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(Preliminary Examination)

Current Issues

(April - 2022)

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19 All India 1st Ranks in ESE

62 All India 1st Ranks in GATE

Current Issues

(April - 2022)

POLITY OF GOVERNANCE

WHO GLOBAL CENTRE FOR TRADITIONAL MEDICINE (GCTM) IN JAMNAGAR



KEY POINTS

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) in Jamnagar on 19th April in the presence of the Prime Minister of Mauritius Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO).
- The centre will be the first and only global outpost centre for traditional medicine in the world.
- The DG WHO, termed the centre as a truly global project and expressed confidence that the world will come to India for its leadership in the traditional medicine.
- The centre's five main areas will be research and leadership, evidence and learning, data and analytics, sustainability and equity and innovation and technology.

BROADCAST SEVA PORTAL

Why in News?

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has launched the Broadcast Seva (BS) Portal.

- The portal is likely to help 900 satellite TV channels, 70 teleport operators, 1,700 MSOs, 350 Community Radio Stations (CRS) and 380 private FM channels, among others.



KEY POINTS

What is the BS Portal?

About:

- It is a 360 degree digital solution that will facilitate stakeholders in seeking permissions, applying for registration, tracking applications, calculating fees and executing payments.
- This portal will provide its services under the wider umbrella efforts of Digital India to all stakeholders to private satellite TV channels, teleport operators, Multi-Service Operators (MSOs), community and private radio channels, etc.

Objective:

- To provide a single point facility to the stakeholders and applicants to apply for various registrations, permissions and licences issued by I&B Ministry for broadcast related activities.

Significance:

- It will reduce the turnaround time of applications and, at the same time, will help applicants track the progress.
- Improving India's business climate is one of the key focus areas of the Government of India and the Broadcast Seva Portal exemplifies the government's commitment to ease of doing business and empowering the broadcasting sector.

- The portal will enable establishment of an efficient and transparent system for the growth and management of the Broadcast sector.
- It is in line with the vision of promoting Make in India and Digital India initiatives.

NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP MELA HELD AT 700 LOCATIONS



KEY POINTS

- Skill India, in association with the Directorate General of Training, organized a daylong 'Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Mela' on 21st April across the country in more than 700 locations.
- Over 4000 organisations from more than 30 industries, including power, retail, telecommunications.
- IT/ITeS, electronics, automotive, and others, participated in the event.
- Individuals having a 5th-12th grade pass certificate, a skill training certificate, an ITI Diploma, or a graduate degree were eligible to participate in the Mela.
- The candidates will get certificates, recognized by National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), increasing the chances of their employability after the training.

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) announced that the National Apprenticeship Mela will be soon made a monthly affair with the endeavor to engage atleast 10 lakh youngsters over the next one year.

PM PARTICIPATES IN 400TH PARKASH PURAB OF SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR AT RED FORT



KEY POINTS

- The 400th Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur was celebrated at Red Fort in New Delhi on 21st April.
- Participating in the event, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi offered prayers and released a commemorative coin and postage stamp.
- The PM underlined the historical significance of Red Fort as it witnessed the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur and has been a reflection of the history and aspiration of the nation.
- Shri Modi emphasized that India's freedom from hundreds of years of slavery and India's independence cannot be separated from its spiritual and cultural journey and that is why the country is celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and 400th Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji together with identical resolve.

DIGITAL PLATFORM FASTER

Why in News?

Recently, Chief Justice of India (CJI) launched the digital platform FASTER (Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records).

- The Supreme Court has also launched other programmes involving technology like Artificial Intelligence (AI) based portal 'SUPACE' in the judicial system aimed at assisting judges with legal research.

- eCourts Mission Mode Project is a pan-India Project, monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, for the District Courts across the country.
 - ✓ The objective of the project is to provide designated services to litigants, lawyers and the judiciary through ICT enablement of courts.

KEY POINTS

What is a FASTER Digital Platform?

About:

- It is a digital platform to communicate interim orders, stay orders, bail orders etc., of the Supreme Court to authorities concerned through a secured electronic communication channel.

Need:

- There have been cases where jail inmates are not released despite bail orders passed by the Supreme Court due to delay in communication of such orders.
- So, it was needed to utilise information and communication technology tools for efficient transmission of court's orders.

Significance:

Ensure timely Release of Undertrials:

- Ensure that undertrials are not made to wait for days on end behind bars to be released because the certified hard copies of their bail orders took time to reach the prison.
 - ✓ Undertrials are the people who are yet to be found guilty of the crimes they have been accused of.

Prevent Unnecessary Arrests:

- It will help in preventing unnecessary arrests and custody of people even after the court had already granted them its protection.

Ensure Fundamental Rights of Prisoners:

- Ensure fundamental rights of personal liberty, life and dignity of the prisoners which is given under Article 21 of Constitution of India.

Challenges:

- The availability of internet connection in jails across the nation as without this facility transmission of such orders to prisons will not be possible.

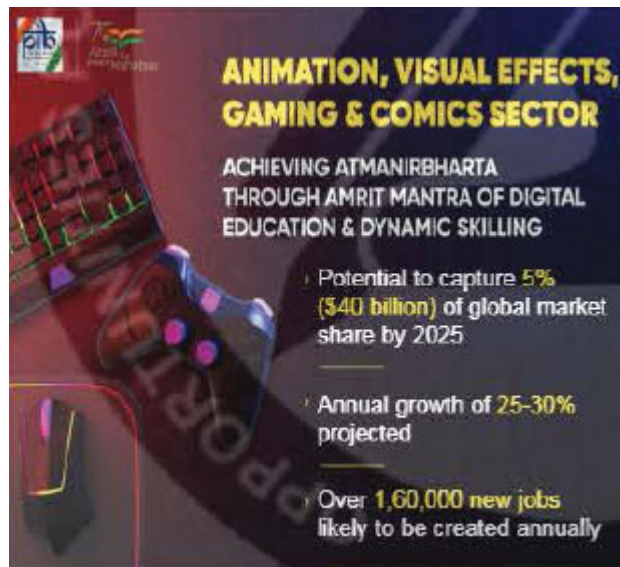
NORTH EAST REGION GETS FIRST FLYING TRAINING ORGANIZATION



KEY POINTS

- North East Region's first Flying Training Organization (FTO) has been inaugurated in Lilabari, Assam.
- The Lilabari FTO, to be operated by M/s Redbird Aviation is amongst nine FTOs to be established in five airports in India by June 2022.
- The other four FTOs include those in Belagavi and Kalaburagi in Karnataka, Jalgaon in Maharashtra and Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh.
- With the establishment of these FTOs, India will aim to become a global hub for pilot training.
- In Lilabari FTO, Ground Classes (Online + Offline), practical flying training, Drone flying training and simulator training will take place for Single Batch of 10 students which will be later increased to 20.
- After completing their training, students will be eligible for employment in Airlines, private charter services, air ambulances, Government pilot jobs, cargo/freighter services etc.

I&B MINISTRY FORMS TASK FORCE FOR PROMOTION OF AVGC PROMOTION



KEY POINTS

- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) has constituted a task force for Animation Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) promotion.
- The task force headed by Secretary, Ministry of I&B, and having representation from other ministries, industry, academia and state governments, will submit its first action plan in three months from now.
- AVGC sector in India has the potential to become the torch bearer of "Create in India" & "Brand India".
- India has the potential to capture 5% (\$40 billion) of the global market share by the year 2025, with an annual growth of around 25-30% and creating over 1,60.000 new jobs annually.

'SVANIDHI SE SAMRIDDHI' EXTENDED TO COVER STREET VENDORS OF ADDITIONAL 126 CITIES

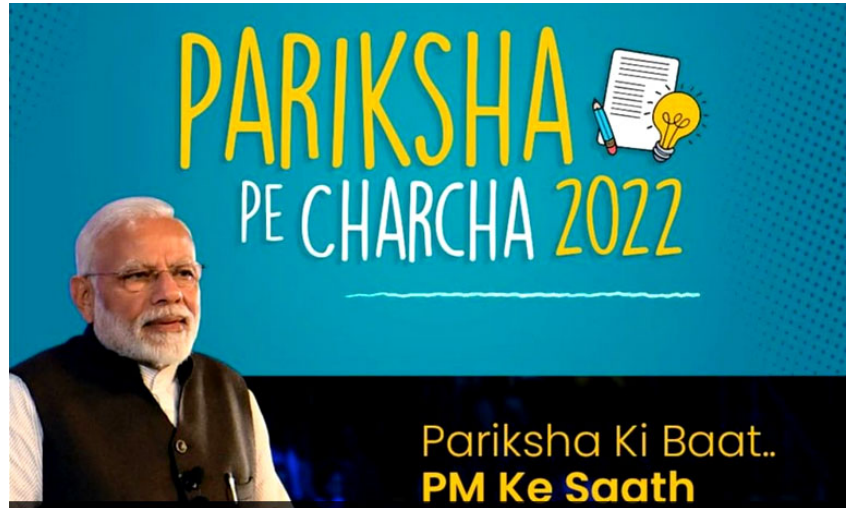
KEY POINTS

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA) has launched 'SVANidhi se Samriddhi' program in additional 126 cities across 14 States/UTS.
- The first phase of the program was launched on 4th January 2021 in 125 cities covering approximately 35 lakh street vendors and their families.
- 22.5 lakh scheme sanctions have been extended to them including 16 lakh insurance benefits under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana and 2.7 Lakh

pension benefits under Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, amongst other such benefits.

- Phase - II aims to cover 28 lakh street vendors and their families, with a total target of 20 lakh scheme sanctions for FY 2022-23.
- The remaining cities would be gradually added to the program.

PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA: PM SAYS TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE USED EFFECTIVELY



KEY POINTS

- In the 5th edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC) held on 1st April 2022, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi interacted with students, teachers and parents at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi.
- Answering queries, the PM said the National Education Policy-2020 caters to 21st century aspirations and takes India to the future.
- He said, outdated ideas and policies from the 20th century cannot guide India's development trajectory in the 21st century and the country has to change with the times.
- The Prime Minister added that technology should be welcomed and used effectively. Saying that pre-examination stress is among the most common feelings among students, Shri Modi said, exams are an innate part of people's life, and just another milestone in the development journey.
- The Prime Minister said, infinite opportunities await the country's youth as they belong to a special generation. He said, there is more competition, but there are also many more opportunities.

IMPORT OF ADDITIONAL 101 WEAPON SYSTEMS BANNED TO BOOST INDIGENIZATION

KEY POINTS

- Taking the Atmanirbhar Bharat mission ahead, India has announced the 3rd "negative arms import list" also called the "positive indigenisation list."
- The list includes 101 defence weapons and platforms that will be manufactured indigenously. Now the total number of weapons and systems on this list is 310.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said, this list not only takes into account the capabilities of our domestic defence industry, but also it will be helpful in attracting new investments in technology and manufacturing capabilities, and promoting domestic research and development. Meanwhile, the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) handed over 30 TOT (Transfer of Technology) agreements to 25 Indian industries for the transfer of 21 technologies developed by 16 DRDO labs across the country. So far DRDO has entered into more than 1430 TOT agreements with industries all over the country, out of which, a record number of 450 TOT have been signed in the last two years.

VARUNA

KEY POINTS

- The 20th edition of the Bilateral Naval Exercise between the Indian and French Navies named 'VARUNA' is being conducted in the Arabian Sea on April 1st.
- The Bilateral Naval Exercises between the two Navies is being held since 1993.
- In Varuna- 2022 exercise, varieties of Submarines, ships and fighter planes participated.

