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50 Important Topics with Model Questions

IR & National Security
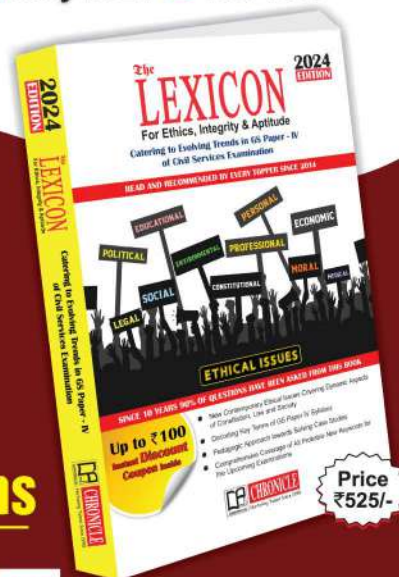
JPSC
Jharkhand Combined
Civil Services
Prelims Exam 2023
Solved

ARTICLES

- **Climate Change**
  Impact on Women and Children

- **Digital Public Infrastructure**
  A Fundamental Driver of India's Social Transformation

- **India's Poor Solid Waste Management**
  Posing Critical Threat to Public Health and Environment

Current Affairs In Focus

- **Carbon Farming**
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Textiles & Apparel and Gaming Sectors Fact Sheet

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50 Important Topics **with** Model Questions

IR & National Security

In this special section, we have come up with curated and comprehensive content on 50 important topics covering International Relations and National Security. The topics have been identified by our team of experts based on a careful analysis of the previous years' questions. Only those dimensions of the topics have been covered which are most likely to be asked in the upcoming Mains examination. Each topic is followed by a carefully framed model question. These questions will help you prepare better for the examination.

Articles

Current Affairs In Focus

REGULAR COLUMNS

Climate Change: Impact on Women and Children
Urgent Need to Address the Vulnerabilities

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster. Climate change exacerbates the existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, necessitating urgent and targeted interventions to promote gender equality, enhance resilience, and ensure sustainable development for women and children.

■ **Alok Singh**

A recent study by the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation highlights that women and children in Bihar, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Telangana are particularly vulnerable to climate change-related disasters. The study also revealed that children exposed to climate hazards are more likely to be stunted, underweight, and at risk of early pregnancies.

The world is witnessing an alarming increase in extreme weather events and climate-induced natural hazards, significantly impacting vulnerable populations. A 2021 report by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) highlighted that 75% of Indian districts are susceptible to hydrometeorological disasters such as floods, droughts, and cyclones. These changes disproportionately affect women and children, exacerbating their existing vulnerabilities.

The data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) reveals that over half of the women and children in India are at severe risk. Women and girls, particularly in impoverished areas, face heightened health risks due to their roles, responsibilities, and cultural norms.

Additionally, natural disasters are linked to increased gender-based violence, and changes in water cycle patterns further restricts access to safe drinking water, burdening women and girls with additional responsibilities. Addressing these vulnerabilities is crucial for building resilience and ensuring equitable climate action. Thus, it should be made an urgent priority in the fight against climate change.

THE UN CLIMATE IMPACTS REPORT — IN NUMBERS

WOMEN + CHILDREN

Climate change and socio-economic factors are projected to increase undernourished children in Africa under 5 to **52 million** by 2050

Malnutrition could increase severe child stunting in South Asia by **62%** by 2050

How does climate change impact women and children?

Climate change disproportionately affects women and children, exacerbating existing gender inequalities and posing unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety. These vulnerable groups face increased burdens, heightened risks of violence, and significant challenges as outlined below.

- **Amplified Gender Inequalities:** Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities, disproportionately affecting women and girls. They face unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety due to their reliance on natural resources and roles in securing food, water, and fuel.
- **Increased Burden on Women:** In low- and lower-middle-income countries, agriculture is a crucial employment sector for women. Climate-induced droughts and erratic rainfall force women to work harder to secure resources, often requiring girls to leave school to help.
- **Threat Multiplier:** Climate change escalates social, political, and economic tensions, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions. This increases vulnerabilities to gender-based violence, including sexual violence, human trafficking, and child marriage.
- **Disaster Impact:** Women are less likely to survive disasters and more likely to be injured due to disparities in information, mobility, decision-making, and resource access. Post-disaster, they face challenges in accessing relief and assistance, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability.
- **Health Risks:** Climate change endangers women's and children's health by limiting access to healthcare and increasing risks related to maternal and child health. Extreme heat increases stillbirth incidences, and the spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria and Zika virus worsens maternal and neonatal outcomes.

How does climate change intersect with other inequalities for women and girls?

While women and girls experience disproportionate impacts from climate change at the global level, the effects are not uniform. Thus it becomes imperative to have a look on impact of climate change on women and children.
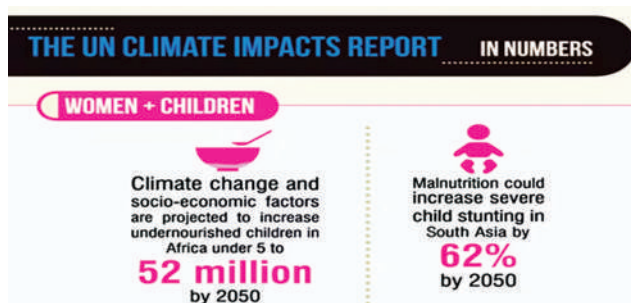
DPI: A Fundamental Driver of India's Social Transformation

The emergence of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has ushered in a new era of e-governance in India. This has enabled citizens to access a wide range of government services online. DPI is working to connect all individuals and businesses to the digital economy, regardless of socio-economic background. India's DPI initiative, known as 'India Stack', has been helpful in increasing productivity, improving efficiency and creating additional employment opportunities.

■ **Dr. Amarjeet Bhargava**

Recently, the first UN International Conference on 'Digital Public Infrastructure' (DPI) was held in New York under the leadership of India. During the conference, the President of the United Nations General Assembly said that India's progress is an example of how DPI is a fundamental driver of social transformation and progress. He also mentioned that it provides equal opportunities if used in an inclusive manner.

India has achieved remarkable results by adopting a DPI-centric strategy. A strong digital infrastructure promotes global connectivity, financial inclusion, and innovation. DPI in India is established as a public-private partnership, which has become a benchmark for many countries, corporations and start-ups across the world. The importance and acceptance of DPI is increasing. In this context, it is necessary to analyze its role and challenges in social transformation.

What is Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)?

- 'Digital Public Infrastructure' (DPI) is an 'Open-source identity platform'. It helps to create various applications and products to ensure easy access to government and private services.
- DPI includes platforms such as certificate and verification, citizen registration, digital payment, data exchange and digital information system.
- These platforms are known for their features like customization, localization and interoperability. These public digital platforms take advantage of publicly available data using the open innovation model.
- **Example** - The interoperability of the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) architecture extends to more than 300 banks. Consumers get specific linkage to operate bank accounts through UPI. This enables consumers to access their bank accounts through more than 50 third-party apps.

India' DPI: A Global Role Model

- India's Digital Public Infrastructure is known as the 'India Stack'. It has proven to be a key factor in driving innovation and competition in the country. DPI has played a key role in expanding markets, reducing the financial inclusion gap, increasing government revenues and its spending efficiency.

- India was praised by the World Bank in September 2023 for its effective use of digital public infrastructure (DPI) in ensuring access to financial and government services.
- Digital Public Infrastructure was prominently discussed during the G20 Summit held in New Delhi in September 2023. The summit concluded with the adoption of the Delhi Declaration, which highlighted the importance of adopting DPI to address inequalities in digital access and accelerate reform progress.
- On 22 November 2023, the Indian Prime Minister announced the launch of two India-led initiatives- the 'Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository' (GDPIR) and a 'Social Impact Fund' to accelerate DPI implementation. As of November 2023, GDPIR has 54 DPIs from 16 countries.

DPI in India: Important Facts and Figures

- India's digital economy is growing rapidly and is expected to reach $1 trillion by 2025.
- The digital economy is supported by the country's huge internet user base. Over 759 million Indians are using the internet.
- Access to broadband connectivity has also improved, reaching over 93 per cent of Indian villages.
- Nearly 1.3 billion citizens have been enrolled under the ambitious Aadhaar programme.
- The usage of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has also grown rapidly in India and is expected to reach one billion transactions per day by 2026.
- According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (2023), India's digital public infrastructure has helped distribute USD 400 billion or approximately Rs. 29 trillion to beneficiaries in the last five years.
- India has achieved the goal of more than 80 per cent financial inclusion for its citizens in just 7 years with the help of digital public infrastructure.
  In the absence of this strategy, it would have taken more than 47 years to achieve these results.

India's Poor Solid Waste Management
Posing Critical Threat to Public Health & Environment

Lack of clarity and awareness among key stakeholders and irregular regulatory enforcement are major obstacles to efficient management of solid waste. Waste management practices can be streamlined by using appropriate technology. Also, an effective combination of technical and economic components can make solid waste management methods sustainable and viable.

Recently, the Supreme Court of India criticized the poor system of solid waste management in New Delhi. More than 3,800 tonnes per day (TPD) of solid waste remains untreated in the national capital. This waste reaches landfills and poses a threat to public health and the environment.

Also, according to a recent report, titled 'Turning Rubbish into a Resource: Global Waste Management Outlook, 2024' released by the United Nations, more than one-third of the global population is forced to live with solid waste. The report estimates that the amount of solid waste generation will increase from 2.3 billion tonnes in 2023 to 3.8 billion tonnes by 2050. It also states that an estimated 540 million tonnes of municipal solid waste, which is 27 percent of the global total waste, is not being collected. Only 36 percent and 37 percent of the waste generated in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and South Asia is being collected.

Given this grim reality, analyzing the health and environmental impacts of solid waste becomes imperative. Also, this is the time to reevaluate efforts made for solid waste management.

Solid Waste and its Management

- Unwanted and unusable solid substances generated from human activities are called solid waste. Residential sites, commercial establishments, industries, construction and demolition and agricultural activities are the major sources of solid waste generation.
- Solid waste management includes the following activities:
  - **Collection Systems:** The first step in waste management is the collection of waste from various sources with the help of efficient waste collection systems.
  - **Segregation:** Segregation facilitates effective waste management; this involves the separation of waste at the source into different categories (Example: recyclables, organic waste and non-recyclables).
  - **Transportation:** In the next step, the collected waste is transported to the treatment and disposal facilities with the help of suitable modes of transportation.
  - **Disposal and Treatment:** The waste is recycled with the help of scientific methods. The non-recyclable material is treated by other suitable methods.

Solid Waste in India: An Overview

- According to a report released by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), about 62 million tonnes of solid waste is generated in India every year.
- Out of the total waste generated, only 43 million tonnes is collected, out of which 12 million tonnes is treated before disposal, and the remaining waste is discarded in landfills/wasteyards.
- According to estimates by India's Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), annual waste generation in the country will rise to 165 million tonnes by 2030. The extraction of hazardous, plastic, e-waste and biomedical waste is also likely to increase proportionately.
- According to a study published in the Journal of Urban Management (December 2021), of the 62 million tonnes of waste generated annually in the country, 7.9 million tonnes comprise hazardous waste, 5.6 million tonnes plastic waste, 1.5 million tonnes e-waste and 0.17 million tonnes biomedical waste.

