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Geography

Rising US Drone Activity Over the Black Sea – A Threat to Kremlin's Peace?

Introduction and Background:

- The Defence Ministry of Russia has instructed its officials to prepare responsive strategies towards drone flights from the US over the Black Sea area.
- The increased drone presence over the Black Sea by the US is being seen with scepticism, reflecting greater US and NATO involvement in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Why is it in the News?

- An unprecedented surge in US drone activity monitored over the Black Sea has prompted Russia's Defence Ministry to take necessary action to deter American reconnaissance aircraft.
- This development heightens tension, signalling possible forceful actions to maintain regional sovereignty.

The Geographical Gaze: The Black Sea

- Known as the Euxine Sea, the Black Sea is a major water body connecting Eastern Europe and Western Asia.
- The Black Sea is a marginal sea of the Atlantic Ocean, fringed by the Pontic, Caucasus, and Crimean Mountains.
- A conduit system formed by the Dardanelles, Bosphorus and Marmara Sea bridges the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- It also connects to the Sea of Azov via the Strait of Kerch.

The Countries of the Black Sea

- The countries sharing their borders with the Black Sea are Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania.

Unfolding the Scientific Secrets of the Black Sea

- The Black Sea boasts the largest water body globally with meromictic conditions, i.e., its lower waters never mix with the upper layers leading to a completely anoxic deep water zone.
- The Black Sea basin receives seawater from the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus straits. Freshwater inputs come from multiple European rivers including the sizable Danube.
- Consequently, the salinity intensifies with depth from around 18 ppt at the surface to about 22 ppt in the deeper waters.
- Creation of a unique water mass, the Cold Intermediate Layer (CIL), separates surface waters from the deeper waters which leads to deep-water isolation.
- Below approximately 200 m, bacterial decomposition depletes any available oxygen while the anaerobic activity of certain bacteria leads to the formation of hydrogen sulphide.
- Although this restricts biodiversity, it ensures remarkable preservation of human artefacts that fall beneath such depths from normal processes of degradation.

This recent escalation in aerial surveillance activities over the Black Sea brings a geopolitical storm brewing, cornering the region's tension surrounding sovereignty, potential conflicts, and historical alliances. This issue merits close attention in the coming weeks.

The Shyok River: An Insight into a Ladakhi Tributary

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

The Shyok River, a tributary of the Indus River, recently made headlines when a mishap took the life of five army personnel during their withdrawal

from a military training exercise. The soldiers were in their T-72 tank at Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) area of eastern Ladakh when the equipment was swept away due to a sudden rise in the river's water levels.

2. ABOUT SHYOK RIVER:

-Originated from the Rimo Glacier situated in the Karakoram Range within Ladakh, a union territory in India.

-The river has a unique southeasterly to northwestern flow pattern. Initially, it moves in the southeast direction, but after joining the Pangong range, it takes a northwestern turn.

-The Shyok valley, encompassing the river, shares proximity with the Nubra Valley. The gateway to both these valleys is Khardung La, located north of Leh on the Ladakh range.

3. TRIBUTARIES OF SHYOK RIVER:

-The Nubra River, a significant tributary of the Shyok River, originates from the Siachen glacier. It also imitates the unusual southeast-to-northwest flow pattern of Shyok.

-Other tributaries include the Chang Chen Mo River (merging with Shyok) and the Galwan River that locations its origin in the southern Aksai Chin to later join Shyok.

4. CURRENT RELEVANCE:

-The reported incident underscores the difficult terrain and harsh environmental condition that the Indian armed forces work in, especially in the border areas.

-It also shines light on the geographical significance of the Shyok River and its tributaries.

5. GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

-The Shyok river's unusual flow pattern indicates the presence of Palaeolithic fault lines in the

northwest-southeast direction which are crucial in the determination of the river's upstream course.

-The geographical location and characteristics of the Shyok River and its tributaries hold strategic importance given they are in a region that is often a subject of territorial disputes.

In summary, the study of Shyok River offers valuable insights into the geographical complexity of the Ladakh region, the challenges faced by the defence forces, and the intricacies of territorial disagreements in these areas.