EXHIBITION SHOWCASING INDIA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE

KEY POINTS

- Indian Council of Historical Research under the Ministry of Education organised an exhibition showcasing India's freedom struggle on April 4th.
- The exhibition was inaugurated by Speaker of Lok Sabha, Om Birla, in the Parliament Library. It highlighting the stories of the country's unsung heroes that contributed to India's freedom struggle.

e-DAR

KEY POINTS

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has launched a portal e-DAR (Digitised Detailed Accident Report) on 14th April 2022.
- The portal provides information on road accidents instantaneously, helping easier claims under insurance and check on fake claims conducting a search of vehicles involved in the accident.

NATIONAL DATA AND ANALYTICS PLATFORM

KEY POINTS

- The NITI Aayog plans to launch the National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP), which would give government data in a user-friendly manner and encourage data-driven decisionmaking and research.
- The platform aims to standardise data across government sources and provide flexible analytics that allow users to easily analyse data using numerous datasets.

“HUNAR HAAT”

KEY POINTS

- On 16th April 2022 Union minister Anurag Thakur inaugurated the 40th edition of “Hunar Haat,” a forum to preserve, protect, and promote local artists and craftsmen.
- “Hunar Haat” has offered employment to over 9 lakh artists and craftsmen in just six years, in addition to promoting ancestral arts and crafts even in distant corners of the country.

‘NATPOLREX-VIII’

KEY POINTS

- The Indian Coast Guard started 8th edition of the two-day National Level Pollution Response Exercise, ‘NATPOLREX-VIII’.
- The exercise was inaugurated by Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar on 19th April 2022.
- The objective of NATPOLREX-VIII is to enhance the preparedness and response capability of all the stakeholders in combating marine spills.

URJA PRAVAHA

KEY POINTS

- The Indian Coast Guard Ship Urja Pravaha, an auxiliary barge arrived in Kochi, Kerala on 22nd April 2022.
- Urja Pravaha is 36 meters long and is designed to carry cargo ship fuel, aviation fuel and fresh water.

“ENTERPRISE INDIA”

KEY POINTS

- A Event titled “Enterprise India” was inaugurated by Narayan Rane, Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises on 27th April 2022.
- The objective is to promote entrepreneurship culture and generating awareness about the initiatives and schemes of the MSME Ministry across the nation.

DIGITAL INDIA RISC-V (DIR-V) PROGRAM

KEY POINTS

- The Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) program was announced on 27th April 2022 by the government of India.
- It's aim is to create Microprocessors for the country's and the world's future and to achieve industry-grade commercial silicon and design for the next generation of microprocessors by the month of December 2023.
- RISC-V is an open and free ISA that will enable a new era of processor innovation through collaboration.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

INDIA, TURKMENISTAN BILATERAL MEET

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian President for the first time visited Turkmenistan, where he signed four agreements, including in financial intelligence and disaster management and agreed to expand bilateral trade and energy cooperation to further strengthen the multifaceted partnership.

- Earlier, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India and Turkmenistan on Cooperation in the field of Disaster Management.



KEY POINTS

What are the Highlights of the Bilateral Meet?

- Highlighted the significance of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Ashgabat Agreement on International Transport and Transit Corridor.
- The Chabahar port built by India in Iran could be used to improve trade between India and Central Asia.

- Discussing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan- India (TAPI) pipeline, India suggested that issues related to the security of the pipeline and key business principles may be addressed in Technical and Expert level meetings.
- India expressed its readiness to partner with Turkmenistan in its drive towards digitalisation and noted that Space can be another area of mutually beneficial cooperation.
- Underlined the importance of holding regular cultural events in each other's territory since both countries share centuries-old civilisational and cultural linkages.
- Emphasised on the need for both countries to cooperate closely on the effective management of the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected their population.
- Agreed to further enhance cooperation under the framework flowing from the India-Central Asia Summit.
- India thanked Turkmenistan for its support to India's permanent membership in a reformed and expanded UN Security Council as well as for India's initiatives as a non-permanent member of UNSC for the period of 2021-22.
- Both share a broad 'regional consensus' on the issues related to Afghanistan, which includes formation of a truly representative and inclusive government, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, central role of the UN, providing immediate humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan and preserving the rights of women, children and other national ethnic groups and minorities.

NEPAL PM VISITS INDIA

Why in News?

The Prime Minister of Nepal visited India and held a summit meeting with the Indian Prime Minister.

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



KEY POINTS

What are the Highlights of the Visit?

Connectivity:

- Launched the 35-km cross-border railway line linking Jaynagar in Bihar to Kurtha in Nepal.
 - ✓ This is the first broad-gauge passenger rail link between the two sides and it will be extended to Bardibas in Nepal under a project supported by an Indian grant of Rs 548 crore.

Solu Corridor:

- The Indian side handed over the Solu Corridor, a 90-km, 132 kV power transmission line built for Rs 200 crore under an Indian line of credit.
- The line will help bring electricity to several remote districts in northeastern Nepal by connecting them to the country's national grid.

RuPay card:

- Launched India's RuPay card in Nepal.
- The domestic variant of the RuPay card will now work at 1,400 point-of-sale machines in Nepal, and the move is expected to facilitate bilateral tourist flows.
- Nepal is the fourth country, after Bhutan, Singapore and the UAE, where RuPay is live.

MoUs:

- Nepal signed a framework agreement to join the India-led International Solar Alliance (becoming the 105th member country).
- Signed three more pacts – a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on enhancing technical cooperation in the railways sector, and two agreements between Indian Oil Corporation and Nepal Oil Corporation for the supply of petroleum products for five years and for sharing of technical expertise.

Joint Vision Statement on Power Sector Cooperation:

- India called for taking full advantage of opportunities in the power sector, including through joint development of power generation projects in Nepal and development of cross-border transmission infrastructure.
 - ✓ India plays an important role in developing Nepal's power sector, through capacity building and direct support to infrastructure projects related to generation and transmission.
- Nepal also appreciated India's recent cross-border electricity trade regulations that have enabled it to access India's market and trade power with India. Nepal exports its surplus power to India.
- The two sides agreed to expedite work on the delayed Pancheshwar multipurpose dam project (on Mahakali river) that is considered to be a gamechanger for the development of the region.

Border Issue:

- Nepalese Prime Minister urged his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to take steps to resolve a boundary dispute.
 - ✓ The Indian side made it clear both countries need to address the boundary issue through dialogue and to avoid the politicisation of such issues.
- India had earlier rejected Nepal's unilateral move in 2020 to amend its constitution to show the Kalapani region as part of Nepal for the first time.

4TH INDIA- US '2+2' DIALOGUE

Why in News

Recently, the fourth '2+2' dialogue between India and the United States took place in Washington DC, US. India's External Affairs and Defence Ministers meet with their American counterparts.

- This meeting was held on the sidelines of a virtual meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the US.



KEY POINTS

What are the Key Points of this Meeting?

Space Situational Awareness Arrangement: India and the US have signed a bilateral space situational awareness arrangement.

- This lays the groundwork for more advanced cooperation in space.
- Inaugural Defense Artificial Intelligence Dialogue: They also agreed to launch an inaugural Defense Artificial Intelligence Dialogue, while expanding joint cyber training and exercises.

- **Military Supply Chain Cooperation:** The US asserted that it supports India as a defence industry leader in the Indo-Pacific and a net provider of security in the region.
 - ✓ In this context, new supply chain cooperation measures were launched that will let both countries more swiftly support each other's priority defence requirements.
- **Observing Crisis in Ukraine:** They agreed to maintain close consultations on the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, including on humanitarian assistance efforts, and echoed support for an independent investigation into the brutal violence deployed against civilians.

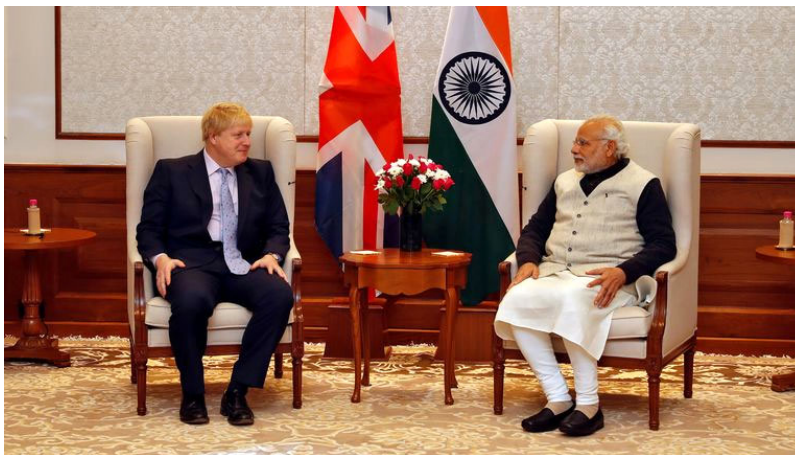
What is the Status of India's 2+2 Dialogue with the US?

- The US is India's oldest and most important 2+2 talks partner.
- The first 2+2 dialogue between the two countries was held during the Trump Administration in 2018.
- India and the US have signed a troika of "foundational pacts" for deep military cooperation:
 - ✓ Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016,
 - ✓ Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) after the first 2+2 dialogue in 2018,
 - ✓ Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) in 2020.
- The strengthening of the mechanisms of cooperation between the two militaries are of significance in the context of an increasingly aggressive China.

What is the 2+2 Dialogue?

- 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.
- It is a format of dialogue where the defence/foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country.
- India has 2+2 dialogues with four key strategic partners: the US, Australia, Japan, and Russia.
 - ✓ Besides Russia, the other three countries are also India's partners in the Quad.

INDIA, UK AGREE TO CONCLUDE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT BY YEAR END



KEY POINTS

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has said that India and the United Kingdom have decided to do their best to conclude the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of this year.
- Addressing a joint press briefing following bilateral talks with his UK counterpart Boris Johnson in New Delhi on 22nd April, PM Modi said, the teams of both countries are working on the FTA and good progress is being made in the negotiations.
- Both leaders also discussed the developments taking place at the regional and global levels.
- Prime Minister Modi said, they emphasized maintaining the Indo-Pacific region based on free, open, inclusive, and rules-based order.
- Shri Modi said, they stressed dialogue and diplomacy in Ukraine for an immediate ceasefire and resolution of the problem.
- In his statement, the visiting Prime Minister Johnson said the partnership between India and Britain is one of the defining friendships of the times.
- He pointed out that since last year, the threats of autocratic coercion have grown even further and it is vital to deepen cooperation including a shared interest in keeping the Indo-Pacific open and free.

INDIA-UAE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT COMES INTO FORCE

- The historic India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, CEPA came into force agreement was signed between the two nations on February this year.
- Secretary, Department of Commerce, BVR Subrahmanyam flagged off the first consignment of goods comprising jewellery products from India to UAE under the CEPA at a function in New Delhi.
- The consignment will now attract zero customs duty under this Agreement and is expected to reach Dubai.
- Gems and jewellery sector contributes a substantial portion of India's exports to the UAE.
- India will benefit from preferential market access provided by the UAE on over 97 per cent of its tariff lines which account for 99 per cent of Indian exports to the UAE in value terms.
- CEPA is expected to increase the total value of bilateral trade in goods to over 100 billion US dollar and trade in services to over 15 billion US dollar during next five years.