Adverse Effects of Poor Waste Management

- **Health Problems:** Improper management of solid waste can lead to various health problems. For example, burning waste in the open can lead to breathing problems and lung-related diseases in the long run.
- Similarly, irregular collection of solid waste can lead to the spread of disease carriers like rats and mosquitoes.
- **Environmental Degradation:** Unscientific dumping of solid waste can lead to soil and groundwater pollution. This not only contaminates the surrounding environment

Current Affairs

inFocus

Carbon Farming: Path to Sustainable Agriculture & Decarbonization

Recently, the European Parliament approved the provisional agreement with EU Member States on a new carbon removal certification scheme. This will establish an EU wide certification framework, and registry, for permanent carbon removals, carbon farming and carbon storage in products.

What is Carbon Farming?

- The term "carbon farming" refers to agricultural methods that enhance the uptake and storage of carbon dioxide (CO2) in soil.
- The European Commission defines carbon farming as "a green business model that rewards land managers for taking up improved land management practices, resulting in the increase of carbon sequestration in living biomass, dead organic matter and soils by enhancing carbon capture and/or reducing the release of carbon into the atmosphere, in respect of ecological principles favourable to biodiversity and the natural capital overall."
- It aims to deliver climate mitigation in agriculture. This involves the management of both land and livestock, all pools of carbon in soils, materials, and vegetation, plus fluxes of carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), and nitrous oxide (N2O).
- It includes carbon removal (sequestration and permanent storage of carbon in soils and biomass), avoided emissions (preventing the loss of already stored carbon), and emissions reductions (i.e., reductions of GHGs below current levels of farm emissions).

Need

- The unpredictability of climate change presents significant challenges to farmers worldwide, especially to the developing Countries like India.
- Amid growing environmental challenges and the quest for climate-resilient sustainable agriculture, the practice of carbon farming in the agriculture sector has gain significant importance across the world.

Principles of Carbon Farming

- **Carbon Sequestration**: The core principle involves capturing carbon dioxide through photosynthesis and storing it in the soil. This is achieved by promoting the growth of plants and trees that absorb carbon from the atmosphere.
- **Reduced Emissions:** Carbon farming emphasizes practices that minimize greenhouse gas emissions. This includes optimizing fertilizer use, adopting no-till farming, and reducing reliance on synthetic inputs.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Integrating diverse crops and promoting agroforestry practices contribute to biodiversity conservation. This enhances ecosystem resilience and supports sustainable agricultural systems.
- **Soil Health:** Improving soil health is fundamental to carbon farming. Practices like cover cropping and rotational grazing not only sequester carbon but also enhance soil structure, water retention, and nutrient cycling.

Implementation of Carbon Farming

- **Rotational grazing** involves rotating livestock across different pastures. This technique helps to maintain soil health and increase carbon sequestration in the soil.
- **Agroforestry practices** including silvopasture and alley cropping can further diversify farm income by sequestering carbon in trees and shrubs.
- **Conservation agriculture techniques** such as zero tillage, crop rotation, cover cropping, and crop residue management (stubble retention and composting) can help minimise soil disturbance and enhance organic content, particularly in places with other intense agricultural activities.
- **Integrated nutrient management practices** promote soil fertility and reduce emissions by using organic fertilizers and compost.
- **Agro-ecological approaches** such as crop diversification and intercropping have benefits for ecosystem resilience.
- **Livestock management strategies** including rotational grazing, optimising feed quality, and managing animal waste can reduce methane emissions and increase the amount of carbon stored away in pasture lands.

- Blue Corner Notice of Interpol

Judiciary
- SC Directives to Strengthen JJ Act, 2015
- Supreme Court's Observation on SC & ST Act, 1989
- Supreme Court Limits ED's Power to Arrest under PMLA
- Lawyers' Services not covered under CPA: SC

National Security
- Government forms Committee to Combat Transnational Cybercrimes

Polity & Governance
- Conference on Criminal Justice System

Polity & Governance

Conference on Criminal Justice System

On 19th May, 2024, the Ministry of Law and Justice organized a two-day conference, titled 'India's Progressive Path in the Administration of Criminal Justice System', in association with the Assam government, at IIT-Guwahati.

The first conference of the series was held in New Delhi on 20th April, 2024.

Aim
- To bring out the highlights of the three new criminal laws that have been enacted to overhaul the criminal justice system in the country.

What are the Key Highlights of the Conference?
- **Redefining India's Criminal Justice System:** The Conference shed light on the overarching objectives of the new criminal law triad, set to redefine the structure of India's criminal justice system and profoundly impact the lives of its citizens. The new criminal laws are scheduled to take effect from 1st July, 2024.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS):** The first technical session featured in-depth discussions centred on adopting a comparative approach to assess the implementation of BNS, 2023.
- **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 (BSA):** The second technical session discussed the salient aspects of BSA, 2023.
- **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS):** The third technical session delved into the ramifications of the procedural changes introduced by the BNSS, 2023 on investigation of crime by police officers, and infusion of ICT tools which has practical implications for the functioning of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies.
- **Principles of Access of Justice to All:** The existing criminal laws define the State- Citizen relationship based on colonial prejudices and practices, whereas the new Criminal Laws are based on the principles of access of justice to all.

- **Making Country Citizen-centric:** The three laws have hence been enacted to overhaul the criminal justice system in the country to make it citizen-centric.
- **Restorative Justice:** The new Criminal laws have replaced the philosophy of punitive and retributive justice with restorative justice, with focus on rehabilitation and victim-centric approach.
- **Harbinger of New Changes:** The new criminal laws create provisions which are synchronised to the present times; they will also be harbinger for bringing further changes in tune with time and upholding constitutionality in the country.
- **Fulfilling the Aspirations of Viksit Bharat:** The new laws adopt a transformative approach, providing a historic opportunity to work the criminal justice administrative system in the country, fulfilling the aspirations of Viksit Bharat.

Framework for Holistic Development of Trainers in Skilling Ecosystem

On 16th May, 2024, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) released a framework which aims to foster a dynamic workforce in an ever-evolving economy.
- The MSDE's partner, Future Right Skills Network (FRSN) has drafted the "Trainer Development Strategy for the Skilling Ecosystem" which lays out guidelines for the development of the 21st century educator.

About the Framework
2 Frameworks to Study the Trainer Lifecycle
1. The 3Cs (Container, Channel, Creator) of the Educator Identity.
2. Integrated model of trainer development.

Shortage of Trainers
- One of the primary issues plaguing long term training (LTT) is the shortage of trainers.
- Lack of qualified trainers in vocational education stems from the profession's unattractive status, driven by factors like poor incentives, low salaries, and limited career growth.

India Proposes New Digital Competition Law to Regulate Big Tech

Recently, Indian government has proposed the Digital Competition Bill, 2024, aimed at curbing anti-competitive practices by tech giants like Google, Facebook, and Amazon, mirroring the EU's Digital Markets Act.

• The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) is handling the draft.

Predictive Regulation

• **Current Framework**: India currently follows an ex-post antitrust framework under the Competition Act, 2002, addressing market abuse after it occurs.

• **Proposed Change**: The draft Bill introduces a forward-looking, preventive ex-ante framework to pre-empt potential anti-competitive practices before they arise.

• **Rationale**: This shift aims to address the rapid and complex nature of digital markets, reducing delays in regulatory actions that currently disadvantage smaller competitors.

Significant Entities

• **Definition**: Companies providing core digital services like search engines and social media sites could be designated as "Systematically Significant Digital Enterprises" (SSDEs) by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) based on turnover, user base, market influence, etc.

• **Quantitative Criteria**: Includes thresholds such as a minimum turnover of Rs 4,000 crore in India or $30 billion globally, or having at least 1 crore end users.

• **Regulations for SSDEs**: Prohibited from self-preferencing, anti-steering, and restricting third-party applications, with penalties up to 10% of global turnover for violations.

Associate Digital Enterprises

• **Role of Data Sharing**: The Bill recognizes the impact of data sharing between group companies and proposes to designate such entities as Associate Digital Enterprises (ADEs).

• **Obligations**: ADEs would have the same obligations as SSDEs.

Analysis

• **Proactive Measures**: The Bill's ex-ante approach aims to prevent anti-competitive practices before they occur, ensuring a fairer digital marketplace.

• **Potential for Reduced Delays**: By addressing potential abuses proactively, the regulation could enhance market fairness and protect smaller competitors from being edged out by dominant players.

• **Compliance Burdens**: Tech giants may face significant compliance challenges, potentially diverting resources from innovation to regulatory adherence.

• **Arbitrary Decision Making**: Concerns about the broad criteria for SSDE designation and the discretionary power of the CCI could lead to inconsistent or unfair regulatory decisions.

• **Impact on Start-ups**: Potentially restrictive regulations could inadvertently affect smaller businesses that rely on big tech platforms for market access.

Inter-Services Organisations Act for Enhanced Military Integration

The Indian Government has enforced the Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) (Command, Control, and Discipline) Act effective from 10th May 2024, to bolster command, control, and integration within the armed forces.

Legislative Background

• **Passage and Assent**: The ISOs Act was passed during the Monsoon Session of 2023 and received presidential assent on August 15, 2023.

• **Enforcement Date**: The Act comes into effect on May 10, 2024, following its notification in the Gazette.

Key Provisions of the Act

• **Empowerment of Commanders**: Commanders-in-Chief and Officers-in-Command of ISOs are granted control over Service personnel under their command to maintain discipline and administration.

• **Integration and Jointness**: The Act aims to enhance integration and jointness among the armed forces, facilitating expeditious case disposal and avoiding multiple proceedings.

Strategic Context

• **Integrated Theatre Commands**: The Act aligns with the planned reorganisation of the military into integrated theatre commands, a priority under the mandate of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

Analysis

• **Streamlined Administration**: By empowering commanders, the Act is expected to streamline administration and improve disciplinary processes within the armed forces.

• **Avoiding Redundancies**: The provision to avoid multiple proceedings will likely enhance the efficiency of military justice and administrative processes.

• **Foundation for Joint Structures**: The Act lays the groundwork for creating integrated joint structures, promoting synergy among the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

• **Long-term Impact**: Over time, this integration is anticipated to improve operational coordination and effectiveness in joint operations.

• **CDS Mandate**: The enforcement of the ISOs Act supports the CDS's mandate to drive jointness and integration across the services.

• **Enhanced Coordination**: The Act's provisions will likely lead to better coordination and resource utilization among the different branches of the armed forces. ■■

Reports & Indices

Periodic Labour Force Survey

On 15th May, 2024, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released its 22nd quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) bulletin for January-March 2024 (Q4FY24).

