. Gold, silver, and copper coins were minted, featuring the names and titles of the Mughal emperors, along with Persian inscriptions.
 - ♦ The Mughal coinage system remained influential even after the decline of the empire, and many regional kingdoms adopted similar coinage practices.
- **Colonial Period (17th century CE - 20th century CE)**
 - ♦ With the arrival of European colonial powers, various European trading companies issued their own coins for trade and commerce in India. The British East India Company and later, the British colonial government, issued coins featuring English inscriptions.
 - ♦ The Coinage Act of 1835 established a uniform coinage system in British India, and the rupee became the standard currency.
- **Modern Period (20th century CE - present):** After India gained independence in 1947, the Indian government introduced new coinage series, including the anna, paise, and later, the decimal system with the rupee as the base currency.

Significance

- **Historical Documentation:** Coins serve as essential historical artifacts, providing valuable evidence about the

rulers, dynasties, and kingdoms that once thrived in India. They offer insights into the political events, economic conditions, and cultural exchanges that shaped the nation's past.

- **Cultural Heritage:** The design and symbols on coins reflect the cultural diversity and artistic achievements of different periods in Indian history. From the Mauryan Lion Capital to the intricate patterns on Mughal coins, the coinage system is a representation of India's rich cultural heritage.
- **Economic Development:** The evolution of coinage in India mirrors the growth of economic systems and trade practices over the centuries. Coins facilitated commerce, trade, and monetary exchanges, playing a crucial role in the country's economic development.
- **Unification and Integration:** Standardized coinage systems promoted by various empires and rulers helped integrate diverse regions and kingdoms into a unified economic network. Uniform currency encouraged trade and cultural exchange across the subcontinent.
- **Political Stability:** The introduction of standardized coinage systems under powerful empires and rulers contributed to political stability and central authority. Coins bearing the image of the ruler symbolized their sovereignty and legitimacy.
- **Interaction with the World:** The designs and inscriptions on coins often depicted religious symbols, deities, and scripts from different cultures, indicating India's interactions with neighbouring civilizations and the wider world.
- **Numismatic Studies:** The study of numismatics, the science of coins, helps researchers and historians understand the socio-economic and political aspects of past societies. Numismatics contributes to the reconstruction of historical events and facilitates a deeper understanding of India's ancient past.
- **National Identity:** The use of national symbols and iconic figures on modern coins fosters a sense of national identity and pride. Coins with symbols like the national emblem or historical monuments connect citizens with their country's heritage.

Indian Renaissance: Causes and Significance

Causes/Factors

- **Religious Causes:** Orthodoxy ruled Indian faiths and culture in the 18th and 19th centuries. There were several castes and sub-castes in Indian society. Missionaries from the Christian and Muslim faiths started persuading people to practise their respective faiths as a result of this circumstance.