MORE THAN 77 MN PEOPLE SLIPPED INTO POVERTY IN 2021 DUE TO PANDEMIC: UN

KEY POINTS

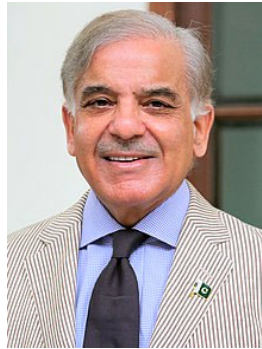
- The United Nations (UN) has said that more than 77 million people slipped into poverty in 2021 as governments struggled to service debts and secure early vaccine access.
- The UN report suggests that rich countries managed to avoid the worst economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic but poorer ones continue to deal with debilitating debt.
- The report said 20% of the countries will not be able to return to pre-2019 levels of GDP per capita by the end of 2023.
- The poorest countries pumped billions into servicing debts and were forced to cut spending on education and infrastructure.

INDIA-US HOLD 2+2 MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE

KEY POINTS

- External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh participated in the India-US 2+2 dialogue in Washington on 11th April.
- The US delegation was led by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin.
- Issuing a press statement after the dialogue, Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh said, "We had discussions on a range of bilateral, defence and global issues.
- Our partnership is of crucial importance for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region.
- Our extensive engagement has yielded important results.
- Some of these include concluding a Space Situational Awareness Agreement between the Department of Space from India and Department of Defence of USA and commencing the defence space and defence Artificial Intelligence dialogues in the near future."
- The Defence Minister further noted that India-US military to-military engagements have continued in spite of challenges from the pandemic Informing that the Indian side called for increased investment by US defence companies in India under the 'Make in India' programme during the dialogue, Shri Rajnath Singh noted that participation of US entities in industrial collaboration and partnership in research and development will be critical for success of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign.

MIAN MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF BECOMES PAKISTAN'S NEW PM



KEY POINTS

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has congratulated Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan.
- Shri Modi has said that India desires peace and stability in a region free of terror so that both countries can focus on its development challenges.
- Sharif who leads the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) was elected as PM by the National Assembly a day after Imran Khan lost the no-confidence vote in the 342-member assembly.

SRI LANKA ANNOUNCES EXTERNAL DEBT DEFAULT AMID FINANCIAL CRISIS

KEY POINTS

- Sri Lanka has suspended non-essential imports and external debt servicing (approximately USD 4 billion) citing financial crisis.
- Central Bank of Sri Lanka has said, it had become challenging and impossible to repay external debt, as the country tries to use its dwindling foreign exchange reserves to import essentials like fuel.
- Central Bank of Sri Lanka's governor, P. Nandalal Weerasinghe said the suspension of payment would be until the country came to an agreement with creditors and with the support of a loan programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Tax cuts and COVID-19 pandemic badly hurt Sri Lanka's tourism-dependent economy and exposed the government's debt-fuelled spending.
- The island nation's reserves have slumped more than two-thirds in the past two years.

NEPAL BANS EXPORTS OF NON ESSENTIALS AS GOVT DEBT SOARS HIGH

KEY POINTS

- Nepal has restricted imports of non-essential goods including cars, cosmetics, and gold after its foreign currency reserves dropped.
- It comes as a fall in tourism spending and money sent home by Nepalis working abroad triggered a steep rise in government debt.
- According to the country's central bank, Nepal Rastra Bank, foreign currency reserves fell by more than 16 percent in the seven months to the middle of February.
- Nepal's Finance Ministry said that government debt has risen to more than 43 percent of its Gross Domestic Product, as officials increased spending to help cushion the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

INDIA, AUSTRALIA INK ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND TRADE AGREEMENT



KEY POINTS

- India and Australia have signed the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) on 2nd April 2022.
- The India-Australia ECTA is the first trade agreement of India with a developed country after more than a decade.
- The Agreement encompasses cooperation across the entire gamut of bilateral economic and commercial relations and covers areas like Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom, Customs Procedures, Pharmaceutical products, and Cooperation in other Areas.
- Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal said that the India-Australia trade pact will raise bilateral trade from the present \$26-27 billion to \$100 billion by 2030, much faster than initial expectation of rising to \$50 billion in five years.

INDIA ABSTAINS FROM UNGA VOTING TO OUST RUSSIA FROM UNHRC

KEY POINTS

- The 193-member UN General Assembly at its emergency special session on the Russia-Ukraine conflict on 7th April voted to suspend Russia from the 47-member UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).
- The US-led resolution was supported by 93 countries, opposed by 24 countries with 58 abstentions (including India) and 19 countries failing to turn up to vote.
- This is the first time that a permanent member of the UNSC has been ousted from a UNHRC, Libya is the only other country to have been suspended from UNHRC in 2011.
- Russia's suspension was based on a 2006 resolution which allows suspension of membership rights of a country which commits "gross and systematic violations of human rights".
- India said its abstention was for "reasons of substance and process", and claimed that it chose the "side of peace".
- It expressed concern about the situation, and condemned the killing of civilians in Bucha while reiterating its call for an independent investigation into the killings.

ALEKSANDAR VUCIC

KEY POINTS

- Aleksandar Vucic has been re-elected as the President of Serbia on April 3. The pro-European and centrist Alliance for Victory coalition was represented by Zdravko Ponos, a retired army general.
- Aleksandar Vucic is serving as Serbia's president since 2017, and since 2012 he has been serving as the
- president of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS).

GAOFEN-3 03

KEY POINTS

- China has launched a new Earth observation satellite Gaofen-3 03. It was from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre on April 7.
- The satellite will help in the mitigation and prevention of marine disasters which helps in the monitoring of the dynamic marine environment, environmental protection, marine research, agriculture, water conservancy, and meteorology.

WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

KEY POINTS

- The International Monetary Fund has slashed the gross domestic product growth forecast for India in FY23 to 8.2 percent in its latest World Economic Outlook report. Earlier in January report, this was estimated at 9 percent.

PATRICK ACHI



KEY POINTS

- Patrick Achi has been re-appointed as Prime Minister of Ivory Coast by President Alassane Ouattara.
- Earlier, he was appointed prime minister in March 2021.
- He was the third prime minister of Ivory Coast in the last three years after Amadou Gon Coulibaly (who died in 2020) and Hamed Bakayoko (who died in 2021).

“RS- 28 SARMAT”

KEY POINTS

- Vladimir Putin, Russian President announced that his military had successfully testfired an intercontinental ballistic missile, “RS- 28 SARMAT” capable of carrying a big nuclear payload.
- It is a super-heavy, thermonuclear-armed intercontinental-range ballistic missile.
- The Sarmat was supposed to take the place of the Soviet-built Voevoda. NATO dubbed “RS- 28 SARMAT” as “Satan 2”.

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

KEY POINTS

- As per the findings, published by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India third highest military spender in 2021.

- Five largest spenders were U.S., China, India, U.K. and Russia. U.S. and China alone accounted for 52% spending.
- SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

DIGITAL SERVICES ACT

KEY POINTS

- On 22nd April 2022, the European Union (EU) finalised Digital Services Act to regulate harmful content including hate speech, disinformation and child sexual abuse images.
- It is part of the EU Commission's digital strategy aiming to reinforce the Digital Single Market and to realize the full potential of eCommerce.

RAISINA DIALOGUE 2022

KEY POINTS

- On 25 April 2022, Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community. It takes its name from Raisina Hill- the seat of the Indian government.
- It held annually in New Delhi since 2016. It is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation

WORLD MALARIA DAY

KEY POINTS

- World Malaria Day is observed on April 25th every year to raise awareness about this life threatening disease that continues to be a menace to humanity. Malaria is spread through the female Anopheles mosquito's bite (which is infected with the malaria-causing plasmodium parasite).
- The first World Malaria Day was observed in 2001. Theme of 2022: "Harness innovation to reduce the malaria disease burden and save lives".

SOCIAL ISSUES

DE-NOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES

Why in News?

Recently, the standing committee of Parliament has criticised the functioning of the development programme for de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

- The committee noted that the Scheme for economic empowerment of Denotified Tribes (DNTs) communities has total outlays of Rs 200 crore for the period of five years from 2021-22 and the Department could not spend even a single rupee in 2021-22.

DENOTIFIED TRIBES - MEANING

- DE notified Tribes** (DNTs), also known as *Vimukta Jati*, are the tribes that were originally listed as "Criminal Tribes" and "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences."
- Once a tribe became "notified" as criminal, all its members were required to register with the local magistrate, failing which they would be charged with a "crime" under the Indian Penal Code.



KEY POINTS

Who are De-Notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes?

- These are communities that are the most vulnerable and deprived.
- DNTs are communities that were 'notified' as being 'born criminals' during the British regime under a series of laws starting with the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.
- These Acts were repealed by the Independent Indian Government in 1952, and these communities were "De-Notified".
- A few of these communities which were listed as de-notified were also nomadic.
 - ✓ Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living in one place all the time.

- Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes never had access to private land or home ownership.
- While most DNTs are spread across the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.
- Many commissions and committees constituted since Independence have referred to the problems of these communities.
 - ✓ These include the Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee, 1947 constituted in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh),
 - ✓ Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee in 1949 (it was based on the report of this committee the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed),
 - ✓ Kaka Kalelkar Commission (also called first OBC Commission) constituted in 1953.
 - ✓ The B P Mandal Commission constituted in 1980 also made some recommendations on the issue.
 - ✓ The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), 2002 held that DNTs have been wrongly stigmatised as crime prone and subjected to high handed treatment as well as exploitation by the representatives of law and order and general society.
 - ✓ The NCRWC was established under the chairmanship of Justice M N Venkatachaliah.
- It has been estimated that South Asia has the world's largest nomadic population.
 - ✓ In India, roughly 10% of the population is Denotified and Nomadic.
 - ✓ While the number of Denotified Tribes is about 150, the population of Nomadic Tribes consists of about 500 different communities.

What are the Developmental Efforts Regarding DNT?

- Background: A National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was constituted in 2006 by the then government.
- It was headed by Balkrishna Sidram Renke and submitted its report in 2008.
- The commission held that "It is an irony that these tribes somehow escaped the attention of our Constitution makers.
- They are deprived of Constitutional support unlike Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes".
- The Renke commission estimated their population at around 10.74 crores based on Census 2001.

NCW LAUNCHES ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING CELL

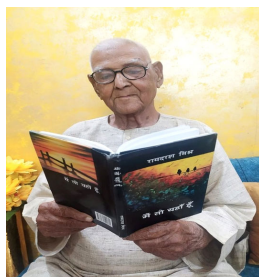


KEY POINTS

- The National Commission for Women has launched an Anti-Human Trafficking Cell to improve effectiveness in tackling cases of human trafficking.
- The Commission has observed that some of the major issues faced in combating trafficking include lack of rehabilitation for victims and insensitive attitude towards trafficked survivors and their families.
- Therefore, the Cell will improve monitoring mechanism and encourage government agencies regarding measures being adopted for prevention of trafficking and rehabilitation of victims.
- The Cell will also help survivors of trafficking in rebuilding their lives by providing them with need-based training and by organizing capacity building programs for them to prevent re-traumatization of victims.