Key Findings

- **Unemployment Rate (UR)** in urban areas decreased from 6.8% in January – March 2023 to 6.7% in January – March 2024 for persons of age 15 years and above.
- **Female UR** decreased from 9.2% in January – March 2023 to 8.5% in January – March 2024.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** in urban areas has shown an increasing trend from 48.5% to 50.2% during January – March 2023 to January – March 2024 respectively for persons of age 15 years and above.
- **Female Labour Force Participation Rate** in urban areas rises from 22.7% to 25.6% during January – March 2023 to January – March 2024, reflecting Overall Increasing Trend in LFPR.
- **Increasing Trend in Worker Population Ratio (WPR)** for persons of age 15 years and above went up from 45.2% in January – March 2023 to 46.9% in January – March 2024.
- **Female Worker Population Ratio** in urban areas rises from 20.6% to 23.4% during January – March 2023 to January – March 2024, reflecting Overall Increasing Trend in WPR.

About PLFS

Considering the importance of availability of labour force data at more frequent time intervals, National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) launched Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) in April 2017.

Two-fold Objective

- To estimate the key employment and unemployment indicators (viz. Worker Population Ratio, Labour Force Participation Rate, Unemployment Rate) in the short time interval of three months for the urban areas only in the 'Current Weekly Status' (CWS).
- To estimate employment and unemployment indicators in both 'Usual Status' (ps+ss) and CWS in both rural and urban areas annually.

Indicators

- The PLFS gives estimates of key employment and unemployment Indicators like the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR), Unemployment Rate (UR), etc.

Let's Understand Some Key Terms

- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** LFPR is defined as the percentage of persons in labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population.
- **Worker Population Ratio (WPR):** WPR is defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.
- **Unemployment Rate (UR):** UR is defined as the percentage of persons unemployed among the persons in the labour force.
- **Current Weekly Status (CWS):** The activity status determined on the basis of a reference period of last 7 days preceding the date of survey is known as the current weekly status (CWS) of the person.

World Migration Report, 2024

On 7th May, 2024, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched the World Migration Report 2024.

The Report reveals significant shifts in global migration patterns, including a record number of displaced people and a major increase in international remittances.

Major Findings

Current Global Estimate

- The current global estimate is that there were around 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, which equates to 3.6 percent of the global population.

Gender Gap

- There are currently a larger number of male than female international migrants worldwide and the growing gender gap has increased over the past 20 years.

SOCIETY WATCH

Social Justice

NCBC Recommendations on Reservation Quota for OBCs

On 16th May, 2024, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) recommended an increase in the reservation quota for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in public employment in Punjab and West Bengal.

What is the Reason behind NCBC's Recommendations?

- The Commission's decision comes after a review of the current reservation policies, oral statements, and documentary evidence, aiming to align with the directives laid out by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case.

Recommendations Given by NCBC

For Punjab
- Currently, Punjab allocates 25% of public employment positions to Scheduled Castes and 12% to OBCs, totalling 37% reservation.
- The NCBC has proposed enhancing the OBC quota by an additional 13%, bringing the total OBC reservation in public employment to 25%.
- This adjustment will adhere to the Supreme Court's ceiling of up to 50 per cent reservation for socially and educationally backward classes.

For West Bengal
- In West Bengal, the total reservation for SCs/STs and OBCs for govt. employment and education is 45%.
- NCBC has recommended the West Bengal govt. to increase the quota for OBCs by 5% in government employment and educational institutions.

Indian Society

Nyishi Community

On 21st May, 2024, Kabak Yano, a woman climber from Arunachal Pradesh has etched her name in history by summiting Mount Everest.

- With this remarkable achievement she becomes the 5th woman climber from Arunachal Pradesh and 1st woman from the Nyishi Community to achieve such feat.

Brief Description on Nyishi Community
- The Nyishi are the largest ethnic group in Arunachal Pradesh in north-eastern India.
- In Nishi, their traditional language, 'Nyi' refers to "a man" and the word 'shi' denotes "a being", which combined together refers to a civilized human being.
- Nyishis are divided into five major phratries based on lineage called Hosa (Identification through descendent of same forefather) namely Dopum, Dodum, Dolu, Hagung and Anyia Hari.

Origin
- Nyishi people believe that they are the descendants of Abo Tani - the progeny of the first human being on Earth. That is why Nyishi, Adi, Gallo, Tagin, Apatani, and Mishings of Assam call themselves as Tani Group of Tribes.

Distribution
- They are spread across seven districts of Arunachal Pradesh: Kra Daadi, Kurung Kumey, East Kameng, West Kameng, Papum Pare, parts of Lower Subansiri and Upper Subansiri.
- They also live in the Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur districts of Assam.

Religion
- According to the 2011 Census, Nyishi follows Christianity (31%), Hinduism (29%), and many still follow the indigenous Donyi Polo.
- 'Donyi' means the Sun, and 'Polo' means the Moon, which are revered as the Ayu Donyi (Great Mother Sun) and Atu Polu (Great Father Moon).

Festivals
- The Nyishi people celebrate three major festivals, namely, Boori-Boot (February), Nyokum (February) and Longte (April).

Social Structure
- One striking feature of Nyishi society is that it is neither based on caste system nor stratified into classes, except a loose type of social distinction, which is not determined by birth or occupation.
- In ideological term, the Nyishis consider the women as the source of peace, progress and prosperity.

Welfare Schemes

PM-KUSUM Scheme: Key Achievements & Issues

On 23rd May, 2024, the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) cautioned the public against fake websites for PM- KUSUM scheme and has advised them to not click on any unverified link received via WhatsApp or SMS for registration.

What is PM-KUSUM Scheme?

- Launched in 2019, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) Scheme is aimed at ensuring energy security for farmers in India.
- It also aims to increase the share of installed capacity of electric power from non-fossil-fuel sources to 40% by 2030 as part of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).
- The Scheme has been extended till 31st March, 2026.

Components

- **Component-A:** For setting up of 10,000 MW of decentralized grid connected renewable energy power plants on barren land.
- **Component-B:** For installation of 17.50 lakh stand-alone solar agriculture pumps.
- **Component-C:** For solarisation of 10 lakh grid connected agriculture pumps.

Benefits of PM-KUSUM to Farmers and Economy

Reduced Electricity Expenses

- The adoption of solar pumps (Component B) has helped reducing operational costs for farmers.
- By shifting from traditional grid-based electricity or diesel-powered pumps to solar alternatives, farmers can experience a significant decrease in energy expenses.

Improved Irrigation

- Use of solar pumps has ensured a steady and reliable water supply for irrigation, leading to increased irrigation efficiency.

New Avenues of Income

- By encouraging the installation of solar power plants on barren or fallow lands (Component A) and promoting decentralized solar power generation, PM-KUSUM opens up new avenues of income for rural farmers.

Achieving Environmental Goals

- The widespread adoption of solar technology reduces the reliance on non-renewable energy sources, contributing to a decrease in carbon emissions.

- This aligns with global environmental goals and positions India as a responsible and sustainable player on the international stage.

Achievements (As on 30th April, 2024)	
Component A • **Total Sanctioned Solar Capacity:** 4766 MW • **Total Installed Solar Capacity:** 168.28 MW	**Component B** • **Total Sanctioned Standalone Pumps Installed:** 1294787 • **Total Installed Standalone Pumps:** 331648
Component C • **Total Sanctioned Individual Pump Solar (IPS):** 161204 • **Total Installed Individual Pump Solar (IPS):** 2574 • **Total Sanctioned Feeder Level Solar (FLS):** 3376466 • **Total Installed Feeder Level Solar (FLS):** 9603	**Total Solar Generation (MWh)** • **Component A:** 0 • **Component B:** 340790.45 • **Component C:** 0

Issues Involved

- **Funds:** The availability of low-cost financing for farmers and the state's share of funds is a significant challenge in implementation.
- **Availability and Quality of Solar Equipment:** The availability and quality of solar equipment, especially under the domestic content requirement (DCR) norms, is still a matter of concern.
- **Regulatory Issues:** Many state electricity regulatory commissions (SERCs) usually do not favour promoting distributed solar generation due to its impact on their revenue and existing power purchase agreements (PPAs) with conventional generators.

Conclusion

PM-KUSUM has in important role to play in transforming India's agricultural landscape and renewable energy sector. By providing financial support to farmers, the scheme facilitates enhanced irrigation, leading to increased agricultural productivity and income. Further, as a comprehensive and forward-thinking initiative, the Scheme serves as a significant step towards achieving India's clean energy goals while uplifting the livelihoods of farmers and fostering a greener and more prosperous future for the nation. The scheme is more than just an agricultural enhancement project; it's a significant step towards achieving energy security, reducing carbon footprints, and empowering farmers. ∎∎

Asia-Pacific Regional Register
- Project Udbhav: Army's Initiative to Rediscover Heritage
- Saga Dawa Festival Celebrated in Sikkim
- Gangamma Jatara Festival

Architectural Heritage
- Hampi's Virupaksha Temple

Historical Findings
- First Evidence of Rock Art Found in Mangaluru City
- Sri Madhava Perumal Temple Inscriptions

Art & Culture
- Indian Literary Works included in UNESCO's MoW

Art & Culture

Indian Literary Works included in UNESCO's MoW Asia-Pacific Regional Register

Recently, three Indian literary works- Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sahṛdayaloka-Locana, were added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register.
- The inclusion of these texts took place during the 10th meeting of the Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP) held from 7-8 May, 2024, in Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia).

Brief Descriptions

1. Ramcharitmanas
- ✓ It was written by Tulsidas in the 16th century A.D in the Awadhi dialect.
- ✓ It is different from Ramayana which was written by Sage Valmiki in Sanskrit language.
- ✓ The Ramcharitmanas is written in Chaupai form.

2. Panchatantra
- ✓ It is one of the oldest collections of fables in the world, composed in Sanskrit. Vishnu Sharma, the court scholar of King Amar Shakti of Mahilaropya, is credited with compiling it.
- ✓ It was probably composed around 300 BCE.
- ✓ It was translated into Pahlavi (Iranian language) in 550 BCE.

3. Sahrdayaloka-Locana
- ✓ It was composed by Acharya Anandvardhan in Sanskrit. He lived in Kashmir during the second half of the 10th century and the first half of the 11th century AD.

Important Facts

MOWCAP
- MOWCAP was set up in 1998 during its first MOWCAP General Meeting held in Beijing, China.

- It brings together people from the Asia and the Pacific region to pursue the Memory of the World (MoW) Program's objectives.
- MOWCAP embraces the Asia Pacific region of 43 countries – one of five UNESCO regions across the globe.

Memory of the World (MoW) Programme
- Launched in 1992, it is an international cooperation strategy aimed at safeguarding, protecting and facilitating access to and the use of documentary heritage, especially heritage that is rare and endangered.
- The programme is administered by a three-tier committee structure: international, regional and national.
- The basic purpose of the committee is to ensure that member states are able to establish a mechanism at the national and regional levels in order to facilitate the final selection of the projects for the programme.