Eruption of Mount Etna: Europe's Most Active Volcano Stirs

Brief Introduction of Mount Etna

- Mount Etna, located on the east coast of Sicily, is Europe's most active volcano and one of the largest globally.

- The mountain, standing at about 3,326 metres, is the highest peak South of the Alps in Italy, making it the highest Mediterranean island mountain.

- Records of its volcanic activity date back to 1500 B.C, reflecting thousands of years of geological history.

Current Activity and Raised Alert

- Recently, Mount Etna has experienced increased volcanic activity, spewing hot ash and lava which subsequently raised alert levels on the island of Sicily.

- The smaller Stromboli volcano, also in Italy, showed similar activity, causing significant geological concern.

Understanding the Stratovolcano

- Mount Etna is technically known as a 'stratovolcano' or a 'composite volcano'

- Stratovolcanoes are specific volcanic formations with a conical shape created by layers of volcanic material deposited during successive volcanic eruptions.
- These volcanoes usually have a gentle slope at the base that steepens towards the summit, resulting in tall mountain peaks, a notable feature of Mount Etna.
- Stratovolcanoes are usually part of massive volcanically active regions and are often found above subduction zones; Etna is no exception.

Subduction Zone and its Significance

- A 'subduction zone' is a point where two of the Earth's tectonic plates collide and one tectonic plate moves or 'subducts' beneath the other one.
- Such zones are crucial in volcanic activity since the collisions and subductions of these rigid tectonic plates often result in volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.
- Understanding these zones enables scientists to predict and study volcanic and seismic activities to a certain extent.

General Knowledge Pointers

- In terms of the understanding of geological features, Mount Etna offers a prominent example of a stratovolcano, and an understanding of tectonic activities.
 - The volcanic activity and the resultant reactions of these landforms immensely contribute to the study of earth science.
 - Notably, Mount Etna forms part of the Ring of Fire, a massive region around the Pacific Ocean loaded with volcanoes and earthquakes due to abundant subduction zones.
- In essence, the recent activity in Mount Etna serves as a reminder of the Earth's dynamic nature, bringing focus to our tectonic world and its impacts on human habitation, climate change, and the environment.

Gevra and Kusmunda Coal Mines: India's Coal Monarchs Make Global Marque

Introduction

- Recently, Chhattisgarh-based South Eastern Coalfields Limited's (SECL) Gevra and Kusmunda coal mines have made India proud by securing the 2nd and 4th spot in the list of the world's 10 largest coal mines by WorldAtlas.com.
- Owned by Coal India Limited (CIL), these mines are part of India's central public sector enterprise.

Geographical Position

- Gevra and Kusmunda mines are located in the Korba district of Chhattisgarh.
- This region, rich in coal deposits, significantly contributes to the nation's coal production.

Mining Performance and Output

- These mines annually produce over 100 million tons of coal, accounting for about 10% of India's total coal production.
- Gevra emerged as the largest coal mine in the country in 2023, with an annual production of 52.5 million tons in FY 22-23 and 59 million tons in FY 23-24.
- Kusmunda followed closely, producing over 50 million tons of coal in FY 23-24.

Technologies Used

- High-end machineries like "Surface Miner" are being used for eco-friendly coal extraction without blasting.
- For Overburden removal (uncover coal seam), Mines employ world's leading HEMMs (Heavy Earth Moving Machinery) and Vertical Rippers for an environment-friendly, blast-free process.

Coal India Limited (CIL)

- CIL, an Indian state-owned coal mining and refinery company, was established in November 1975 under the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973.

- The Act provides CIL a monopoly over coal mining and distribution activities in the country.
- CIL is currently the world's largest coal producer.

Important General Knowledge Points

- Coal India Ltd (CIL) is a leading public sector undertaking and the biggest coal producer and supplier in India.
- Initially, CIL was a fully government-owned entity until it underwent disinvestment in 2010, after which the government held a majority share with a share percentage standing at 67%.
- With its mines ranking significantly in the top global spots, CIL is a significant player in India's energy and industrial sector.