AWARDS

PROF RAMDARASH MISHRA



KEY POINTS

- Prof Ramdarash Mishra, a well known poet, will be awarded the prestigious Saraswati Samman, 2021, for his collection of poems 'Mein to Yahan Hun'.
- The recipient is chosen by a selection committee, whose current head is Dr Subhash C Kashyap.
- Saraswati Samman, Instituted in 1991, is one of the most prestigious literary awards in the country.

DD NATIONAL PET SHOW WINS ENBA AWARD 2021



KEY POINTS

- Doordarshan has won ENBA Award 2021 for its TV series based on pet care namely 'Best Friend Forever' under the 14th edition of Exchange4media News Broadcasting Awards, ENBA Awards.
- Doordarshan's TV series has been selected for the best in-depth Hindi series.
- The 'Best Friend Forever' TV series is a half-an-hour weekly live phone-in show on DD National, wherein two pet experts guide people on how to take care of pets and other pet-related issues.

PRIME MINISTER CONFERS AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION



KEY POINTS

- On the occasion of Civil Services Day on 21st April, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi conferred the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- The PM advised state administrations and Chief Ministers to call former Chief Secretaries, Cabinet Secretaries of their respective states and take benefit from the flag-bearers of administrative machinery that have contributed significantly in the journey of Independent India.
- This will be an appropriate way of honouring the civil service in the year of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, the PM added.

'CELENT MODEL BANK' AWARD



MODEL BANK

KEY POINTS

- Indusind Bank has been awarded the global 'Celent Model Bank' award under the category of 'Payments System Transformation' for building a best-in-class Enterprise Payments Hub.
- The award recognises the Bank's outstanding journey in creating a cloud-based central payments hub.

2021 AIMA MANAGING INDIA AWARDS

KEY POINTS

- Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, presented the 2021 AIMA Managing India Awards in multiple categories in Delhi on 16th April 2022.
- Shoojit Sircar was honoured with the “Director Of The Year award” for Sardar Udham.

‘BEST INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT’ AWARD



KEY POINTS

- The Border Roads Organisation project Atal Tunnel built in Rohtang of Himachal Pradesh received Indian Building Congress (IBC) ‘Best Infrastructure Project’ award on 28th April , 2022.
- More than thirty state of the art infrastructures were nominated for the prestigious awards, the strategic tunnel was adjudged by the Jury of IBC as the Best Projects for Excellence in Built Environment in 2021.
- Director General BRO, Lt General Rajeev Chaudhry received the award.

SPORTS

KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES



- The second edition of Khelo India University Games is being held in Karnataka from 24th April to 3rd May.
- Approximately 3879 participants from around 190 universities are participating across 20 disciplines vying for 257 gold medals.
- Two new disciplines namely Yogasana and Mallakhamb have been added for the first time in an effort to preserve and promote the century-old sporting disciplines of the country.
- Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Thakur said that the Khelo India University Games (KIUG) will help prepare international level sportspersons as it aims at providing a national level launchpad for University students to showcase their talent and catch the eyeballs of the team selectors for various sports.

YOUNG INDIAN GRANDMASTER R PRAGGANANDHAA WINS REYKJAVIK OPEN CHESS TOURNAMENT



KEY POINTS

- Young Indian Grandmaster, R Praggnanandhaa has won the prestigious Reykjavik Open Chess Tournament in Reykjavik, Iceland, with 7.5 points from nine rounds.
- The 16-year-old Praggnanandhaa defeated compatriot GM D Gukesh in the final round on 12th April to emerge sole winner.
- He remained unbeaten through the nine rounds and finished with wins over Matthieu Cornette of France and Gukesh in the last two rounds.

Praggnanandhaa had recently hogged the limelight after stunning world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen in an online tournament.

2023 FIH MEN'S HOCKEY WORLD CUP



KEY POINTS

- Naveen Patnaik, Odisha Chief Minister, has unveiled the logo of the 2023 FIH Men's Hockey World Cup at the Kalinga stadium, Bhubaneswar on 14th April 2022.
- The event to be held in cities of Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.

48TH LA RODA INTERNATIONAL OPEN CHESS TOURNAMENT TITLE

KEY POINTS

- Dommaraju Gukesh, Indian Grandmaster has clinched the 48th La Roda International Open chess tournament title in Castile-La Mancha, Spain. He defeated Israel's Victor Mikhalevski on 18th April 2022.

DANISH OPEN SWIMMING



KEY POINTS

- Indian swimmer Sajan Prakash won the men's 200m butterfly gold at the Danish Open swimming meet in Copenhagen, Denmark on 16th April 2022.
- Vedaant Madhavan bagged the silver medal in the men's 1500m freestyle event.

SERBIA OPEN

KEY POINTS

- On 24th April 2022, Andrey Rublev (Russian) has defeated world No. 1 Novak Djokovic (Serbia) to win his third title in the Serbia Open.
- Rublev has now equalled Rafael Nadal (Spain) for the most tour-level titles in 2022.
- In February 2022, he also clinched crowns in Marseille and Dubai

SUMMITS**“SMART CITIES, SMART URBANIZATION”****KEY POINTS**

- The conference on “Smart Cities, Smart Urbanization” was inaugurated in Surat on 18th April 2022.
- The event is being organised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, in collaboration with Surat Smart City Corporation Development Ltd.

GLOBAL AYUSH INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION SUMMIT 2022**KEY POINTS**

- Government of India & Ministry of AYUSH organised first Global Ayush Investment and Innovation Summit – 2022 at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 20 April 2022.
- The event witnessed participation of industry leaders, academicians and scholars to promote traditional medicines and systems.
- It's aim is to attract “lucrative investments” to build India as the ‘global Ayush destination’ in the world through agreements with international and national institutions.

GLOBAL PATIDAR BUSINESS SUMMIT**KEY POINTS**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Global Patidar Business Summit (GPBS), being organized by Sardardham, on 29th April, 2022.
- Sardardham is organizing GPBS under ‘Mission 2026’ to provide an impetus to socioeconomic development of Patidar community.
- The Summit is organized every two years. The first two Summits were held in Gandhinagar in 2018 and 2020.
- The main theme of GPBS 2022 is “Aatmanirbhar Community to Aatmanirbhar Gujarat and India”.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NEAR FIELD COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Why in News?

Google Pay has recently launched a new feature in India, 'Tap to pay for UPI', in collaboration with Pine Labs. The feature makes use of Near Field Communication (NFC) technology.

- The functionality will allow users with NFC-enabled Android smartphones and UPI (Unified Payments Interface) accounts linked to Google Pay to carry out transactions just by tapping their phones on any Pine Labs Android point-of-sale (POS) terminal across the country.
- The process is much faster compared to scanning a QR code or entering the UPI-linked mobile number which has been the conventional way till now.
- In February 2022, Apple introduced Tap to Pay on the iPhone.



KEY POINTS

What is NFC and how does it work?

- NFC is a short-range wireless connectivity technology that allows NFC-enabled devices to communicate with each other and transfer information quickly and easily with a single touch - whether to pay bills, exchange business cards, download coupons, or share a document.
- NFC transmits data through electromagnetic radio fields, to enable communication between two devices. Both devices must contain NFC chips, as transactions take place within a very short distance.

- ✓ NFC-enabled devices must be either physically touching or within a few centimetres from each other for data transfer to occur.
- In 2004, consumer electronics companies, Nokia, Philips and Sony together formed the NFC Forum, which outlined the architecture for NFC technology to create powerful new consumer-driven products.
- Nokia released the first NFC-enabled phone in 2007.

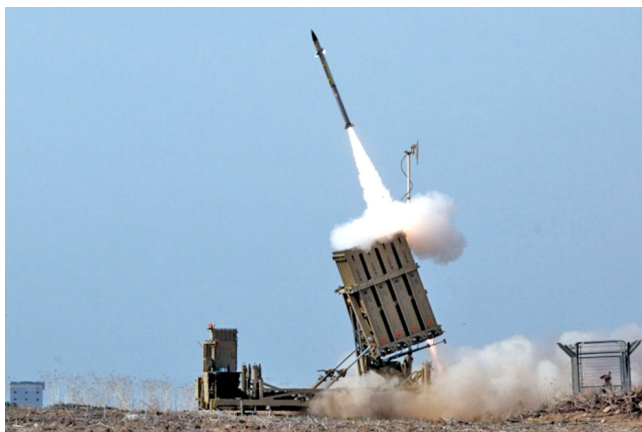
What are the other applications of NFC technology?

- It is used in contactless banking cards to perform money transactions or to generate contact-less tickets for public transport.
 - ✓ Contactless cards and readers use NFC in several applications from securing networks and buildings to monitoring inventory and sales, preventing auto theft, and running unmanned toll booths.
- It is present in speakers, household appliances, and other electronic devices that are controlled through smartphones.
- It also has an application in healthcare, to monitor patient stats through NFC-enabled wristbands. NFC is used in wireless charging too.

How safe is this technology?

- NFC technology is designed for an operation between devices within a few centimetres from each other.
- This makes it difficult for attackers to record the communication between the devices compared to other wireless technologies which have a working distance of several metres.
- The user of the NFC-enabled device determines by the touch gesture which entity the NFC communication should take place with, making it more difficult for the attacker to get connected.
- The security level of the NFC communication is by default higher compared to other wireless communication protocols.
- Since the receiving device reads data the instant one sends it, NFCs also reduce the chance of human error.

“IRON BEAM”



KEY POINTS

- On 14th April 2022 Israel successfully tested a new laser missile-defence system “Iron Beam”.
- It is the world’s first energy-based weapons system that uses a laser beam to shoot down incoming Drones, rockets, mortars, longrange missiles, anti-tank missiles etc.
- It is developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.

“RADIO AKSH”



KEY POINTS

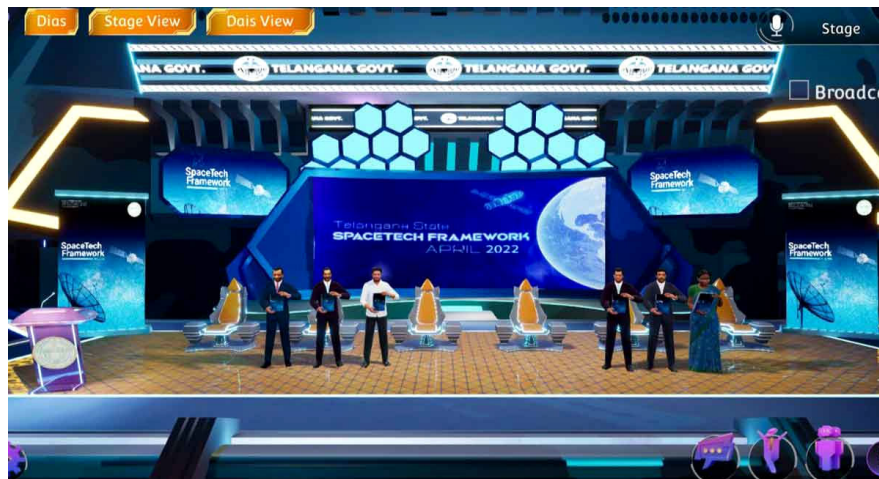
- ‘Radio Aksh’, India’s first-ever radio channel for the visually impaired has been launched in Nagpur, Maharashtra on 17th April 2022.
- It was the idea of “The Blind Relief Association Nagpur” (TBRAN) and “Samdrushti Kshamata Vikas Avam Anusandhan Mandal” (Saksham).