Project Udbhav: Army's Initiative to Rediscover Heritage

On 21st May, 2024, as part of 'Project Udbhav', a seminar and exhibition on 'Historical Patterns of Indian Strategic Culture' was held at the National Museum in New Delhi.
- Army Chief General said that as part of the Project 'Udbhav' the Indian Army has investigated the great battles of the Mahabharata, the valiant deeds of notable military leaders, and India's rich statecraft legacy to broaden the country's perspective in the defence sector.

What is Project Udbhav?
- Launched in October, 2023, Project Udbhav delved deep into ancient Indian texts such as Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and Arthashastra.
- Project Udbhav (meaning evolution) is a significant collaboration between the Indian Army and the United Service Institution of India (USI).
- The project aims to promote indigenous discourse in the Army by integrating India's ancient strategic acumen into the contemporary military domain with a focus on making the force future-ready.
- The initiative also examines the epic battles of the Mahabharata and the strategic brilliance of historical empires like the Mauryas, Guptas, and Marathas.

Banking & Finance

- India Volatility Index (VIX)
- Loan-to-Value Ratios in Gold Loans
- SEBI Amends BRSR Framework
- Delisting of Shares

- Government Bond Buyback
- FPIs allowed to Issue P-Notes
- Reduction in Government Treasury Bill Sales
- SEBI's New Framework for Regulating Stock Market
- Inverted Duty Structure
- RBI's Framework to Strengthen Project Financing

Infrastructure

- Insurance Surety Bonds in National Highway Contracts

Industry

- National Workshop on "Forging Sustainability in the Steel Sector"
- PM Gati Shakti to Aid in Social Security Push
- Aggregate Measurement of Support

Banking & Finance

India Volatility Index (VIX)

On 14th May, 2024, India VIX, which is an indicator of the market's expectation of volatility, surged past the 21 mark.

What is Volatility Index?

- Also known as the 'Fear Index', it is a measure of the market's expectation of volatility over the near term.
- Volatility is often described as the 'rate and magnitude of changes in prices' and in finance often referred to as risk.
- The Chicago Board of Options Exchange (CBOE) was the first to introduce the volatility index for the US markets in 1993 based on S&P 100 Index option prices.
- Generally VIX levels in excess of 30 are considered to signal heightened volatility from increased uncertainty, risk and investor fear.
- Levels below 20, however, correspond to more stable, less stressful periods.

What does it Measure?

- The Volatility Index is a measure of the amount by which an underlying index is expected to fluctuate in the near term, (calculated as annualised volatility, denoted in percentage e.g. 20 per cent) based on the order book of the underlying index options.
- Usually, during periods of market volatility, the market moves steeply up or down and the volatility index tends to rise.
- As volatility subsides, the Volatility Index declines.

Benefits

- Since its inception, it has become an indicator of how market practitioners think about volatility.
- Investors use it to gauge market volatility and base their investment decisions accordingly.

About India VIX

- India VIX is a volatility index based on the index option prices of NIFTY.
- It is computed using the best bid and ask quotes of the out-of-the-money near and mid-month
- NIFTY option contracts which are traded on the Futures & Options (F&O) segment of NSE.
- India VIX indicates the investor's perception of the market's volatility in the near term.
- The index depicts the expected market volatility over the next 30 calendar days i.e. higher the India VIX values, higher the expected volatility and vice-versa.

Applications of India VIX in the Indian Market

- Higher India VIX values may indicate greater expected market volatility, leading to higher option premiums.
- Traders and investors may use this information when buying or selling options.

Loan-to-Value Ratios in Gold Loans

On 16th May, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a stern directive to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) involved in gold loans, urging them to adhere strictly to regulations concerning loan-to-value ratios, auction procedures, and cash disbursements.

- The RBI has urged NBFCs to conduct transparent auctions in cases of non-payment, ensuring that individuals whose gold is being auctioned are informed and can participate physically at the taluka level.

Understanding Loan-to-Value Ratios (LTV)

- It is the ratio of the loan amount sanctioned to the value of the gold deposited as collateral.
- The value of the gold used as collateral is based solely on the actual weight of the gold, not the purchase price.
- **Exclusions:** The weight of the stones and the making charge of the jewellery are excluded from these calculations.
- **Calculation:** LTV = Loan amount / Market value of the collateral

- ISRO Successfully Tests 3D-Printed Rocket Engine
- JWST Unveils Farthest Black Hole Merger

Defence Technology

- FWD-200B: Indigenous Bomber UAV
- DRDO Successfully Tests SMART System

New Technology & Innovations

- Contactless Voltage Measurement Device
- China's HEPS Synchrotron
- Iron-Based Cathode Breakthrough for Cheaper Batteries
- Revolutionary Nanopatterning Technique Developed
- Goldene: One-Atom Thick Gold Sheet

Space Science

- NASA Launches PREFIRE Mission
- Recent Solar Storm: ISRO's Findings

Space Science

NASA Launches PREFIRE Mission

On 25th May, 2024, NASA successfully launched the first of two climate satellites, initiating the PREFIRE (Polar Radiant Energy in the Far-InfraRed Experiment) mission, aimed at studying heat emissions from Earth's poles.

Mission Objectives

- PREFIRE aims to study heat emissions from Earth's poles using two shoebox-size CubeSats.
- These CubeSats were launched aboard Rocket Lab's Electron rocket from Launch Complex 1 in Mahia, New Zealand.
- The mission's primary goal is to collect data to aid researchers in predicting the impact of climate change on Earth's ice, seas and weather patterns.

Future Plans and Data Processing

- The second PREFIRE CubeSat is scheduled for launch on a separate Electron rocket from the same launch complex.
- After a 30-day checkout period to ensure functionality, the mission is slated to operate for 10 months.
- The mission focuses on Earth's energy budget, crucial for determining the planet's temperature and climate, particularly in regions like the Arctic and Antarctica.
- The CubeSats are equipped with thermal infrared spectrometers, downsized to fit the satellite dimensions while maintaining measurement accuracy.

Significance

- The mission will provide new insights into far-infrared wavelengths emitted from Earth's poles, aiding climate and weather modelling efforts.

Recent Solar Storm: ISRO's Findings

On 13th May, 2024, following a potent solar storm striking Earth (on 10th May), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) unveiled its findings from various perspectives, including those from its solar mission Aditya-L1. The event marked the most intense solar storm in decades.

- Due to India's lower latitude, **the country experienced fewer disruptions** compared to regions in the Pacific and American sectors, where the ionosphere was highly turbulent during the storm's peak on May 11.
- Aditya-L1, India's maiden solar mission, is equipped with seven payloads tailored for comprehensive solar studies.
- Instruments like **SWIS and STEPS detected enhancements in alpha particle** and proton flux of the solar wind, signalling the solar eruptive event.
- The X-ray payloads, SoLEXS and HEL1OS, observed multiple X- and M-class flares during the event, while the in-situ magnetometer (MAG) captured the events as it passed the L1 point.
- Despite its primary mission not reaching fruition, Chandrayaan-2's orbiter, still operational, recorded the signatures of solar eruptions from lunar polar orbit.

The onboard XSM instrument autonomously identified large solar flares and monitored local high-energy particle concentrations, providing valuable data about the solar storm's impact.

SOLAR STORMS

- Solar storms are intense bursts of energy and particles ejected from the Sun's surface into space.
- These storms can cause disturbances in Earth's magnetosphere, leading to phenomena like geomagnetic storms and auroras.
- Solar storms vary in intensity, with the most severe ones posing risks to satellite communications, power grids, and astronauts in space.
- Monitoring and predicting solar storms are crucial for mitigating their potential impact on technological infrastructure and space missions.

ISRO Successfully Tests 3D-Printed Rocket Engine

On 9th May, 2024, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully tested a liquid rocket engine, PS4, manufactured using 3D printing technology, a first for the agency.

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change
- Severe Coral Bleaching in Lakshadweep Sea
- Venezuela Loses its Last Glacier

Biodiversity
- New Spider Species Discovered in Western Ghats
- Spread of Invasive Catfish in Eastern Ghats
- Red Colobus: Guardians of Africa's Forests
- Tiger Translocation Initiative in Sahyadri Tiger Reserve

Sustainable Development
- Five Nations Unite to Combat Mercury Pollution in Healthcare

Disaster Management
- Half of the World's Rangelands Degraded: UNCCD Report

Sustainable Development

Five Nations Unite to Combat Mercury Pollution in Healthcare

On 14th May, 2024, the governments of Albania, Burkina Faso, India, Montenegro, and Uganda initiated a $134-million project aimed at eliminating mercury usage in medical devices, marking a crucial step towards environmental and public health protection.

Mercury in Medical Devices: A Silent Threat
- Mercury, a toxic metal, has long been utilized in medical thermometers and sphygmomanometers, posing significant risks to human health and the environment.
- While intact, these devices are harmless; however, when broken or discarded, they release mercury vapor, endangering healthcare workers, patients, and ecosystems.

Project Overview
- Led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the project will be executed by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- It aims to develop and implement strategies to eliminate mercury-containing medical devices.
- The project will focus on stopping the import, export, and manufacture of such devices, promoting mercury-free alternatives, and improving medical waste management.
- The project aligns with WHO recommendations and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, aiming to bring each participating country in line with international best practices.

Promoting Sustainable Alternatives
- The project will educate procurement officers, manufacturers, and the public on the efficacy and affordability of mercury-free alternatives, demonstrating that certain digital thermometers can be cheaper and equally accurate.

Impact and Goals
- The initiative aims to phase out mercury-added devices at a rate of 20 percent per year, reducing spillages by 23,350 kg and positively impacting over 1.8 million people.
- By embracing sustainable practices, the healthcare sector will further demonstrate its leadership role in promoting sustainability and public health.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)
- The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.
- It functions as a family of funds dedicated to addressing issues such as biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, and the degradation of land and ocean health.
- The GEF has a unique governing structure that includes an Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat, 18 agencies, a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, and the Evaluation Office.
- It provides financial assistance for five major international conventions:
  » The Minamata Convention on Mercury (signed in 2013 and entered into force in 2017).
  » The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) (adopted in 2001 and entered into force in 2004).
  » The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) (entered into force in 1993).
  » The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) (adopted in 1994).
  » The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (signed in 1992 and entered into force in 1994).

- India-Iran: 10-Year Deal for Chabahar Port Operations
- Nepal Adds Disputed Territory to Currency Note

World Issues

- Norway, Ireland and Spain Formally Recognize a Palestinian State
- EU's AI Act Set to Enforce Landmark Rules
- Vietnam Urges US to Reclassify Economy
- Russia and China Reaffirm "No-Limits" Partnership

International Treaties

- NHRC Faces Accreditation Deferral by UN-Affiliated Body

International Relations

- India, UK Reaffirm Commitment to Free Trade Agreement

International Relations

India, UK Reaffirm Commitment to Free Trade Agreement

On 17ᵗʰ May, 2024, during the annual UK-India Strategic Dialogue in London, India and Britain reiterated their dedication to finalizing a beneficial free trade agreement.