Economics

Unravelling the Highlights and Concerns of RBI's Financial Stability Report, June 2024

1. Meet the Report: RBI's Bi-Annual Financial Stability Analysis

-RBI's Financial Stability Report (FSR) released in June 2024 assesses India's financial resilience in the context of international uncertainties.

-The report highlights the worrisome rise in digital personal loans and their potential impact on financial stability measures.

2. Dissecting the Financial Stability Report: Key Takeaways

-*Global Macrofinancial Risks:* According to FSR, the global financial system is resilient despite heightened uncertainties. The IMF anticipates

global growth to hover at 3.2%, while the World Bank projects a 2.6% rate.

-*Domestic Macrofinancial Risks:* The Indian economy continues to grow backed by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, anchored inflation, strong external position, and continuing fiscal consolidation.

-*Quality of Assets:* The Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) has reduced to 2.8% (March 2024), the lowest in 12 years, indicating improving asset quality.

-*Deposits and Credit Growth:* Deposit growth rose to 13.5% in the quarter ending March 2024. Credit growth also stood healthy at 19.2% but was a bit lower than the previous half-year period.

-*Personal Loans and Related Concerns:* Despite low GNPA proportions, RBI expresses concern over the potential financial instability from personal loans accessed through digital apps.

3. Decoding Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)

-These are loans made by banks or financial institutions that are in risk of default.

-Non-performing assets are a significant element in assessing the financial health of banking institutions. High NPA implies bad credit decisions, impacting the profitability and liquidity.

4. Digital Personal Loans: A Rising Concern

-*Emergence and Growth:* Post-2017, banks shifted focus to retail sectors including personal loans, fueling the growth of the digital lending market estimated at USD 350 billion by 2023.

-*Potential Risks:* These easily accessible loans potentially lead to over-borrowing and financial distress. This is substantiated by high delinquency levels for personal loans, especially for amounts below Rs 50,000.

-*RBI's Stance:* RBI is concerned with the increasing share of retail loans outdoing industrial and service loans, hence putting in place regulatory measures to control the rise.

5. Understanding Digital Personal Loans

-These are loans provided through mobile applications or online platforms with a seamless application process, paperless mechanisms, and quick approvals.

-While it aids in reaching the unbanked and underbanked populations, thus promoting financial inclusion, it carries the risk of over-borrowing.

6. Recovering Digital Personal Loans: Measures to be Adopted

-*Use of FinTech:* Encourage Fintech companies to develop automated repayment plans, debt consolidation options, and monitor loan performance.

-*Improved Credit Assessment:* Alternatives credit scoring models can be explored that include income stability and financial behaviour patterns.

-*Legal and Policy Interventions:* Use Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRT), SARFAESI ACT, 2002, and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, to efficiently recover dues.

Note: The FSR is a critical document that reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), helmed by the RBI Governor. It is bi-annually published and is a significant guide in understanding the state of India's financial stability.

RBI Joins Project Nexus - A Global Initiative for Efficient Cross-Border Payments

Introduction and About Project Nexus

- Project Nexus is a groundbreaking initiative launched by the Bank for International Settlements

(BIS), aimed at designing a global platform for cross-border payments.

- This initiative is a product of the joint efforts of the BIS, numerous central banks, and financial institutions aimed at building a standardised global payment platform.

- The project aims to enhance the efficiency and security of international money transfers.

Why is RBI's Involvement in Project Nexus Significant?

- The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) participation in Project Nexus can potentially revolutionise how we understand and execute cross-border payments as it significantly contributes to streamlining and strengthening the global payment system.

- This move from RBI places India in a pivotal position regarding global payment reforms.

Benefits of Project Nexus

- Standardisation: Project Nexus will simplify the way Instant Payment Systems (IPS) interconnect.

- Single Connection: It enables payment system providers to reach all other network countries without the need for individual tailor-made connections.

- Instant Payments: The project framework allows international payments to be made from the sender to the recipient within 60 seconds in most scenarios.

- Cost Efficiency: Charges for sending and receiving payments are almost nil, making the system highly cost-effective.

- Growth Acceleration: The existing instant payment systems can leverage Project Nexus to expedite the growth of instant cross-border payments.