“THE MAVERICK EFFECT”

KEY POINTS

- “The Maverick Effect”, explains a ‘band of dreamers’ joined hands to create NASSCOM and pave the way for the IT revolution in India.
- The book, is an authoritative biography of the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) and written by Harish Mehta. Launched on April 5.

TELANGANA SPACE-TECH FRAMEWORK



KEY POINTS

- Telangana space-tech framework is a first-of its-kind attempt in the government sector to launch spacetech framework.
- It's aim is to help the state emerge as a commercial hub for all space-related products and services and promote domestic production of launch vehicles, satellite systems and subsystems, ground equipment manufacturing and other facilities.

ENERGY SECTOR

INDIA'S FIRST ETHANOL PLANT IN PURNIA



KEY POINTS

- In Bihar country's first ethanol plant was inaugurated in Purnea district.
- Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said ethanol production would help reduce the cost of petrol and generate fresh employment opportunities in the state.
- The rupees 105 crore plant set up by a private investor is the first one developed since the Union government approved the Bihar government's ethanol production and promotion policy-2021.
- The ethanol plant set up with the latest technology using zero waste discharge, has been built in 15 acres.
- It would buy 130 tonnes of rice husk and 150 tonnes of maize or rice from farmers every day.
- It is country's first grain-based ethanol plant.

IREDA REGISTERS HISTORIC ANNUAL PERFORMANCE IN 2021-22

KEY POINTS

- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) has registered historic annual performance in 2021-22 in midst of covid pandemic.
- The profit has jumped 83 percent to all-time high of 634 crore rupees.
- The Board of Directors of IREDA approved the audited financial results for 2021 – 2022.
- The loan disbursement of over 16 thousand crore rupees is also the highest in the company's history and a record increase by 82 percent from the previous year.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGY

STATE ENERGY AND CLIMATE INDEX

Why in News?

Recently, the NITI Aayog launched the State Energy and Climate Index (SECI). It is the first index that aims to track the efforts made by states and UTs in the climate and energy sector.

- The parameters of the index have been devised keeping in mind India's goals for climate change and clean energy transition.

KEY POINTS

What are the Key Points of SECI?

Objectives: The objectives of the index are:

- Ranking the States based on their efforts towards improving energy access, energy consumption, energy efficiency, and safeguarding the environment.
- Helping drive the agenda of the affordable, accessible, efficient and clean energy transition at the State level;
- Encouraging healthy competition among the states on different dimensions of energy and climate.

Parameters: The State Energy and Climate Index (SECI) ranks states and UTs on six parameters:

- Discoms' (Power distribution companies) Performance;
- Access Affordability And Reliability Of Energy;
- Clean Energy Initiatives;
- Energy Efficiency;
- Environmental Sustainability;
- New Initiatives.

Categorization: Based on the outcome of SECI scores, states and union territories have been categorized into three groups -- front runners, achievers, and aspirants.

- **Top Performers:** Gujarat, Kerala and Punjab have been adjudged as top three performer states in the NITI Aayog's SECI.
 - ✓ The top three performers among smaller states are Goa, Tripura and Manipur.

- **Unsatisfactory Performance:** States like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand were placed at the bottom.

Category	SECI score	
Front-runners (Top one-third)	Composite SECI score ≥ 46	
Achievers (Middle one-third)	Composite SECI score between 36 and 46	
Aspirants (Lowest one-third)	Composite SECI score ≤ 36	

- **Need:** India is a resource-rich and diverse country. Many of its states are comparable to countries in the European Union in terms of area, population, and diversity of resources.
 - ✓ Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach will not be appropriate as each state and Union Territory (UT) differ in terms of culture, geography, and use of energy resources.
 - ✓ It is imperative for each state and UT to have its own policy to harness its potential and capability.

What are India's Climate Change Commitments?

- The Prime Minister of India at the COP-26 Glasgow summit presented five nectar elements, Panchamrit, to deal with climate change:
 - ✓ India will reach its non-fossil installed electricity capacity to 500 GW by 2030.
 - ✓ India will meet 50% of its electricity requirements from renewable energy by 2030.
 - ✓ India will reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now onwards till 2030.
 - ✓ By 2030, India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by less than 45%.
 - ✓ By the year 2070, India will achieve the target of Net-zero.

Index	World Energy Trilemma Index (WETI)	Energy Transition Index (ETI)	Renewable Energy Country Attractiveness Index (RECAI)	Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)
Publishing Agency	World Energy Council	World Economic Forum (WEF)	Ernst & Young (EY)	Germanwatch e.V.
What it measures	Measures energy system performance in terms of Energy Security, Energy Equity, Environmental Sustainability in Country context	Checks nation's energy system information	Ranks performance of economies based on the investment made in the renewable energy sector -energy supply, renewable technologies, & ease of doing business	Measures country's progress towards the NDC 2030 targets and compares climate protection performance of countries
India's Rank	75/127 (2021)	87/115 (2021)	3/40 (2021)	10/63 (2022)
Best performing countries	Top 3: Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark	Top 3: Sweden, Norway, Denmark	Top 2: USA & Mainland China	Top 6: Denmark (4 th), Sweden (5 th), Norway (6 th)

GREEN INITIATIVES FOR EFFECTIVE PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched the Awareness Mascot 'Prakriti' & Green Initiatives for Effective Plastic Waste Management.

- The mascot will spread greater awareness among masses about small changes that can be sustainably adopted in our lifestyle for a better environment.
- Earlier in February, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change announced the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2022.

What are the Green Initiatives Launched?

- National Dashboard on Elimination of Single Use Plastic (SUP) and Plastic Waste Management by MoEFCC to bring all stakeholders including Central Ministries/ Departments, State/UT Governments at one place and track the progress made for elimination of SUP and effective management of plastic waste.
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Portal by Central Pollution Control Board {CPCB} for Plastic Packaging, improving accountability, traceability, transparency and facilitating ease of reporting compliance to EPR Obligations by Producers, Importers and Brand-owners

- Mobile App for Single Use Plastics Grievance Redressal by CPCB to empower citizens to check sale/usage/manufacturing of SUP in their area and tackle the plastic menace.
- Monitoring module for Single Use Plastics (SUPs) by CPCB for local bodies, State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and CPCB, to inventorize details of SUP production/sale & usage in commercial establishments at district level, and on-ground enforcement of ban on SUP.
- Industrial production of Graphene from Waste Plastic by National Institute of Health and Environment & National Research Development Corporation to promote more industries to come forward to upcycle plastic waste.

TWO NEW GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE SITES

Why in News?

Recently, Geological Survey of India (GSI) has identified two geological heritage sites in the Indian Himalayan Region of India.

- The sites identified are Siwalik Fossil Park, Himachal Pradesh and Stromatolite bearing Dolomite / Limestone of Buxa Formation of Buxa Formation, Sikkim.
- With inclusion of these two sites, there are 34 Geological Heritage Sites in India.
- Earlier, the GSI identified certain geological sites across the Northeast for promotion of geo-tourism.

KEY POINTS

- Siwalik Fossil Park (Himachal Pradesh): The Siwalik Fossil park displays a rich collection of vertebrate fossils recovered from the Siwalik rocks of the area of Plio-Pleistocene age (2.6 million to 11,700 years ago).
 - ✓ The deposition of Siwalik sediments took place in the narrow linear depression, called the 'fore deep', which started developing in front of the Himalayas since the inception of its uplift in the middle Miocene (23 million years to 2.6 million years ago).
- Stromatolite bearing Dolomite / Limestone of Buxa Formation of Buxa Formation (Sikkim): This Geoheritage site at Mamley exposes lithounits of Buxa Formation, Daling Group of Proterozoic age (2.5 billion years to 541 million years ago).
 - ✓ The dolostones (sedimentary rock) are profusely stromatolitic (Precambrian algal structures). This site provides one of the rare examples of early life in Sikkim Himalaya.
 - ✓ The Precambrian is the earliest of the geologic ages, which are marked by different layers of sedimentary rock.

What are Geo-heritage Sites?

- Geo-heritage refers to the geological features which are inherently or culturally significant offering insight to earth's evolution or history to earth science or that can be utilized for education.
- Geological Survey of India (GSI) is the parent body which is making efforts towards identification and protection of geo-heritage sites/national geological monuments in the country.

Geological heritage site/National geological monument	
ANDHRA PRADESH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volcanogenic bedded Barytes, Mangampeta, Cuddapah Dist. • Eparchaeon Unconformity, Chittor Dist. • Natural Geological Arch, Tirumala Hills, Chittor Dist. • Erra Matti Dibbalu- the dissected and stabilized coastal red sediment mounds located between Vishakhapatnam and Bhimuniapatnam.
KERALA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laterite near Angadipuram PWD rest house premises, Malapuram Dist. • Varkala Cliff Section, Thiruvananthapuram Dist.
TAMILNADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fossil wood near Tiruvakkarai, South Arcot Dist. • National fossil wood park, Sattanur, Tiruchirappalli Dist. • Charnockite, St. Thomas Mount, Madras. • Badlands of Karai Formation with Cretaceous fossils along Karai – Kulakkalnattam Section, Perambalur District.
MAHARASHTRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lonar Lake, Buldana Dist.
GUJARAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sedimentary Structures – Eddy Markings, Kadan Dam, Panch Mahals Dist.
RAJASTHAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sendra Granite, Pali Dist. • Barr Conglomerate, Pali Dist. • Stromatolite Fossil Park, Jharmarkotra Rock Phosphate deposit, Udaipur Dist. • Gossan in Rajpura-Dariba Mineralised belt, Udaipur Dist.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stromatolite Park near Bhojunda, Chittaurgarh Dist. • Akal Fossil Wood Park, Jaisalmer Dist. • Kishangarh Nepheline Syenite, Ajmer Dist. • Welded Tuff, Jodhpur Dist. • Jodhpur Group – Malani Igneous Suite Contact, Jodhpur Dist. • Great Boundary Fault at Satur, Bundi Dist.
KARNATAKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columnar Lava, St Mary Island Udupi Dist. • Pillow lavas near Mardihalli, Chitradurga Dist. • Peninsular Gneiss, Lalbagh, Bangalore • Pyroclastics & Pillow lavas, Kolar Gold fields, Kolar Dist
CHATTISGARH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Permian Marine bed at Manendragarh, Surguja Dist
HIMACHAL PRADESH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siwalik Fossil Park, Saketi, Sirmurdt.,
ODISHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pillow Lava in Iron ore belt at • Nomira, Keonjhar dist.
JHARKHAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant Fossil bearing Intertrappean beds of Rajmahal Formation, upper Gondwana sequence around Mandro, Sahibganj dist
NAGALAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagahill Ophiolite Site near Pungro,
SIKKIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stromatolite bearing Dolomite / Limestone of Buxa Formation at Mamley, near Namchi, South district.

DISTRICT GANGA COMMITTEES AND NAMAMI GANGE

Why in News?

The Ministry of Jal Shakti has launched the ‘Digital Dashboard for District Ganga Committees (DGCs) Performance Monitoring System’ (GDPMS) under Namami Gange Programme.

- The Digital Dashboard has been devised to help the DGCs in enhancing people-river connections.

KEY POINTS

What are District Ganga Committees?

- District Ganga Committees were constituted in the districts on the Ganga River basin for putting in place a mechanism at the district level to ensure people's participation in management and pollution abatement in river Ganga and its tributaries.
- The DGCs are mandated to ensure proper utilization of assets created under Namami Gange, monitor drains/sewage falling in River Ganga and its tributaries, and create a strong connect of people with Ganga rejuvenation.