Key Points

- **Progress on 2030 Roadmap:** India and the UK reviewed advancements on the 2030 Roadmap, focusing on collaborative efforts in various areas.
- The 2030 Roadmap, established in 2021, outlines joint commitments in health, climate, trade, education, science, technology, and defence.
- **FTA Negotiations:** Both nations committed to ongoing negotiations for a mutually advantageous free trade agreement, emphasizing enhanced defence cooperation alongside.
- **Defence Capability Cooperation:** Discussions included ongoing and future collaborations in defence capability, underscoring avenues for deeper engagement in this sector.
- **High-Level Meetings:** Indian Foreign Secretary engaged in discussions with UK officials, including Minister of State for Defence Procurement, to explore defence cooperation opportunities.
- **Commitment to Cooperation:** UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Minister for South Asia emphasized commitment to strengthening ties with India, highlighting mutual interests in trade, defence, climate, and health.
- **FTA Talks Status:** India and the UK have conducted 13 rounds of FTA talks, with discussions ongoing in areas like goods, services, investments, and intellectual property rights.

India-Iran: 10-Year Deal for Chabahar Port Operations

On 13ᵗʰ May, 2024, India and Iran signed a decade-long contract to operate the Chabahar port, marking a significant step in bolstering regional connectivity and trade.

Contract Details

- **Parties Involved:** India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) and Ports & Maritime Organisation of Iran (PMO).
- **Investment:** IPGL to invest $120 million for port equipment and operation.
- **Credit Line:** India offers a credit line equivalent to $250 million for infrastructure projects.

Historical Context

- **Initial Development:** The port's strategic significance was realized during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s.
- **Early Agreements:** Discussions between India and Iran date back to 2002, with a strategic cooperation roadmap signed in 2003.

Strategic Importance

- **Location:** Chabahar port is in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, providing strategic access to the Indian Ocean.
- **Proximity:** Closest Iranian port to India, offering secure access for large cargo ships.

Challenges and Delays

- **US Relations:** The project faced delays due to India's growing relationship with the US and its stance on Iran.
- **Slow Progress:** Despite India's investment in regional infrastructure, progress on the port was slow until the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Recent Developments

- **Operational Milestones:** IPGL has been operating the port since December 2018, handling substantial cargo volumes.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** The port has facilitated the supply of aid, including during the Covid-19 pandemic.

UPSC CSE Mains Special

International Relations

India & its Neighbours

India-Sri Lanka: Major Issues and their Resolution

India and Sri Lanka enjoy a vibrant and growing economic and commercial partnership, which has witnessed considerable expansion over the years. India has traditionally been among Sri Lanka's largest trade partners and Sri Lanka remains among the largest trade partners of India in the SAARC.

Major issues affecting India-Sri Lanka Relations

- **Fisheries Dispute:** The Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar have been hotspots for fishing rights disputes. Indian fishermen often face arrest by Sri Lankan authorities for crossing maritime boundaries. This has led to frequent tensions and incidents involving fishermen from both countries.
- **Katchatheevu Island Dispute:** The ownership of Katchatheevu Island, located in the Palk Strait, has been contentious. A 1974 agreement recognized the island as Sri Lankan territory but allowed Indian fishermen to fish nearby, dry their nets, and visit a Catholic shrine. A 1976 pact further defined maritime boundaries, restricting fishing without explicit permission.
- **Border Security and Smuggling:** The porous maritime boundary raises concerns about border security and smuggling of goods, narcotics, and illegal immigrants.
- **Tamil Ethnic Issue:** The ethnic conflict involving the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka is a sensitive topic, with India concerned about the welfare and rights of the Tamil community.
- **China's Influence:** India is wary of China's growing economic and strategic presence in Sri Lanka, seeing it as a challenge to its regional interests.
- **Notable Chinese Projects:** A 2023 agreement with the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of China to cover about USD 4.2 billion of Sri Lanka's debt. Investments in the South Asia Commercial and Logistics Hub (SACL) at Colombo Port.

What needs to be done to resolve the issues?

- **Fishermen Disputes:** Both countries need to establish a more robust mechanism for maritime boundary enforcement and sustainable fishing practices. Joint patrolling and development of alternative livelihoods for fishermen could reduce the tension.
- **Ethnic Tensions:** India has consistently advocated for the protection of Tamil rights in Sri Lanka. Continued diplomatic engagement, support for reconciliation processes, and promoting devolution of powers within Sri Lanka are essential steps. Collaboration on post-conflict reconstruction in Tamil-majority areas can also help.
- **China's Influence:** India can counterbalance China's influence by deepening its economic and security cooperation with Sri Lanka. Recent initiatives, such as India's investment in Sri Lankan infrastructure and renewable energy projects, are steps in the right direction.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Enhancing economic integration through agreements like the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) can boost bilateral trade. Promoting joint ventures, particularly in technology and services, can create more balanced economic ties.
- **Development Assistance:** Ensuring transparency and efficiency in the implementation of development projects is critical. Joint monitoring committees can oversee project execution, ensuring that aid meets the intended developmental goals.

IMPORTANCE OF INDIA-SRI LANKA RELATIONS	
Strategic Location	Military Significance
Sri Lanka's position in the Indian Ocean region makes it a crucial hub for India's security interests.	Sri Lanka's proximity is strategically important for the Indian Navy, facilitating the movement of naval fleets between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
Economic Ties	**Geopolitical Importance**
India is a key trading partner for Sri Lanka. Between Feb 2023 - Feb 2024 the exports of India have increased by $334M (110%) from $302M to $636M, while imports decreased by $-15.4M (-12%) from $128M to $113M.	Sri Lanka's location is vital for India's Indian Ocean strategy and for fostering partnerships aimed at establishing an Indian Ocean Rim Community.

STATE WATCH

In this section, we have briefly presented the schemes and programs started by various states, meetings and conferences organized at the state level, latest reports released by the state governments and other major developments from which questions are often asked in state-specific competitive examinations.

Uttar Pradesh

UP's 1st Eco-friendly Aroma Cluster

- The CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) has launched Uttar Pradesh's first 'Sustainable Aroma Cluster' in the Bhagauli locality of Barabanki district.
- The cluster has been developed on the land of 30 farmers by cultivating aromatic plants in an eco-friendly manner.
- It aims at zero-carbon emission by adopting sustainable practices in agriculture.
- CIMAP has planted a high-yielding mint variety (CIM-Unnati) in the cluster which is resistant to biotic stress, including plant pests and diseases and tolerant to abiotic stresses, including drought, untimely rain, salinity, heat, cold and heavy metals.

BHISHM Portable Hospital Cubes

- Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully tested its portable hospital BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita and Maitri) wherein portable cubes were airdropped at Malpura dropping zone in Agra.
- It is equipped with several innovative tools designed to enhance disaster response and medical support during emergencies.
- It integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics to facilitate coordination, real-time monitoring and management of medical services.
- BHISHM has an operation theatre, ventilator, x-ray machine, conducting blood tests and other facilities.

Assam

Disaster Reporting and Information Management System (DRIMS)

- Recently, Assam launched the Disaster Reporting and Information Management System (DRIMS), bolstering its disaster management capabilities.
- An initiative of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority, DRIMS is a digital platform that aims to streamline the reporting and assessment of damages caused by various disasters, enabling prompt disbursal of aid to those affected.

- Developed in collaboration with UNICEF, DRIMS efficiently captures critical impact indicators of damages during disasters.
- DRIMS also tracks damages to crops, livestock, and other assets, facilitating swift post-disaster restoration efforts.

Uttarakhand

Pirul Lao Paise Pao Campaign

- Uttarakhand government has launched 'Pirul Lao-Paise Pao' campaign to prevent forest fires in state.
- Under the campaign, the local youth and villagers will collect dry Pirul (Pine tree leaves) in the forest and take them to the designated Pirul collection centre. They will be paid Rs 50 per kg, which will be directly transferred to the bank accounts.
- Pine leaves, growing up to 20-25 centimetres, are highly inflammable when dry. The pine corn, called Chaita in the local language, is a major cause of spreading fire in the forest.

'Nakshatra Sabha'

- The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board has partnered with Starscapes, an astro-tourism company, to launch 'Nakshatra Sabha' - India's first-ever annual campaign dedicated exclusively to promoting astro-tourism.
- Key highlights of the Nakshatra Sabha include stargazing through specialized equipment, expert talks on astro-tourism, an astrophotography contest, and special solar observations in alignment with the sun's peak activity and the active Aditya mission.
- Scheduled to commence in early June at George Everest, Mussoorie, Nakshatra Sabha will span until mid-2025, offering a series of immersive events at various locations throughout Uttarakhand.
- This will cover dark sky potential sites in the districts of Uttarkashi, Pithoragarh, Nainital, and Chamoli.

Manipur

'School on Wheels' Initiative

- The 'School on Wheels' programme was recently launched in Manipur.

News Snippets

Here we have presented those contemporary developments which do not require detailed study; rather it is sufficient to read them in brief while preparing for the examination. Instead of including such developments in the initial regular columns of the magazine, we have presented them separately in this section.

India in Brief

Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)

- On 11th May, 2024, Secretary, Ministry of Mines inaugurated the Registered Office of Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL) at Sansad Marg, New Delhi.
- KABIL is a Joint Venture Company among the three Government Enterprises: National Aluminium Company Ltd. (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) and Mineral Exploration & Consultancy Limited (MECL), in the ratio of 40:30:30, under the aegis of Ministry of Mines.
- It was incorporated on 08.08.2019 under the companies Act 2013.
- Mandate of KABIL is to identify, explore, acquire, develop, mine, process, procure strategic minerals outside India for supplying primarily to India.

D-voters

- On 7th May, 2024, Chief Minister of Assam asserted that the issue of 'Doubtful' (D) voters of Bengali-Hindus of the state will be resolved in six months after the elections.
- D-voters are those who could not provide evidence in favour of their Indian nationality.
- The concept of D-voters was introduced in Assam in 1997 by the Election Commission. It does not exist anywhere else in India.
- Neither the Citizenship Act of 1955 nor the Citizenship Rules of 2003 provide clear definitions for "doubtful voter" or "doubtful citizenship."
- While 'D' voters continue to remain on Assam's electoral roll, they cannot vote in an election unless their case is decided by a Foreigners' Tribunal.

National Savings Certificate (NSC) Scheme

- On 14th May, 2024, Prime Minister disclosed his investments in the National Savings Certificate (NSC) scheme.
- NSC is a fixed-income investment scheme introduced by the Government of India. It is designed to encourage investment and tax savings, especially for low- to mid-income investors.
- NSCs can be purchased at any post office. Only individual Indian citizens who are residents of India are eligible to invest in the scheme.
- There is no age restriction for purchasing NSC. Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), trusts, and private and public limited companies cannot invest.
- The investment matures after five years. There is no maximum limit on the amount that can be invested.