Bank for International Settlements (BIS)

- The BIS, launched in 1930, is owned by 63 central banks that together account for around 95% of the world's GDP.

- It primarily functions from Basel, Switzerland, and operates representative offices in Hong Kong SAR and Mexico City, along with Innovation Hub Centers across the globe.
- BIS's medium-term strategy, known as Innovation BIS 2025, utilises technology and new collaboration mediums to serve the central banking community in this rapidly evolving world.
- The organisation serves central banks by providing a platform for communication and international cooperation, delivering deep analysis and insights on key policy issues, and offering sound and competitive financial services.
- The global banking guidelines, known as Basel Banking Accords, set by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) under BIS provide guidelines for the best banking practices.

Significance in Current Affairs and General Knowledge

- Knowledge of Project Nexus and RBI's involvement is vital for those preparing for government exams since it directly ties with financial systems and banking sectors.
- Understanding about the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) is vital as it offers insights into the functioning of global banking systems and international cooperation in banking.
- The details about the Basel Banking Accords are also useful for banking sector-related exams and interview preparations.

The Rise in Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

Introduction to PMI

- The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), is a survey-based indicator that measures the wellbeing

of the manufacturing and services sectors of the economy.

- It provides an early insight into economic trends and conditions from the perspective of companies.
- Decisions by investors, analysts, and policymakers are often influenced by the PMI data as it provides a clear picture of the economic health ahead of official data releases.

Why PMI is in the News?

- In June, the PMI saw an increase, reaching 58.3, indicating a spike in economic activity.
- The rise in the PMI can be attributed to the growing demand for manufactured goods, leading to amplified levels of production.
- Increased domestic consumption as well as a boost in export orders significantly drove up production levels.

Understanding the PMI

- PMI measures the economic trends in the manufacturing and service sector based on market demand conditions, supply chain issues, employment conditions, and potential future activities.
- PMI values range from 0 to 100 wherein reading above 50 signifies business expansion while below 50 indicates contraction.
- A PMI reading precisely at 50 marks no change in the business activity.
- The PMI data, usually released at the start of every month, is a valuable and reliable lead indicator of economic conditions.

Significance of PMI

- The PMI plays a crucial role in providing an overview of the economic climate from a business's perspective.
- Due to its informative nature, it is utilised by analysts, investors and decision-makers to comprehend future economic trends before the release of official data.

- The recorded PMI figure aids in understanding the rate of growth or contraction in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- The rise and fall of PMI values can potentially impact the policymakers' strategies and investment decisions in the respective sectors.

In conclusion, such indicators like the PMI are integral to understanding and navigating economic trends, and their fluctuations offer an important tool for strategic decision making in business and policy. The current rise in PMI is a positive sign for the manufacturing sector and indicates an upward trend in the economy.

Banking Industry Tightens Measures Against 'Money Mule' Activities

Introduction to 'Money Mule' Phenomenon

- A 'money mule' is a person who allows their bank account to be employed by criminal elements to facilitate the transfer of funds procured illegally.
- There has been a surge in the activities of money mules in recent times, especially within new accounts that are less than a year old.

Why 'Money Mules' Are in the News

- Given the noticeable rise in the activities of money mules, banks have begun a thorough examination of new sole proprietorship and individual current accounts.
- The purpose of this increased vigilance is to discourage money laundering and digital fraudulent activities.

The Method of Operation of 'Money Mules'

- Criminals engage money mules to help launder their illegal funds, which may stem from various

sources like online scams, frauds, human trafficking, and drug trafficking.

- The mules are utilised to establish a buffer between the victims and the criminals, making it more challenging for law enforcement authorities to track the funds.
- Money mules are usually lured with promises of easy money via fake job advertisements and social media platforms. While some are aware of their participation in illegal operations, others might be oblivious.
- Mules who get apprehended bear the legal brunt of facilitating money laundering, even if they were unaware of the illicitness of their actions.

Measures Employed by Banks to Combat 'Money Mule' Activities

- Steps being employed by banks to curb the proliferation of money mules include verification visits, latitude data checks, and washout logic analysis.
- The Reserve Bank of India is actively engaging in dialogue with banks to enhance existing measures against financial fraud, underlining the significance of this issue.