AIR QUALITY DATABASE 2022: WHO

Why in News?

Ahead of the World Health Day (7th April), the World Health Organisation (WHO) has released Air Quality Database 2022, which shows that Almost the entire global population (99%) breathes air that exceeds WHO's air quality limits.

- The WHO for the first time has taken ground measurements of annual mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). It also includes measurements of Particulate Matter with diameters equal or smaller than 10 µm (PM10) or 2.5 µm (PM2.5).
- The findings have prompted WHO to highlight the importance of curbing fossil fuel use and taking other tangible steps to reduce air pollution levels.
- Earlier, in the 2021 World Air Quality Report released by IQAir (a Swiss group), India was home to 11 of the 15 most polluted cities in Central and South Asia in 2021.

What are the Findings?

- Unhealthy Air: More than 6,000 cities in 117 countries are now monitoring air quality but their residents are still breathing unhealthy levels of fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, while people in low and middle-income countries suffer the highest exposure.
- Increased Collection of Data: As many as 2,000 more cities and human settlements are now recording ground monitoring data for particulate matter, PM10 and/or PM2.5, than in the last update (2018).
 - ✓ This marks an almost sixfold rise in reporting since the database was first made in 2011.

- **Impact of Air Pollution:** Meanwhile, evidence base for the damage air pollution does to the human body has been growing rapidly and points to significant harm caused by even low levels of many air pollutants.
 - ✓ Particulate matter, especially PM 2.5, is capable of penetrating deep into the lungs and entering the bloodstream, causing Cardiovascular, Cerebrovascular (stroke) and Respiratory Impacts.
 - ✓ NO₂ is associated with respiratory diseases, particularly asthma, leading to respiratory symptoms (such as coughing, wheezing or difficulty breathing), hospital admissions and visits to emergency rooms.
- **Compliance with WHO Air Quality Guidelines:** In the 117 countries monitoring air quality, the air in 17% of cities in high-income countries falls below WHO's air quality guidelines for PM 2.5 or PM 10.
 - ✓ In low and middle-income countries, air quality in less than 1% of the cities complies with WHO recommended thresholds.

What are the WHO's New Air Quality Guidelines?

- The 2021 guidelines recommend new air quality levels to protect the health of populations, by reducing levels of key air pollutants, some of which also contribute to climate change.
- By striving to achieve these guideline levels, countries will be both protecting health as well as mitigating global climate change.
- WHO move sets the stage for eventual shifts in policy in the government towards evolving newer stricter standards.
- WHO's new guidelines recommend air quality levels for 6 pollutants, where evidence has advanced the most on health effects from exposure.
 - ✓ 6 classical pollutants include particulate matter (PM 2.5 and 10), ozone (O₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and carbon monoxide (CO).

New WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines

Pollutant	Time	2005 levels	New 2021 levels
PM_{2.5} Particulate matter <2.5 microns	Annual	10	5
	24-hour	25	15
PM₁₀ Particulate matter <10 microns	Annual	20	15
	24-hour	50	45
O₃ Ozone	Peak season	-	60
	8-hour	100	100
NO₂ Nitrogen dioxide	Annual	40	10
	24-hour	-	25
SO₂ Sulfur dioxide	24-hour	20	40
CO Carbon monoxide	24-hour	-	4

What are the Suggestions to Improve Air Quality and Health?

- Adopt or revise and implement national air quality standards according to the latest WHO Air Quality Guidelines.
- Monitor air quality and identify sources of air pollution.
- Support the transition to exclusive use of clean household energy for cooking, heating and lighting.
- Build safe and affordable public transport systems and pedestrian- and cycle-friendly networks
- Implement stricter vehicle emissions and efficiency standards; and enforce mandatory inspection and maintenance for vehicles.
- Invest in energy-efficient housing and power generation
- Improve industry and municipal waste management
- Reduce agricultural waste incineration, forest fires and certain agro-forestry activities (e.g. charcoal production)
- Include air pollution in curricula for health professionals and providing tools for the health sector to engage.

‘PRAKRITI’

KEY POINTS

- Union Minister of Environment Shri Bhupender Yadav, has launched the mascotto ‘Prakriti’ on April 6. This will raise public awareness about small changes that can be made to our lifestyle for a better environment.

REPORTS**HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON INDIA 2021: US****Why in News?**

- Recently, the US State Department released a strong and critical report on human rights in India in 2021.
- The report is submitted each year to the US Congress which is retrospective and contains a country-wise discussion of the state of internationally recognised individual, civil, political and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements.
- In December 2021, data related to human rights violations in states was provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Rajya sabha.

Highlights of the Report**Arbitrary Arrest and Detention:**

- Indian law “prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention but both occurred during the year”, with police using “special security laws to postpone judicial reviews of arrests”.
- Pretrial detention was arbitrary and lengthy, sometimes exceeding the duration of the sentence given to those convicted.

Violations of Privacy:

- Citing media reports on journalists being targeted for surveillance through the Pegasus malware, the report flagged violations of privacy by government authorities, “including the use of technology to arbitrarily or unlawfully surveil or interfere with the privacy of individuals”.

Curbs on Free Expression and Media:

- The report highlighted instances in which the government or actors considered close to the government allegedly pressured or harassed media outlets critical of the government, including through online trolling.
- It detailed the government’s order of February, 2021 directing Twitter to block accounts of journalists covering protests against the three (later repealed) farm laws.

On Freedom of Association:

- The report highlighted the cases of Amnesty International India, whose assets were frozen by the Enforcement Directorate, and the suspension of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) license of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) for alleged violations.

UNEP REPORT ON NOISE POLLUTION

Why in News?

Recently released United Nations Environment Programme report titled Annual Frontiers Report 2022 became controversial on account of the mention of a single city, Moradabad of Uttar Pradesh.

- The Frontiers report identifies and offers solutions to three environmental issues: urban noise pollution, wildfires and phenological shifts that merit attention and action from governments and the public at large to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

KEY POINTS

What was the Controversy?

- The report compiles studies about noise levels in several cities around the world and illustrates a subset of 61 cities and the range of dB (decibel) levels that have been measured.
- Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Asansol and Moradabad are the five Indian cities mentioned in this list.
- Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh was shown as having a dB range from 29 to 114.
 - ✓ At a maximum value of 114, it was the second noisiest city in the list.
 - ✓ While road traffic, industry and high population density are well-known factors associated with high dB levels, the inclusion of Moradabad appeared strange because similar studies in the past had never suggested it to be an unusually noisy city.
- The first was Dhaka, Bangladesh at a maximum value of 119 dB.

Why are Measurements of Noise Important?

Fulfil the WHO Guidelines:

- The latest 2018 World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines established a health-protective recommendation for road traffic noise levels of 53 dB.

Adverse Effects on Public Health:

- The Frontiers report compiled a host of evidence, including the adverse effects of noise on public health, which range from mild and temporary distress to severe and chronic physical impairment.

- ✓ Estimates suggest that in Europe 22 million and 6.5 million people suffer from chronic noise annoyance and sleep disturbance, respectively.
- ✓ The elderly, pregnant women and shift workers are among those at risk of noise-induced sleep disturbance.
- ✓ Noise-induced awakenings can trigger a range of physiological and psychological stress responses because sleep is necessary for hormonal regulation and cardiovascular functioning.
- ✓ Traffic noise exposure is a risk factor for the development of cardiovascular and metabolic disorders such as elevated blood pressure, arterial hypertension, coronary heart disease and diabetes.
- ✓ Long-term exposure to environmental noise contributes to 48,000 new cases of ischemic heart disease and causes 12,000 premature deaths annually in Europe.

What is India Doing about Noise Pollution?

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is mandated to track noise levels, set standards as well as ensure, via their State units, that sources of excessive noise are controlled.
- The agency has a manual monitoring system where sensors are installed in major cities and few cities have the facility to track noise levels in real time.

GLOBAL WIND REPORT 2022

Why in News?

Recently, the Global Wind Report for 2022 was published by the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC).

- GWEC was established in 2005 to provide a credible and representative forum for the entire wind energy sector at an international level.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

Wind Energy Installations Must Quadruple Every Year:

- Wind energy installations every year across the world must quadruple from the 94 GW (Gigawatt) installed in 2021 within this decade to meet the global climate targets.
 - ✓ Without the necessary amplification, restricting global warming over pre-industrial levels to 1.5 degrees Celsius - a target set by the Paris Agreement — and achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050 may become difficult.

Capacity Installed in 2021:

- New installations of 93.6 GW in 2021 brought global cumulative wind energy capacity to 837 GW, a Year-on-Year (YoY) growth of 12%.

- The onshore wind market added 72.5 GW worldwide. That is 18% lower than the previous year due to a slowdown in China and the US, the world's two largest wind markets.
- The offshore wind market enjoyed its best ever year in 2021, with 21.1GW commissioned.

New offshore installations likely to Decline:

- New offshore installations in 2022 are likely to decline to the 2019/2020 levels.
 - ✓ Decline will be primarily due to the reduction of installations in China.
- However, market growth is expected to regain momentum from 2023, eventually passing the 30GW-mark in 2026.

Offshore Wind Energy Generation Increases Return:

- Offshore wind energy generation increases return on investment, along with reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Carbon dioxide emissions can reduce by 0.3-1.61 gigatonnes every year by 2050 if offshore wind energy generation is scaled up.

What are the Challenges to Growth of the Wind Energy Sector?

- Inconsistent policy environments focused on shortterm political aims.
- Badly designed markets which do not enable bankable renewable energy projects.
- Infrastructure and transmission bottlenecks.
- A lack of adequate industrial and trade policies related to renewable technologies
- Hostile political or misinformation campaigns.

What is the Scope of the Wind Energy Sector in India?

- In India, more than 1.4 GW of wind was installed in 2021, exceeding the 1.1 GW of installations during the previous year.
- The Government has set a target of installing 5 GW of offshore capacity by 2022 and 30 GW by 2030.
 - ✓ India is yet to develop its offshore wind energy facility.
- India can generate 127 GW of offshore wind energy with its 7,600 km of coastline.
 - ✓ Onshore wind energy refers to turbines that are located on land and use wind to generate electricity.
 - ✓ Offshore wind energy is the energy generated from the wind at sea.
- The Indian wind market outlook for 2022 and 2023 is projected at 3.2 GW and 4.1 GW of onshore wind installations, respectively.

IPCC: PART THREE OF SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT

Why in News?

Recently, the United Nations' climate science body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the third part of its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6).