ECI's Guidelines for Ethical Social Media Use in Campaigns

- On 6th May, 2024, ECI issued guidelines to regulate the use of social media platforms by political parties and their representatives during election campaigning.
- Parties are required to promptly remove any fake content from their platforms within three hours of notification.
- The advisory stressed adherence to the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, the Indian Penal Code, and the Representation of the People Acts of 1950 and 1951.
- Parties were instructed to avoid publishing deepfake audio and videos, spreading misinformation, posting derogatory content towards women, using children in campaigns, and depicting violence or harm to animals.

NTIPRIT

- A two-day workshop on "Bridging the Standardization Gap" on 15th and 16th May, 2024, was hosted by the National Telecommunications Institute for Policy Research, Innovation and Training (NTIPRIT), Ghaziabad.
- NTIPRIT was established in the year 2010 as National Telecom Academy, the telecom training institute of Department of Telecommunications.
- Subsequently, in year 2011, the mandate of institute was expanded by bringing into the activities related to Policy Research and Innovations under its ambit and the institute was rechristened as National Telecommunications Institute for Policy Research, Innovations & Training (NTIPRIT).
- The institute is the focal point of training activities for all technical cadres in Ministry of Communications.

News Notes

In general competitive examinations, a large number of questions are asked from appointments, awards, military exercises, summits & conferences, important days, etc. for which coverage of current events in a concise form is sufficient. Keeping this in mind, we have presented these contemporary developments in a brief form in this section.

Persons in News	
Person	**Brief Description**
Md. Golam Sarwar	• From 11-15 May 2024, Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), H.E. Mr. Md. Golam Sarwar paid an official visit to India and interacted with the authorities of the Government of India on issues of cooperation in SAARC. • It was SAARC Secretary General's first official visit to any of the Member States of SAARC.
Kareena Kapoor Khan	• On 4th May 2024, Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan joined the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) India as National Ambassador, advocating for children's rights in early childhood development, health, education, and gender equality.

Appointments	
Person	**Brief Description**
Idashisha Nongrang	• Meghalaya has made history by appointing Idashisha Nongrang as the state's first woman Director General of Police (DGP).
R. Lakshmi Kanth Rao	• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed Shri R. Lakshmi Kanth Rao as Executive Director (ED) with effect from May 09, 2024.
Kapil Sibal	• He has been elected as the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).This marks his fourth term serving as the president of the prestigious lawyers' body, succeeding senior advocate Adish C. Aggarwala.

Obituary	
Person	**Brief Description**
Kamla Beniwal	• She was Rajasthan's first woman minister in 1954. She served as deputy CM or Rajasthan in 2003. She held the post of Governor in three states (Mizoram, Gujarat, and Tripura).
Alice Munro	• She was a Canadian short story writer and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013. She also won Man Booker International Prize in 2009.
Malti Joshi	• She was a novelist, essayist and writer, who wrote primarily in the Hindi and Marathi languages. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2018. • Some of her books in Hindi and Marathi include "Madhayantar," "Pataakshep," "Parajay," "Ek Ghar Sapno Ka," "Woh Tera Ghar, Ye Mera Ghar," and the novel "Aurat Ek Raat Hai."
N Vaghul	• Narayanan Vaghul, a doyen of Indian banking. He was instrumental in bringing up ICICI Bank. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2009.
Ebrahim Raisi	• Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi was killed in a helicopter crash near the Azerbaijan-Iranian border.
Birubala Rabha	• She was an activist from Assam who campaigned against witch-hunting in India. She ran an organisation called Mission Birubala which spreads awareness against witch hunting. She was awarded Padma Shri, in 2021.
Surjit Patar	• He was a Punjabi language writer and poet. He was awarded with Punjab Sahitya Akademi Award (1979), Sahitya Akademi Award (1993), Saraswati Samman (2009), Padma Shri (2012), etc.

GS PT Pointers

Jharkhand Combined Civil Services Prelims Exam 2023 Solved Paper

In the GS PT Pointers section, we have provided the General Studies (Set-B) solved paper of Jharkhand Combined Civil Services Prelims Exam 2023 recently conducted by Jharkhand Public Service Commission. The explanations provided herein incorporate important facts related to the topics of the questions. We will publish content related to similar examinations in future. We hope you find the content useful in your preparation for upcoming examinations.

1. **Which of the following pairs is correctly matched?**
   Nobel Prize Winner (2022)   Area of Prize
   (a) Svante Paabo   -   Physics
   (b) Alain Aspect   -   Chemistry
   (c) Morten Deldal   -   Economic Sciences
   (d) Annie Ernaux   -   Literature

2. **In which of the following cities was the Global Buddhist Summit held on 20th April, 2023?**
   (a) Delhi   (b) Kathmandu
   (c) Kuala Lumpur   (d) Jakarta

3. **Which of the following countries has awarded the highest civilian award 'The Grand Order of the Chain of Yellow Star' to the President of India during her visit in 2023?**
   (a) Egypt   (b) Malaysia
   (c) Indonesia   (d) Surinam

4. **Who is the author of the book The Coalition Years?**
   (a) Shashi Tharoor   (b) Pranab Mukherjee
   (c) Ravi Mathur   (d) M.M. Singh

5. **With reference to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which of the following statements is/are correct?**
   I.   It has 42 member nations.
   II. Its Headquarters is located at Brussels.
   Select the correct answer from the options given below:
   (a) Only I   (b) Only II
   (c) Both I and II   (d) Neither I nor II

6. **With reference to G20 (Group of 20), which of the following statements is/are correct?**
   I.   India took over the G20 presidency from Australia on 1st December, 2022.
   II. The first G20 Summit was held in Washington in 2008.
   Select the correct answer using the options given below:
   (a) Only I   (b) Only II
   (c) Both I and II   (d) Neither I nor II

7. **Which of the following Articles of the Constitution of India talks about the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)?**
   (a) Article 43   (b) Article 44
   (c) Article 45   (d) Article 46

8. **In 2023, which US State recently declared holiday in public schools on the festival of Diwali?**
   (a) Los Angeles   (b) Boston
   (c) Jersey   (d) New York

9. **Which of the following pairs is correctly matched?**
   (a) Shri Anand Kumar   -   Science and Engineering
   (b) Shri Moolchand Lodha - Literature & Education
   (c) Shri Janum Singh Soy - Public Affairs
   (d) Shri P. Kalyansundaram- Social Work

10. **In which of the following States has the world's largest railway platform been inaugurated?**
    (a) Karnataka   (b) Madhya Pradesh
    (c) Rajasthan   (d) Delhi

11. **Who was the Chief Guest for the Republic Day in 2023?**
    (a) President of Afghanistan
    (b) President of Egypt
    (c) President of UAE
    (d) President of Indonesia

12. **The Indian Government has launched a rescue operation in Sudan to evacuate its stranded citizens. This operation is known as**
    (a) Operation Devi Shakti
    (b) Operation Ganga
    (c) Operation Addis Ababa
    (d) Operation Kaveri

13. **Which architect has designed the new building of the Indian Parliament?**
    (a) Ravi Modi
    (b) Bimal Roy
    (c) Bimal Patel
    (d) D. Radhakrishnan

Exam Pointers

Based on May 2024 Issues of Yojana, Kurukshetra and Science Reporter

In this section, we are presenting a compilation of exam-oriented study material sourced from various magazines published by the Government of India in May 2024. It has been prepared keeping in mind the exam-specific needs of the candidates

Weaves of India

Vibrant World of Weaves: Regional Diversity in Indian Weaving

- The **journey of weaving in modern India** is considered to have started from the south-west state of Kerala.
- Before the advent of chemical dyes in the late **19th century, 'white colour'** was the basis of weaving in all parts of India.
- **Pochampally Ikat** saree is believed to be originated from Nalgonda district of Telangana state. It uses traditional geometry and abstract patterns.
- **The cabin crew of 'Air India'** has access to specially designed Pochampally silk sarees.
- **Pochampally Saree** received the status of 'Intellectual Property Rights Protection' or 'Geographical Indication' in the year 2005.
- **Paithani saree** is named after the city of Paithan located in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra state. It is being produced here for more than 2000 years.
- The **motifs used** in it mostly include traditional vines, flower and fruit shapes and stylized figures of birds.
- The **main feature of Paithani saree** is that no mechanical means are used to prepare the design.
- **Patan Patola** is a double ikat saree originating from the Patan region of Gujarat. In this, the warp and weft are tied and dyed according to the exact count of threads before weaving on a hanging hand loom.
- **Patola silk sarees** are known for their diverse colours, bold geometry or designs and diverse features.
- Inspired by the temples of **Kanchipuram** (Tamil Nadu), the sarees are exquisitely woven from mulberry silk. In this, solid coloured borders and pallavas are created using intricate **'Korav' and 'Petni'** techniques.
- **Pure brocade embellishments** and charming motifs of creatures like peacock, elephant and horse can be seen in exquisite Kanchipuram sarees. These are complemented with Rudraksham, Thalampurikku and Mayil Chakra designs.
- **Kota Doria cloth** is named after its place of origin Kota, Rajasthan. This fabric is a unique blend of cotton and silk in square check pattern.
- **'Tanchoi weaving'** as a weaving technique involves creating a self-design covering the fabric. 'Tanchoi technique' is famous for its small and intricate patterns.
- **Kunbi saree** is the traditional dress of Goa. These were originally colored red and woven in small and large checks. The dye used in Kunbi saree was made from iron ore, rice starch and vinegar.
- **Pashmina shawls** are a fine type of shawls spun from cashmere wool. This special wool is obtained from the 'Changthangi Goat' (*Capra aegagrus hircus*), native to the high plateau of Ladakh.
- **Jamdani** is a brightly patterned, sheer cotton fabric, traditionally woven on handlooms by **craftsmen and apprentices around Dhaka**.
- **Jamdani is one of the finest muslin fabrics** of Bengal. The historical production of Jamdani was patronized by royal warrants of the Mughal emperors. It is one of the most time and labour-intensive forms of handloom weaving.
- **Maheshwar city of Madhya Pradesh** is considered to be the birthplace of 'Maheshwari Sarees'. Their unique reversible borders are made with a two-way weave called 'Bugdi'. The saree can be worn from both the sides.
- **Mekhala saree** is a popular in Assam. It wrapped around the lower part of the body in a cylindrical form like a classic lehenga. Beautiful silk and georgette are used in Mekhala saree.

Collaboration and Cross-cultural Influences

- **Historically,** evidence of weaving in India dates back to the ancient **Indus Valley Civilization** (3300–1300 BC). Evidence of cotton cultivation and cloth production has been found at many sites of this civilization.
- **The Mughal period** (1526-1857 AD) saw the development of luxurious textiles like brocade, muslin and velvet.
- **European influence** led to an increase in global demand for cotton and silk textiles, leading to the establishment of a trade network.
- European countries introduced **mechanized looms and synthetic dyes** into the field of weaving.
- **Banarasi silk weave** is known for its grandeur, beauty and intricate patterns. Clothes made from it are used during festivals and auspicious occasions.