Probable Knowledge Based Questions (GK Part)

- What is a 'money mule'?
- How are 'money mules' recruited and what crimes are they associated with?
- What measures are banks, in particular Indian Banks, taking to combat money mule activities?
- What is the role of The Reserve Bank of India in this context?

This detailed information will be beneficial for a wide range of competitive exams, as it sheds light on a vital issue concerning money laundering and the preventative measures being implemented by banks, particularly in India. At the same time, it offers insights into the modus operandi of criminal perpetrators.

Defence And Military Exercises

Indigenous Defense Prowess: The Akash SAM and Zorawar Light Tank

Akash Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) – India's Iron-Dome

Introduction and About:

- Akash SAM, India's indigenous Iron-Dome, is vying against Chinese-made Sky Dragon-50 air defence systems for an order from Brazil.
- The missile system is designed and developed by the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and produced by Hyderabad-based Bharat Dynamics Ltd (BDL).

Features:

- This short-range Surface-to-Air Missile system can deter various air threats, neutralising fighter jets, cruise missiles, air-to-surface missiles, and ballistic missiles.
- With a launch weight of 720 kg, it can reach a height of 18 km with maximum speed up to Mach 2.5.
- The Akash SAM features the advanced Rajendra phased array radar, an integral system that can scan, guide and accommodate Multiple Targets.
- Additionally, it has a built-in Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM) features, fast response time from target detection to kill, and operates fully automatically.

The Indigenous Light Tank - Zorawar

Introduction and About:

- The prototype of India's unique light tank, named Zorawar, is ready for extensive trials.
- Developed jointly by DRDO and Larsen & Toubro (L&T), Zorawar carries the legacy of military general Zorawar Singh Kahluria, serving Raja Gulab Singh in the 19th Century.

Features:

- Designed for various terrains, the 25-tonne tank is agile, capable of high-angle firing, and features AI, Drone Integration, and amphibious operation capabilities.
- It's known for its optimal fire, power, mobility, and protection characteristics, maintaining an appropriate weight.
- The Zorawar Light Tank is expected to be inducted into the Indian Army by 2027 post all trials.

About Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO):

DRDO, formed in 1958, serves as the Ministry of Defence's R&D wing, aimed at empowering India with state-of-the-art defence tech and facilitating self-reliance in key defence technologies. It was conceived by merging the Indian Army's Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) and the Directorate of Technical Development and Production (DTDP) with the Defense Science Organisation (DSO).

India Boosts Naval Capabilities with Schiebel's Camcopter S-100 UAS

1. Introduction and About:

- Strengthening its naval prowess, India has recently inked a deal with the Austrian firm Schiebel, to acquire its renowned Camcopter S-100 Unmanned Aerial System (UAS).
- The Camcopter S-100 is a versatile and technologically advanced air system that is

well-equipped to serve in varied climate zones while offering high endurance capacity.

2. Camcopter S-100 in the Indian Ocean Region:

- The Indian Ocean Region, characterised by an array of climatic conditions, will greatly benefit from the S-100's diverse operational capabilities.
- The S-100's high endurance makes it a key asset in this region, where constant surveillance and intelligence are crucial.

3. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Operations:

- The Indian Navy has started using the Camcopter S-100 for ISR operations, previously conducted by manned helicopters.
- This transition manifests the new era of unmanned ISR operations, reducing operational risks and ensuring constant monitoring.

4. Technological Uniqueness and Operational Simplicity of S-100:

- The Camcopter S-100 operates on either aviation gasoline or kerosene, highlighting its operational flexibility.
- Even without GPS, the S-100 operates accurately, showcasing its advanced technological design.
- The compact-size of the S-100 allows it to be launched and recovered with minimal space, enabling ease of deployment from different naval vessels.

5. General Knowledge Aspects:

- The camcopter S-100 is a creation of Austrian company Schiebel, which has had a significant role in aerospace innovations since its establishment in 1951.
- Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) or drones have dramatically changed modern warfare and surveillance methodologies by decreasing human risks while increasing intelligence acquisition.