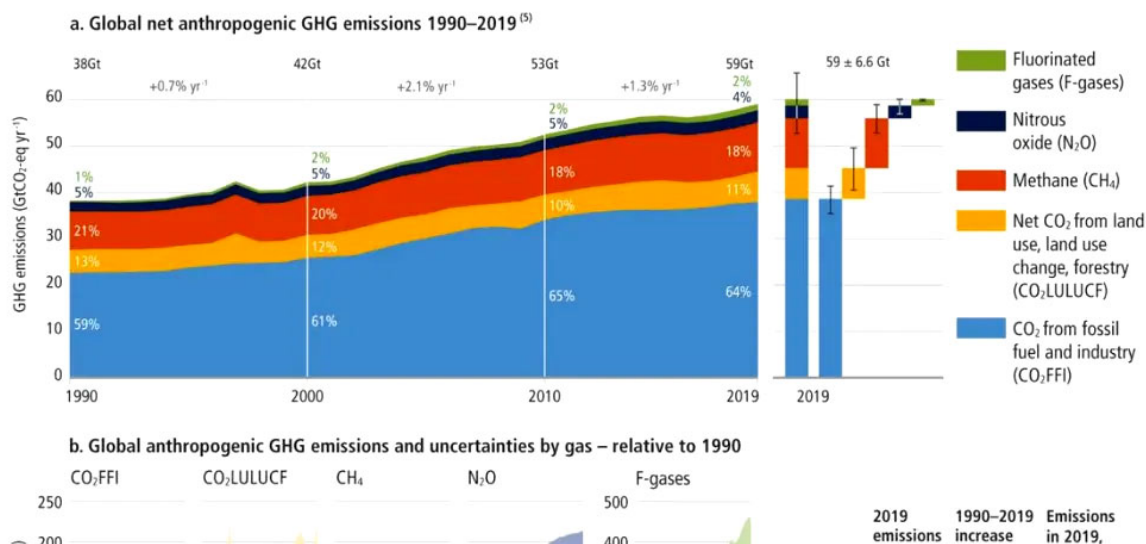
- This second part of the report was published in March 2022 which was about climate change impacts, risks and vulnerabilities, and adaptation options.
- The first part of this report, on the physical science of climate change was published in 2021. It had warned that 1.5 degree Celsius warming was likely to be achieved before 2040 itself.

KEY POINTS

What are the Key Findings of the Report?

GreenHouse Gas Emissions:

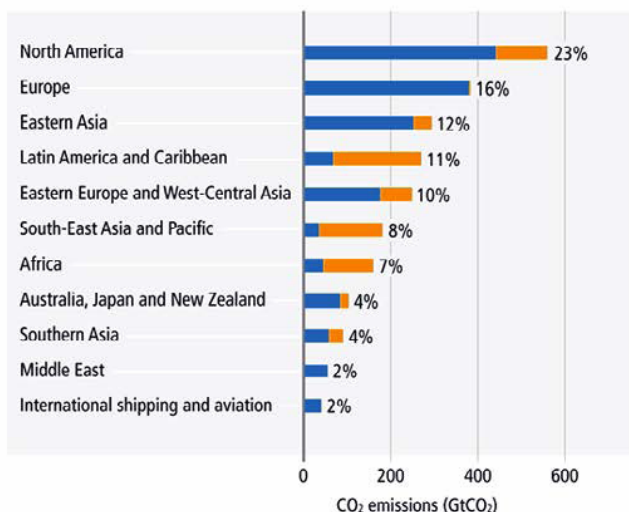
- In 2019, global net anthropogenic Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were at 59 Gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂e), 54% higher than in 1990.
 - ✓ Net emissions refer to emissions accounted for after deducting emissions soaked up by the world's forests and oceans.
 - ✓ Anthropogenic emissions refer to emissions that originate from human-driven activities like the burning of coal for energy or cutting of forests.
- This emissions growth has been driven mainly by CO₂ emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and the industrial sector, as well as methane emissions.
- But the average annual rate of growth slowed to 1.3% per year in the period 2010-19, compared to 2.1% per year in the period 2000-09.
- At least 18 countries have reduced GHG emissions for longer than 10 years on a continuous basis due to decarbonisation of their energy system, energy efficiency measures and reduced energy demand.



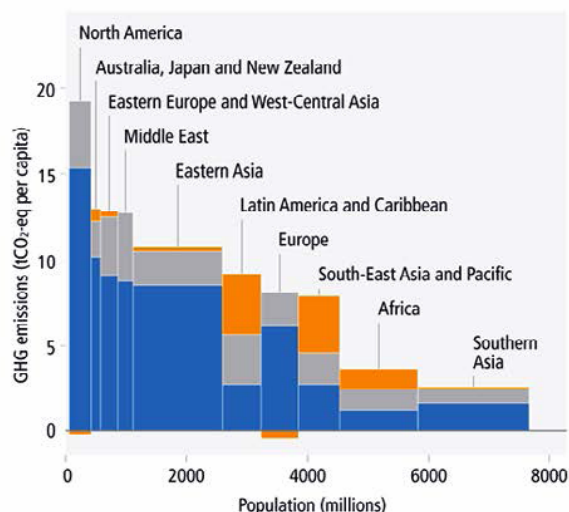
Emission by the Least Developed Countries:

- Carbon inequality remains pervasive as ever with Least Developed Countries (LDCs) emitting only 3.3% of global emissions in 2019.
- Their average per capita emissions in the period 1990-2019 were only 1.7 tonnes CO₂e, compared to the global average of 6.9 tCO₂e.
- LDCs contributed less than 0.4% of total historical CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels and industry in the period 1850-2019.
- Globally, 41% of the world's population lived in countries emitting less than 3 tCO₂e per capita in 2019.

Historical cumulative net anthropogenic CO₂ emissions per region (1850–2019)

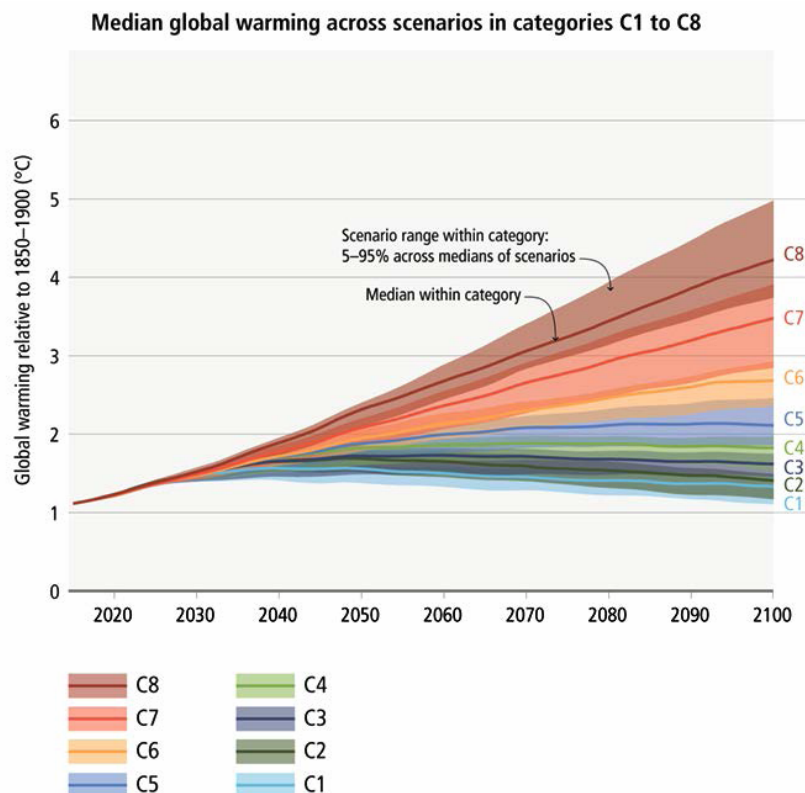


Net anthropogenic GHG emissions per capita and for total population, per region (2019)



Pledges to the Paris Agreement:

- Upon adding up the NDCs announced by countries till October 2021, the IPCC finds that it is likely that warming will exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) in this century, thereby failing the Paris Agreement's mandate.
- ✓ Current pledges made by countries who have signed the Paris Agreement are known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- The CO_2 emissions from existing and planned fossil fuel infrastructure - coal, oil, and gas – contribute greatly to this projected failure.



- In its best-case scenario, known as the C1 pathway, the IPCC outlines what the world needs to do to limit temperatures to 1.5°C , with limited or no ‘overshoot’.
- ✓ Overshoot refers to global temperatures crossing the 1.5°C threshold temporarily, but then being brought back down using technologies that suck CO_2 out of the atmosphere.
- To achieve the C1 pathway, global GHG emissions must fall by 43% by 2030.

Low Emissions Technologies:

- Widespread ‘system transformations’ are required across the energy, buildings, transport, land and other sectors, to achieve the 1.5°C target and this will involve adopting low-emission or zero carbon pathways of development in each sector. And solutions are available at affordable costs.

- The costs of low emissions technologies have fallen continuously since 2010. On a unit costs basis, solar energy has dropped 85%, wind by 55 %, and lithium-ion batteries by 85%.
- Their deployment, or usage, has increased multiple fold since 2010 - 10 times for solar and 100 times for electric vehicles.
- Reducing fossil fuel use in the energy sector, demand management and energy efficiency in the industrial sector and adopting the principles of ‘sufficiency’ and efficiency in the construction of buildings are among the plethora of solutions.

Demand-side Mitigation:

- It also adds that demand-side mitigation, ie, behavioural changes such as adopting plant-based diets, or shifting to walking and cycling “can reduce global GHG emissions in end use sectors by 40- 70% by 2050 compared to baseline scenarios” and improve wellbeing.
 - ✓ Most of the potential for demand-side mitigation currently lies in developed countries.

Impact on GDP:

- The IPCC states that low-cost climate mitigation options could halve global GHG emissions by 2030. In fact, the long-term benefits of limiting warming far outweigh the costs.
- Investing in decarbonisation would have a minimal impact on global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Short Fall of Finances:

- Financial flows fall short of the levels needed to achieve the ambitious mitigation goals, however.
- The gaps are the widest for the agriculture, forestry, and other land uses (AFOLU) sector and for developing countries.
 - ✓ But the global financial system is large enough and “sufficient global capital and liquidity” exist to close these gaps.
- For developing countries, it recommends scaled up public grants, as well as “increased levels of public finance and publicly mobilised private finance flows from developed to developing countries in the context of the USD 100 billion-a-year goal; increase the use of public guarantees to reduce risks and leverage private flows at lower cost; local capital markets development and building greater trust in international cooperation processes”.

What is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change?

- It is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change.
- It was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the

scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

- IPCC assessments provide a scientific basis for governments at all levels to develop climate related policies, and they underlie negotiations at the UN Climate Conference – the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

What is the Assessment Report of IPCC?

- The Assessment Reports, the first of which had come out in 1990, are the most comprehensive evaluations of the state of the earth's climate.
 - ✓ Every few years (about 7 years), the IPCC produces assessment reports.
- Hundreds of experts go through every available piece of relevant, published scientific information to prepare a common understanding of the changing climate.
- The four subsequent assessment reports, each thousands of pages long, came out in 1995, 2001, 2007 and 2015.
 - ✓ These have formed the basis of the global response to climate change.
- Over the years, each assessment report has built on the work of the previous ones, adding more evidence, information and data.
 - ✓ So that most of the conclusions about climate change and its impacts have far greater clarity, certainty and wealth of new evidence now, than earlier.
- It is these negotiations that have produced the Paris Agreement, and previously the Kyoto Protocol.
 - ✓ The Paris Agreement, negotiated on the basis of the Fifth Assessment Report.
- The Assessment Reports - by three working groups of scientists.
- Working Group-I - Deals with the scientific basis for climate change.
- Working Group-II - Looks at the likely impacts, vulnerabilities and adaptation issues.
 - ✓ Working Group-III - Deals with actions that can be taken to combat climate change.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK REPORT

KEY REPORT

- In Asian Development Outlook report, published by Asian Development Bank (ADB) has highlighted that with the increase in commodity prices food prices are also expected to rise.
- The report forecasted that India's GDP growth to 7.5 percent in 2022-23 from 2021-22's estimated 8.9 percent.