Terms in Vogue

In the last few years, the trend of asking questions from popular terminologies has increased in competitive examinations. Accordingly, there is a need for special study of the terms discussed in the contemporary context. Keeping this in mind, we are presenting relevant content in this section.
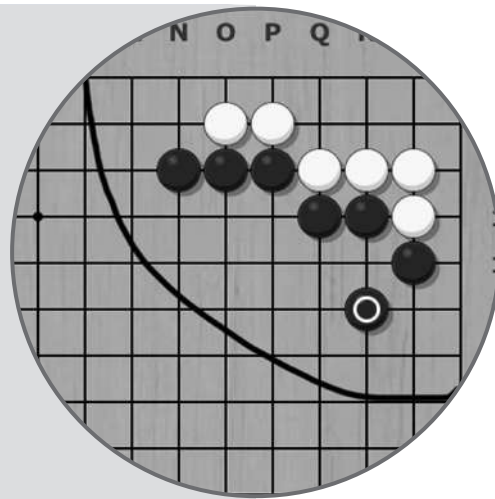
Keeling Curve

➤ Global average concentration of carbon dioxide (CO_2) was 4.7 parts per million (ppm) in March 2024 (higher than March 2023), signifying large spike in Keeling Curve.
➤ The Keeling Curve is a measurement of the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere made atop Hawaii's Mauna Loa since 1958.
➤ It is the longest-running such measurement in the world.
➤ The Scripps CO_2 program was initiated in 1956 by Charles David Keeling and operated under his direction until his death in 2005.

Antares

➤ Recently, the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) filmed the passing of the moon in front of Antares.
➤ Antares is an eye-catching star, also known as Alpha Scorpii.
➤ It's the brightest star in the zodiacal constellation Scorpius (the Scorpion), which has figured prominently in the sky lore of ancient cultures.
➤ Antares holds the stellar classification of a M1 red supergiant star.
➤ The M1 designation means that Antares is reddish in colour and much cooler than many other stars.

Digital Arrest

➤ Recently, a complaint was registered at the Noida Cyber Crime Police Station by a victim, who was deceived of over Rs 11 lakh and exposed to "digital arrest".
➤ Digital arrests refer to a type of sophisticated cyber fraud where cyber-criminals impersonate law enforcement officials or other authorities and coerce victims into transferring significant sums of money.
➤ By creating a fabricated sense of crisis, they pressure victims into making hasty decisions without the chance for rational thought or verification.

Vishing

➤ Recently, the Union government released a circular warning its employees of a sophisticated cybercrime known as vishing.
➤ Short for voice+phishing, it's a technique wherein a threat actor calls the victim over the phone and tries to trick him/her into clicking on malicious files or emails, which can then take one to a legitimate-looking website, asking him/her to share personal information.
➤ In other cases, the attacker can solicit sensitive information from the victim.
➤ It can be so tricky that the caller might appear as the manager or colleague of the victim.

Openwashing

➤ The tech world is embroiled in a heated debate over the concept of "open source" in artificial intelligence (AI) models, with accusations of "openwashing".
➤ Openwashing refers to an accusation against some AI companies that they are using the "open source" label too loosely.
➤ Proponents argue for the equity and safety benefits of open-source AI, while detractors highlight its potential for misuse.
➤ Organizations applying the label may vary significantly in their approaches to openness, from minimal disclosure to strict restrictions.
➤ Challenges in replicating AI models stem from the complex requirements beyond just code, limiting true democratization of access.

Heat Dome

➤ Millions across Mexico, Central America, and parts of the US are facing extreme heat, straining energy grids. This has been caused by heat dome.
➤ Heat dome phenomenon traps hot air, leading to extreme temperatures exceeding 45°C.
➤ Winds bring warm, moist air north from the equator, contributing to the heatwave.
➤ Heat dome leads to low rainfall, increasing the risk of wildfires.
➤ Heatwaves increase the chance of droughts, wildfires, and heat-related deaths.
➤ Urban areas face higher risks due to the urban heat island effect.

Parliament Q & A

In almost all the examinations, direct questions are being asked on the subjects on which facts are presented in the Parliament. Moreover, this information presented in the Parliament is also factually accurate. In this section we have presented a useful compilation of such facts.

Increasing Domestic Coal Production: Steps Taken by the Government

- Regular reviews by Ministry of Coal to expedite the development of coal blocks.
- Enactment of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2021 allowing captive mine owners to sell up to 50% of their annual production in the open market after meeting end-use plant requirements.
- Single Window Clearance portal to speed up the operationalization of coal mines.
- Project Monitoring Unit to assist coal block allottees in obtaining necessary approvals and clearances.
- Auction of commercial mining on revenue sharing basis launched in 2020, with a 50% rebate on coal produced earlier than the scheduled date and incentives for coal gasification or liquefaction.
- Liberal terms for commercial coal mining, including no restriction on coal utilization, reduced upfront amount, adjustment of upfront amount against monthly payments, liberal efficiency parameters, transparent bidding process, 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) through automatic route, and revenue sharing model based on the National Coal Index.

Promoting Export of Agricultural Products: APEDA's Role

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Department of Commerce, promotes the export of agricultural products, including millets, from India.
- Assistance is provided to registered exporters through the Agriculture & Processed Food Export Promotion Scheme, covering Infrastructure Development, Quality Development, and Market Development.
- Buyer-Seller Meets (BSMs) are organized to provide export-market linkages.
- Regular interactions with Indian Missions abroad via video conferences to tap export opportunities.
- Celebrated 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYM – 2023), involving various stakeholders to promote Indian millets globally.
- Organized events like Millet Culinary carnival, International Trade Events, Chefs Conference, exhibitions of Farmers Producer Organizations (FPOs), road shows, kisan melas, Chef's training for paramilitary forces, ASEAN India Millet Festival, etc.
- Declared Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad, as the Global Centre of Excellence for sharing best practices and research.
- IIMR provides training on manufacturing value-added millet food products and supports self-enterprise establishment.
- Developed value-added technologies like "Ready to Eat" and "Ready to Cook" for millet foods.
- Branding of millet foods under the "Eatrite" tag, conducting awareness programs, and promoting agribusiness and technology incubators.

Ease of Doing Business

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, coordinates initiatives under Ease of Doing Business to create a conducive business environment.
- DPIIT works with Ministries/Departments and States/UTs to reduce compliance burdens on citizens and businesses.
- The objectives are to improve Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living by simplifying, rationalizing, digitizing, and decriminalizing Government to Business and Citizen Interfaces.
- DPIIT spearheads the Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP), assessing States and UTs on reforms implemented on designated parameters.
- The focus of BRAP is on streamlining regulations and processes, eliminating unnecessary requirements.
- BRAP covers areas like Information Wizard, Single Window Systems, Online Building Permission System, Inspection Reforms, and Labour Reforms.
- It helps build a knowledge base and instil competition within states and UTs to improve their business environment.
- The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, which received Presidential assent on 11th August 2023, decriminalized 183 provisions of 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments.
- It rationalized criminal provisions, allowing citizens, businesses, and government departments to operate without fear of imprisonment for minor, technical, or procedural defaults.

India Update
Fact Sheet

In this section, we have presented a compilation of useful information on those topics which are important for geaneral competitive examinations and from which facts and figures related questions are repeatedly asked.
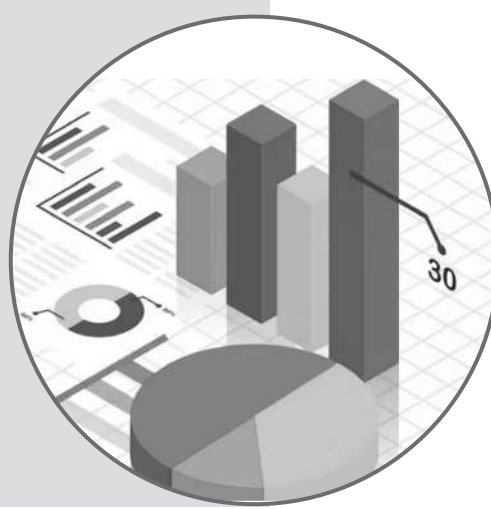
Textiles and Apparel Sector in India

Market Scenario

- The domestic apparel & textile industry in India contributes nearly 2.3 % to the country's GDP, 13% to industrial production and 12% to exports.
- India has a 4% share of the global trade in textiles and apparel.
- Total textile exports are expected to reach $65 Bn by FY26 and are expected to grow at 10% CAGR from 2019-20 to reach $190 Bn by 2025-26.

Ranking

- **Cotton & Jute:** India is the largest producer of jute and second largest producer of cotton in the world.
- **Silk:** India is also the 2nd largest producer of silk in the world and 95% of the world's hand-woven fabric comes from India.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** India has also become the second-largest manufacturer of PPE in the world.
- **Technical Textiles:** India is the 5th largest producer of technical textiles in the whole world with a market size of nearly $22 Bn, which is expected to build up to $300 Bn by 2047.
- **2nd Largest Employer:** The textiles and apparel industry in India is the 2nd largest employer in the country providing direct employment to 45 Mn people and 100 Mn people in allied industries.

Growth Drivers

- Presence of world class infrastructure.
- Increased focus on technical textiles.
- Abundance of raw material and availability of skilled manpower.
- Presence of entire value chains and large and growing domestic market
- Competitive manufacturing costs and organized retail landscape & e-Commerce.
- Rising per capita income, higher disposable incomes and preferences for brands.

Key Textile and Apparel Clusters

Spinning Clusters

- Ludhiana, Baddi, Coimbatore, Erode, Guntur.

Weaving Clusters

Surat, Tarapur, Mumbai, Amravati, Ahmedabad.

Knitting Clusters

- Delhi, Ludhiana, Tiruppur.

Apparel Manufacturing Clusters

- Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata, Vapi, Vishakhapatnam.

India's Gaming Sector

Market Size

- India boasts the largest fantasy sports market globally, with a user base of 180 million. Forecasts indicate a robust industry growth at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 33%, expected to reach INR 25,300 crore by FY27.
- Projected increase in paying gamers from 144 million in 2023 to 240 million by 2028.

Industry Landscape

- Over 1,400 gaming companies in India, including 500 gaming studios.
- Professional players to grow 2.5 times by 2028.
- Government recognition of e-sports and state-led talent development initiatives fuel growth.

Game Downloads and Consumer Base

- Mobile gaming reigns supreme in India, constituting a whopping 90% of the gaming market. This contrasts starkly with the US, where mobile gaming accounts for approximately 37%, and China, where it comprises 62% of the market share.
- India stands out as the foremost global leader in terms of mobile gaming app downloads. Mobile gaming contributes to 90% of the gaming market in India.
- Game downloads in India surged from 5.65 billion in 2019 to 9.5 billion in 2023.

Demographics and Preferences

- Nearly 50% of gamers aged 18 to 30 years prefer mid-core and hardcore genres like shooting games.
- 30% of gamers aged 31 to 45 prefer strategy games.