- The Indian Ocean Region, with its strategic significance, provides crucial trade routes linking the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia. Growing Indian defence capabilities in the area is vital for maintaining regional stability.

6. Importance of the S-100 Deal:

- The acquisition of the Camcopter S-100 signals India's intent to bolster its naval capabilities amidst the evolving geopolitical landscape.
- It also emphasises the growing role of technology, particularly unmanned systems, in advancing India's defence operations.
- The deal could also potentially influence similar acquisitions by other regional powers, thereby altering the defence dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region.

India Bolsters Defence with Successful Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence System Test

Introduction to the Recent Triumph

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has recently undertaken a successful test of the Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system.
- This successful test definitively highlights India's burgeoning capabilities in defending against long-range ballistic missile threats.

The Novelty Scrutinised

- The newly tested Phase-II BMD system can intercept ballistic missiles with a range of up to 5,000 km, thus enhancing India's strategic defence.
- The two-stage, solid-propelled, ground-launched Phase-II missile is engineered for endo to low exo-atmospheric interception.

- The test demonstrated a network-centric warfare weapon system, which includes long-range sensors, low-latency communication, and advanced interceptor missiles.

Background Details

- The Indian Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) Programme was initiated in 2000, post the Kargil War, with the objective to safeguard India from missile threats, specifically from neighbouring nations, Pakistan and China.
- The approach adopted by the program is multi-layered, utilising interceptor missiles like Prithvi Air Defence and Advanced Air Defence.
- With continuous global cooperation, efforts are being routed towards enhancing capabilities and procuring systems like the Russian S-400 Triumph.

A Glance at the Phased Plan

- The DRDO is developing an indigenous multi-tier network to counteract missiles with ranges of upto 2000 km in Phase 1 and 5000 km in Phase 2, respectively.
- The network incorporates surveillance radars for the detection and tracking of incoming missiles.

An Insight into Ballistic Missiles

- A ballistic missile is a rocket-propelled self-guided strategic-weapons system that follows a ballistic trajectory to deliver a payload from its launch site to a predetermined fixed target.
- Such missiles can carry a diverse range of payloads, from conventional high explosives to chemical, biological, or nuclear munitions.
- Notable ballistic missiles of India are Agni, K-4 (SLBM), Prahaar, Dhanush, Prithvi, and Trishul.

Unveiling the Ballistic Missile Defence System in India

- India's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) is a defence mechanism designed to shield against ballistic missile attacks.

- Its development began in 1999, post the Kargil war, with the principal aim of augmenting India's defence mechanisms against a possible nuclear attack from Pakistan.

- India's objective is to deploy a functional 'iron dome' BMD, incorporating both low-altitude and high-altitude interceptor missiles.

- The nation's BMD is primarily developed by DRDO with assistance from many public and private firms such as BEL, Astra Microwave, L&T etc.

Conclusion:

The successful test of the Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence system is a significant step up in enhancing India's defence capabilities. The test demonstrates India's technological advancements in the field of defence and signals a key moment in India's strategic defence progression.

Khaan Quest 2024: India Participates In Multinational Peacekeeping Exercise

Introduction and Overview:

- Multilateral Exercise Khaan Quest 2024 recently unfolded in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia.
- The exercise commenced on 27th July 2024 and concluded on 9th August 2024. It was hosted at the Five Hills Training Area.

Purpose of Khaan Quest 2024

- The prime objective of conducting this exercise is to improve interoperability and exchange best practice tactics, procedures, and techniques to carry out joint operations.
- The exercise intends to prepare the Indian armed forces for peacekeeping missions under the mandate of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- Promulgated under the purview of 'peace enforcement', Chapter VII entails measures executing diplomatic, economic, or forceful action

to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Participants and Their Contribution

- The Indian contingent at the exercise consisted of 40 personnel from the Madras Regiment Battalion, supplemented by other members.
- Around 430 troops from 23 countries came together for the exercise including nations like Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Turkiye, the United States, and the United Kingdom.
- Each country contributes strategically to the exercise, bolstering international cooperation and military readiness on a global platform.