ECONOMY SCENARIO

CARDLESS CASH WITHDRAWALS AT ATMS

Why in News?

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced cardless cash withdrawals at ATMs across the country which will enable consumers to use Unified Payment Interface (UPI) on their smartphones to withdraw cash from Automatic Teller Machine (ATMs).

KEY POINTS

How is this Step Significant?

Enhance Security of Cash Withdrawal:

- It would help prevent frauds like card skimming and card cloning.

Enable users to Take Cash from Any ATM:

- Currently, only existing customers of a few banks are allowed to withdraw cash without cards, and from specific bank's ATM networks.
 - ✓ However, the RBI's move to allow interoperability in cardless withdrawals will enable users to take cash from any and all ATMs.

Invite More Players into the Payment Ecosystem:

- The move will invite more players into the payment ecosystem in India to innovate and solve further problems of customers.

What is Card Skimming or Card Cloning?

- Credit card cloning or skimming is the illegal act of making unauthorized copies of credit or debit cards.
- This enables criminals to use them for payments, effectively stealing the cardholder's money and/or putting the cardholder in debt.
- Once the device picks up the data, it can be used to gain unauthorised access to the user's banking records.
- The stolen information can be coded onto a new card, a process called cloning, and be used to make payments and transact with other bank accounts.

What are the Challenges in Cardless Cash Withdrawal Feature?

Limitation on Cash Withdrawal:

- Currently, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HDFC Bank and SBI allow cardless cash withdrawals for their users. But, accessing the feature is cumbersome as it has certain withdrawal limits, and the transaction is charged.

Scalability of this Feature:

- Scalability of this feature might be a challenge as it has to be seen how many banks quickly roll it out to their customers.

MONETARY POLICY REVIEW: RBI

Why in News

Recently, for the eleventh time in a row, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its latest Monetary Policy review has decided to keep the main policy rate – Repo rate – unchanged at 4%.

- It has also retained its accommodative stance, but indicated it will engage in a gradual and calibrated withdrawal of surplus liquidity to rein in inflation.

KEY POINTS

What is the Significance of this Monetary Policy Review?

- **Acknowledging the Impact of Russia-Ukraine War:** In the wake of the rise in crude oil and commodity prices and the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, RBI has slashed the growth forecast to 7.2% for fiscal 2022-23 from 7.8% projected earlier.
 - ✓ The Russia-Ukraine war could potentially impede the economic recovery through elevated commodity prices and global spill-over channels.
- **Standing Deposit Facility:** The RBI also introduced a new measure, the Standing Deposit Facility – an additional tool for absorbing liquidity - to suck out surplus liquidity of Rs 8.5 lakh crore from the financial system which is fuelling inflation.
- **Signalling Shift in Policy Stance:** This Monetary Policy Review signals that the RBI has finally shifted its priorities to tackle inflation.
 - ✓ Thus, there is a possibility of a hike in its key policy rate (Repo Rate) in the coming months.
 - ✓ Further, RBI has hiked its inflation forecast from 4.5% projected earlier to 5.7% still below the upper band of 6% of the RBI's target – in 2022-23.

- **Resorting to Pre-pandemic Levels:** RBI policy panel took a concrete step by restoring the policy rate corridor under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) to pre-pandemic width of 50 basis points.
 - ✓ This is aimed at bringing down the inflationary pressures.
 - ✓ LAF is a tool used in the monetary policy that allows banks to borrow money from the RBI through repurchase agreements (Repo) or to lend funds to the RBI through reverse repo agreement.

FINANCE MINISTER SMT. NIRMALA SITHARAMAN ATTENDS FATF MINISTERIAL MEETING IN WASHINGTON D.C.

KEY POINTS

- Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman attended the FATF Ministerial Meeting in Washington D.C. on 21st April 2022, conducted along-side the 2022 Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- This meeting focussed on Ministers' providing strategic direction, by endorsing the FATF's strategic priorities for the years 2022-24 and reinforcing Ministers' commitment to ensure suitable funding for the delivery of the strategic priorities which are Strengthening the FATF Global Network, FATF systems of Mutual Evaluations.
- Enhancing International Beneficial Ownership Transparency, Increasing Capabilities to more effectively recover Criminal assets, Leveraging Digital Transformation, Ensuring Sustainable Funding for FATF Strategic priorities.
- During the Meeting, the Finance Minister reaffirmed India's commitment to fighting Money Laundering.
- Terrorist Financing and Proliferation Financing and acknowledged and appreciated FATF on their work on Beneficial Ownership Transparency, Asset Recovery, and the role of FATF Global network in safeguarding the global financial system.

INDIA'S FIRST PURE GREEN HYDROGEN PLANT IN JORHAT

KEY POINTS

- In the first significant step towards Green Hydrogen Economy in India, the country's first 99.999% pure Green Hydrogen plant has been commissioned in Jorhat, Assam.
- The plant set up by Oil India Limited (OIL) has an installed capacity of 10 kg per day which is expected to increase further.
- The plant produces Green Hydrogen from the electricity generated by the existing 500kW Solar plant using a 100 KW Anion Exchange Membrane (AEM) Electrolyser array.
- The AEM technology is being used for the first time in India.
- Meanwhile, OIL has initiated a detailed study in collaboration with IIT- Guwahati on blending of Green Hydrogen with Natural Gas.

INDIA POST TO COLLABORATE WITH STARTUPS FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION SOLUTIONS



KEY POINTS

- The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has launched Fincluvation- a joint initiative to collaborate with Fintech Startup community to cocreate and innovate solutions for financial inclusion.
- According to the Department of Post (DoP), intersection of technology with financial services coupled with traditional distribution networks is opening up new set of business opportunities.
- Fincluvation will allow the start-ups to work with IPPB and DoP experts to develop solutions and conduct pilots using the postal network and IPPB's technology stack.
- Successful pilots can then mature into long-term partnerships.

- Fincluvation mentors will work closely with the startups to tweak products to the customer needs and align the go-to-market strategies with operating models of IPPB and DoP.
- Start-ups can apply at Fincluvation page <https://www.ippbonline.com/web/ippb/fincluvation>.

UTSAV PORTAL LAUNCHED TO PROMOTE INDIAN TOURIST DESTINATIONS GLOBALLY

KEY POINTS

- The Ministry of Tourism and Culture has launched the Utsav Portal - a digital initiative to showcase various elements, dates and details of the events and festivals of India on a global platform and increase tourism awareness, attractions, and opportunities by providing tourists with contextual digital experiences in the form of visually appealing photographs and stills from the events.
- Additionally, the objective is also to let the devotees and travelers experience and view the sights of some of the well-known divine shrines in India in the form of Live Darshan.

DOMESTIC PATENT FILING SURPASSES INTERNATIONAL FILING BOOSTING IPR ECOSYSTEM

KEY POINTS

- India achieved yet another milestone in context of IP (Intellectual Property) innovation ecosystem, wherein for the first time in the last 11 years, the number of domestic patent filing has surpassed the number of international patent filing with the Indian Patent office during January March 2022.
- Of the total 19796 patent applications filed during the quarter, 10706 were filed by Indian applicants as against 9090 by non Indian applicants.
- The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal said this will take India a step closer to the ambitious target of establishing itself in the top 25 nations of Global Innovation Index.
- Some of the key initiatives taken by the Government over the years that has bolstered India's IP regime includes fee concessions like 10% rebate on online filing, 80% fee concession for Start-ups, small entities and educational institutions, and provisions on expedited examination for Start-ups and MSMEs etc.

AGRI EXPORTS CROSS RECORD USD 50 BILLION MARK

KEY POINTS

- Exports of agricultural products (including marine and plantation products) for the year 2021-22 have crossed USD 50 billion, highest level ever achieved for agriculture exports.
- The agricultural exports have grown by 19.92% during 2021-22 to touch \$50.21 billion.
- The growth rate is remarkable as it is over and above the growth of 17.66%, at \$41.87 billion, achieved in 2020-21 and has been achieved in spite of unprecedented logistical challenges in the form of high freight rates, container shortages etc.
- This achievement over past two years will go a long way in realising the Prime Minister's vision of improving farmers' income.

FUTURISTIC INITIATIVES FOR CLEAN ENERGY LAUNCHED UNDER MISSION INNOVATION



KEY POINTS

- Union Minister of State for Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh launched the "Mission Integrated Biorefineries" to accelerate clean energy solutions through Public - Private Partnership (PPP) on 4th April.
- The initiative fulfills India's commitment to a low-carbon future through the global initiative "Mission Innovation", centred on technology advancement and cooperation, zero waste bio-refinery for cost effective production of sustainable bio-fuels with co-production of bio-based chemicals and materials, using bio-technological interventions.
- The Ministry also launched three Integrated Clean Energy Material Acceleration Platforms to leverage emerging capabilities in next-generation computing, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), and robotics to accelerate the pace of materials discovery up to 10 times faster.
- The platforms constitute a knowledge network of more than 38 elite institutions and 80 research personnel working on next-generation low-cost advanced energy materials.

- The Ministry also announced the funding opportunity of Hydrogen Valley Platform, which is a global initiative to optimise the hydrogen demand and supply by onsite generation and utilization.
- DST has committed to facilitate the delivery of three clean hydrogen valleys in India by 2030.
- Mission Innovation has the potential to unlock affordable decarbonisation pathways for sectors responsible for 52% of current global emissions.

PERSONS IN NEWS

LT GEN MANOJ C PANDE APPOINTED AS CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF



KEY POINTS

- Government has appointed Lt Gen Manoj C Pande as the Chief of the Army Staff with effect from the afternoon of April 30, 2022.
- Born on May 06, 1962, Lt Gen Manoj C Pande was commissioned on December 24, 1982 in the Corps of Engineers (The Bombay Sappers) of the Indian Army.
- During his long and distinguished service spanning over 39 years, he has served in a variety of Command, Staff and Instructional appointments.
- Lt Gen Manoj C Pande is an alumnus of National Defence Academy and has undergone courses at Staff College, Camberley (UK), Army War College, Mhow and National Defence College, New Delhi.
- For his illustrious service, Lt Gen Manoj C Pande has been conferred with Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal.

AJAY KUMAR SOOD

KEY POINTS

- A member of the Science & Technology and Innovation Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, Ajay Kumar Sood, has been appointed to the post for a period of three years.
- He succeeded biologist K Vijay Raghavan. Sood appointment was approved by Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on 20, April 2022.

CHIEF SECRETARY OF DELHI

KEY POINTS

- Senior IAS officer Naresh Kumar has been appointed as the Chief Secretary of Delhi.
- Naresh Kumar, an IAS officer from the 1987 batch of the AGMUT cadre, has been shifted from Arunachal Pradesh to Delhi.

NEW VICE CHAIRMAN OF NITI AAYOG

KEY POINTS

- Economist Suman Bery, has been appointed as the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog after Rajiv Kumar resigned from the post.
- The cabinet committee had accepted Rajiv Kumar's resignation and appointed Suman Bery as NITI Aayog's full-time member and later as the Vice-Chairperson.

M. Vijayan

KEY POINTS

- Eminent structural biologist M.Vijayan, DAE Homi Bhabha Professor at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), passed away in Bengaluru on 24, April 2022.
- He was instrumental in the development of macromolecular crystallography in India.
- His main research areas covered protein structures, lectins and interactions of mycobacterial proteins. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2004.