Job Market and Outsourcing

- Online gaming industry to add 2.5 lakh more jobs in the next 10 years.
- Presently employs 1 lakh skilled gaming professionals directly and indirectly.
- Game development costs in India are 50-60% lower than in Western countries.

Current Affairs based
Model MCQs

Here we have presented current affairs based model MCQs for the upcoming UPSC & State PSCs Prelims and other graduate level examinations. The content related to the questions can be accessed in this issue of the magazine.

1. **Which of the following statement(s) is/are incorrect with reference to the Cantonment Board in India?**
   1. It is a civic administration body and functions like a municipal body.
   2. It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
   3. A cantonment differs from a military station— the latter is exclusively devoted to the use and accommodation of military personnel and is established under an executive order.

   Choose the correct statements from the codes given below:
   (a) 1 Only (b) 2 and 3
   (c) 2 Only (d) 1, 2, and 3

2. **Which of the following articles of the Constitution of India provides for directive for development of the Hindi language?**
   (a) Article 349 (b) Article 351
   (c) Article 366 (d) Article 357

3. **Consider the following lines from one of the Ashokan Rock Edicts:**
   'This pillar has a 12th-Century inscription by Chauhan king Vigraharaja IV, boasting of his conquests of the Vindhyas and how he defeated the outsiders (Turkish invaders) and "restored Aryan dominance" over his land'.

   The above given inscription belongs to:
   (a) Rummindei Pillar (b) Nigali Sagar Pillar
   (c) Sankissa Pillar (d) Delhi-Topra Pillar

4. **The province of Baghlan was in news due to flash floods. It is located in:**
   (a) Afghanistan (b) Iran
   (c) Bangladesh (d) Pakistan

5. **With reference to the Majuli Mask of Assam, consider the following statements:**
   1. These masks are made of bamboo, clay, dung, cloth, cotton and wood.
   2. The handmade masks are traditionally used to depict characters in bhaonas, or theatrical performances with devotional messages under the neo-Vaishnavite tradition.
   3. These masks were accorded geographical indication (GI) tag in year 2023.

   Choose the correct statement (S) from the codes given below:

   (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3
   (c) 1 and 2 (d) 3 only

6. **Consider the following statement (s) with reference to the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF):**
   1. The SDR is based on a basket of international currencies comprising the U.S. Dollar, Japanese Yen, Euro, Pound Sterling and Chinese Renminbi.
   2. The value of the SDR is set daily by the IMF on the basis of fixed currency amounts of the currencies included in the SDR basket and the daily market exchange rates between the currencies included in the SDR basket.
   3. SDRs are only allocated to IMF members that elect to participate in the SDR Department.
   4. SDRs can be held and used by member countries, the IMF, and certain designated official entities called "prescribed holders" but it cannot be held, for example, by private entities or individuals.

   Choose the correct statement (s) from the codes given below:
   (a) 1, 2, and 3 (b) 2, 3 and 4
   (c) 1,3, and 4 (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

7. **Consider the following minerals:**
   1. Cobalt 2. Gallium
   3. Silicon 4. Cadmium

   How many of the above are classified as critical minerals?
   (a) 1 and 2 (b) 2, 3, and 4
   (c) 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

8. **The National Commission for Women (NCW) is a:**
   (a) Constitutional Body (b) Non-Statutory Body
   (c) Quasi-judicial Body (d) Statutory Body

9. **What type of plastic is under investigation by China's commerce ministry?**
   (a) POM copolymers (b) Polyethylene
   (c) PVC (d) PET

10. **What is the typical duration for heatwaves in the North-Western parts of India?**
    (a) Heatwaves occur only during the month of March in the North-Western parts of India.
    (b) Heatwaves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July in the North-Western parts of India.
    (c) Heatwaves can occur throughout the year in the North-Western parts of India.
    (d) Heatwaves typically occur between April and July.

Info Bytes

From Govt. News Services like PIB, AIR, etc.

- What campaign did Indian Olympic Association (IOC) start to support athletes at the Paris Olympics? **- Let's Move India**

- In which sport Sachin Sarjerao Khilari won a gold medal at the World Para Athletics Championships 2024 and qualified for Paris 2024 Paralympics? **- Shot Put**

- Where did Mariyappan Thangavelu win his first gold medal in high jump at the World Para Athletics Championships? **- Kobe, Japan**

- Which novel won the International Booker Prize for 2024? **- Kairos**

- Who received the 2024 Shaw Prize in astronomy? **- Srinivas Kulkarni**

- When was World Turtle Day observed? **- 23rd May**

- How many Gangetic Dolphins were found thriving in India's waters? **- Over 4000**

- Which three countries officially recognized Palestine as a state in May 2024? **- Norway, Spain, Ireland**

- In which state of India Saga Dawa Festival is commemorated? **- Sikkim**

- Which organization received the ATD Best Awards for Learning & Development? **- POWERGRID**

- Which country became the 99th member of the International Solar Alliance? **- Spain**

- Which bank topped among PSU banks in business growth for FY24? **- Bank of Maharashtra**

- Who from Pakistan scaled Mount Everest without supplementary oxygen? **- Sirbaz Khan**

- Who was elected as the new President of Vietnam? **- Tu Lam**

- Who became the first Indian to go to space as a tourist? **- Gopi Thotakura**

- What was India's position in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024? **- 39th**

- Who won gold with a world record time in the 400m T20 class at the World Para Championships? **- Deepthi Jeevanji**

- Who has been elected as the President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for the term 2024-25? **- Sanjiv Puri**

- Which Indian organisation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) focusing on digitalizing vaccine cold chain management with the UN Development Programme (UNDP)? **- Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD)**

- Who has been sworn in as Taiwan's new president? **- Lai Ching-te**

- Who has been appointed as the Acting President of Iran? **- Mohammad Mokhber**

- Who has been awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Fellowship? **- Ruskin Bond**

- Who won his sixth Masters title at the Italian Open by defeating Nicolas Jarry in straight sets? **- Alexander Zverev**

- Which country is set to host the FIFA Women's World Cup for the first time in 2027? **- Brazil**

- In which event did the Indian mixed team set a new national record and win gold at the 2024 Asian Athletic Relay Championships in Bangkok? **- 4x400m Relay**

- Which country has launched the world's first 6G device? **- Japan**

- When was National Anti-Terrorism Day observed? **- 21 May**

- Which ministry celebrated International Women in Maritime Day, highlighting the vital contributions of women in the maritime sector? **- Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**

- Which two Indian companies embarked on a global hunt for lithium mines? **- Coal India and NMDC**

- Who clinched gold medals at the Elorda Cup in Kazakhstan? **- Nikhat Zareen and Minakshi**

- Who won the men's doubles title at the Thailand Open? **- Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty**

- Which country has deployed 'Bulava' intercontinental ballistic missiles on its submarines? **- Russia**

- Which movie received a special screening at Cannes 2024, being India's first crowd-funded movie? **- 'Manthan'**

- Who was elected as the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) for the fourth time? **- Kapil Sibal**

Sports in News

Based on recent developments in the world of sports

Sports Bits

- **World Para-Athletics Championships:** The 2024 World Para Athletics Championships was held at Kobe Universiade Memorial Stadium in Japan, from 17 to 25 May 2024. India won 17 medals – gold (6), silver (5), and bronze (6). It placed India sixth in the standings. It is India's best showing at a World Para-Athletics Championships - surpassing the 10 medals won at the 2023 edition in Paris. China topped the medal tally followed by Brazil.

> ### INDIA'S GOLD MEDAL WINNERS
> - Mariyappan Thangavelu (Men's High Jump)
> - Sumit Antil (Men's Javelin Throw)
> - Sachin Khilari (Men's Shot Put)
> - Simran Sharma (Women's 200m)
> - Deepthi Jeevanji (Women's 400m)
> - Ekta Bhyana (Women's Club Throw)

- **Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2024:** Japan won its maiden Sultan Azlan Shah Cup after beating three-time champions Pakistan in the final, played in Malaysia.
- **Thailand Open 2024:** The Indian badminton pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty won the Thailand Open 2024 men's doubles title. The Thailand Open, a prestigious BWF Super 500 event, took place in Bangkok from May 14 to May 19, 2024.
- **Thomas & Uber Cup:** The People's Republic of China has reclaimed its throne as the top badminton nation, clinching both the men's and women's titles at the prestigious 2024 BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals in Chengdu.
- **3rd Elorda Cup 2024:** The Indian boxing contingent won 12 medals, including 2 gold, 2 silver, and 8 bronze at the 3rd Elorda Cup 2024, held in the Kazakh capital city of Astana. **Nikhat Zareen** (52 kg) and **Minakshi (**48 kg) won gold medals.
- **FIFA Women's World Cup 2027:** At the 74th FIFA Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, Brazil was announced as the host nation of the tenth FIFA Women's World Cup to be held in 2027, becoming the first South American nation to host the tournament.
- **AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026:** Australia will host the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026. The quadrennial international football tournament in Asia competed by the women's national teams in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

- **World Football Day:** In 2024, the world marks the 100th anniversary of the first international football tournament involving teams from all regions, held on May 25, 1924, during the Summer Olympic Games in Paris. To honour this milestone, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution on May 7, 2024, proclaiming May 25 as 'World Football Day'.
- **"Let's Move India" Campaign:** The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has launched the "Let's Move India" campaign in collaboration with the Reliance Foundation and the Abhinav Bindra Foundation. The initiative aims to celebrate Olympians heading to the upcoming Paris Olympics and encourage participation in physical activity.

Sportspersons in News

- **Dipa Karmakar:** In vault event, Dipa Karmakar won a gold medal at the Asian Gymnastics Championships 2024 held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. She became the first Indian gymnast to win the continental title in the Asian women's artistic gymnastics championships.
- **Sunil Chhetri:** India's most decorated footballer, has announced his retirement from international football, with his last appearance for the national team scheduled for the FIFA World Cup Qualifier game against Kuwait in Kolkata on June 6. He is the first footballer to receive Khel Ratna Award (2021) - highest sporting honour of India. He was given Arjuna Award (2011) and Padma Shri (2019), India's fourth highest civilian award. He is the third among active players to score maximum international goals after Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.
- **P Shyaamnikhil:** Hailing from Tamil Nadu, he became India's 85th Grandmaster (GM) in chess. He achieved this feat at the 2024 Dubai Police Masters Chess Tournament.
- **Alexander Zverev:** German tennis star Alexander Zverev won the Italian Open 2024 singles title for the second time.
- **Iga Swiatek**: In the women's singles event of Italian Open 2024, Iga Swiatek of Poland won her third title in the last four years.
- **Neeraj Chopra**: The reigning Olympic and world champion in javelin throw, securing a second-place finish at the Doha Diamond League 2024. Chopra's impressive throw of 88.36m on his final attempt fell just 2cm short of Czechia's Jakub Vadlejch, the reigning Diamond League champion and Tokyo 2020 silver medallist. He also won the gold medal at the Federation Cup 2024 (held at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar) with a throw of 82.27m. ■■