History and Importance of Khaan Quest

- The Khaan Quest began as a bilateral military drill between the U.S. and Mongolian Armed Forces in 2003. But it evolved into a multinational peacekeeping exercise from 2006 onwards.
- The annually held exercise Khaan Quest has notably become a strategic event for enhancing military cooperation, peacekeeping capabilities, and readiness for peace enforcement under the UN mandate.

GK Points for Government Exams:

- Ulaanbaatar is the capital city of Mongolia, located in East and Central Asia, between China and Russia.
- Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter allows the Security Council to take enforcement measures to maintain or restore international peace and security. These enforcement measures include military action and can be taken when acts of aggression or other breaches of peace occur.
- The Madras Regiment, participating from India, is one of the oldest infantry regiments of the Indian Army, dating back to the 1750s.
- Peacekeeping exercises like Khaan Quest enable military forces worldwide to collaborate, enhance their readiness for peace enforcement, and create a global environment conducive to peace and stability.

Exercise MAITREE: Strengthening India-Thailand Military Cooperation

I. Introduction and Overview

- "Exercise MAITREE" is a joint military exercise conducted between India and Thailand. The Indian Army contingent is all set to participate in the forthcoming edition of this strategic initiative.
- The 13th edition of Exercise MAITREE is scheduled from 1st to 15th July 2024 at Fort Vachirapakan, situated in Tak Province of Thailand.
- The last exercise of this kind was conducted in September 2019 at Umroi, Meghalaya.
- The Indian Army will be represented by a contingent of 76 personnel composed chiefly of the Ladakh Scouts Battalion. Other arms and services of the Indian Army will also participate.

II. Aims & Highlights of Exercise MAITREE

- The primary aim of the exercise is to foster Military Cooperation between India and Thailand.
- It will mobilise enhanced joint counter Insurgency/Terrorist Operations capabilities in Jungle and Urban Environments, under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter.
- It will spotlight physical fitness, joint planning, and the execution of joint tactical drills.
- The exercises will encompass the creation of a Joint Operation Centre, establishment of an Intelligence and Surveillance Centre, and employment of Drones and Counter Drone Systems.
- Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon and Search Operations, Room Intervention Drills, and the Demolition of Illegal Structures are part of the tactical exercises to be practised.

III. Expected Outcomes

- Exercise MAITREE will allow the sharing of best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for joint operations.

- The Exercise will contribute to developing interoperability, bonhomie, and camaraderie among soldiers of both nations.

IV. The Role of Ladakh Scouts

- The Ladakh Scouts are an infantry regiment of the Indian Army, also known as the "Snow Warriors" or "Snow Tigers".
- Their primary role is to guard India's borders in the high altitude areas of the Ladakh region, as well as the region of Jammu and Kashmir in general.

V. Significance of Exercise MAITREE

- The exercise underscores the cordial relations and military bond between India and Thailand.
- It marks a significant development in regional security initiatives and reinforces India's role in promoting collective military engagement.
- Exercise MAITREE will also provide a unique platform to the armed forces of both nations in honing and learning new skills, thereby contributing to regional security and military preparedness.

'Birlestik-2024' - A Joint Military Drill by Central Asian Nations sans Russia and China

Introduction to Birlestik-2024 Exercise

- Birlestik-2024, also known as Union 2024, is the recent joint military exercise conducted by several Central Asian countries.
- The drill is currently taking place in the Mangistau region of Kazakhstan, making diverse landscapes available for training.
- This exercise is the first, where regional powerhouses such as Russia and China have not participated.

- Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are the participating nations, with Turkmenistan being notably absent.

Purpose and Scope of the Birlestik-2024 Exercise

- Birlestik-2024 aims to enhance cooperation, interoperability, and readiness among the armed forces of the participating nations.
- The exercise underscores joint planning, tactical manoeuvres, and coordination among the forces.
- Birlestik-2024 provides a platform for building stronger regional security partnerships.
- Mutual understanding is fostered, promoting peace and preparing the armed forces to respond effectively to a variety of security challenges.

Why Birlestik-2024 is in the News

- The unique aspect of this year's Birlestik exercise is the absence of regional superpowers, Russia, and China.
- These countries used to participate in drills alongside Central Asian nations as part of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation with Russia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation with China.
- The absence of Russia is particularly noted as it is traditionally dominant in this area but is currently engaged in the conflict with Ukraine.
- The absence of these countries indicates an attempt by the Central Asian nations to assert more independence in their regional security matters.

Geographical and Political Importance

- The geography of central Asia, rich in oil and gas reserves, along with its geopolitical location, make it a strategic region.
- This region serves as a crossroads between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, making it crucial in international political dynamics.

- The participation of Azerbaijan, a Caucasus country, indicates an interest from this region in Central Asian affairs.
- Birlestik-2024 may potentially change the dynamics of the region, affecting the influence of major powers like Russia and China.

General Knowledge Insights

- Central Asia consists of five countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- These countries, except Turkmenistan, have collaborated for the Birlestik-2024 exercise.
- The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) is an intergovernmental military alliance led by Russia.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic, and security alliance, the creation of which was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China.

Inception of the Weapon Systems School (WSS) in Hyderabad: A Pioneering Initiative to Bolster Indian Armed Forces.

Unravelling Key Highlights and Objectives of the New Weapon Systems (WS) Branch

- The Weapon Systems School (WSS) at Begumpet, Hyderabad, was inaugurated by the Chief of the Air Staff, marking a significant development in the Indian Armed Forces, particularly the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- The establishment of the Weapon Systems (WS) branch, approved in 2022, underlines the IAF's intent to evolve into a future-oriented force. This new cadre in the IAF is designed to expand and modernise India's military capability.

- The chief objective of the WSS is to offer effect-based training that aligns with operational requirements of the IAF. This initiative ensures a seamless flow of knowledge and skill upgradation for officers in the newly formed branch.

Fostering Expertise with Varied Streams within the WS Branch

- The WS branch introduces multiple streams for specialised operations like Flying Stream, Remote Stream, Surface-Based Systems, and Intelligence Stream.
- The Flying Stream is responsible for operating weapons and systems on airborne platforms like the Sukhoi-30 MKI and C-130J.
- The Remote Stream cloisters operators for Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA).
- Surface-Based Systems encompass Mission Commanders and operators for Surface-to-Air and Surface-to-Surface weapon systems.
- The Intelligence Stream is designed to manage space-based intelligence and imagery, strengthening the IAF's strategic capabilities.

Amplifying Significance of the WS Branch for the Indian Armed Forces

- The creation of the WS Branch holds tremendous significance as it unifies operators of ground-based and specialist weapon systems under a single command. This consolidation considerably amplifies the IAF's warfighting capabilities.
- This strategic progression, in terms of training and operational readiness, ensures that the Indian Air Force is prepared to confront contemporary and future challenges efficiently. Not only does this strengthen the operational capacity of the IAF, but it also reinforces India's defence capabilities on a larger scale.
- The creation of the WS branch in the IAF also signifies India's evolving warfare strategy, taking a leap in improving its defence organogram and military prowess.

GK Insight: Indian Defense Ecosystem

- The establishment of the WSS can be linked to India's ongoing efforts to modernise its armed forces and enhance their capabilities to address the evolving security environment.
- This initiative goes hand-in-hand with the Indian Government's 'Make in India' campaign which aims to bolster the domestic defence industry, promoting indigenous production of defence equipment, and reducing dependence on foreign imports.
- Considering India's geopolitical positioning, this development signifies a well-calibrated step toward a more self-reliant and robust defence structure, making it a crucial talking point for Government exams related to the defence sector.

Polity

Highlights and Breakdown of Union Budget 2024-2025 – A Deep Dive into Major Priorities

I. Introduction to the Union Budget 2024-2025

- Recently, the Union Budget 2024-2025 was presented in Parliament, marking the first general budget of the 18th Lok Sabha.
- The Union Budget 2024-25 accentuates employment, skilling, support for MSMEs, and the middle class.
- A staggering allocation of Rs 1.48 lakh crore is dedicated for education, employment, and skilling.
- Other crucial allocations include Rs 1.52 lakh crore for agriculture and allied sectors, and Rs 2.66 lakh crore for rural development and infrastructure.

II. Focus Areas and Major Priorities

- The Budget primarily zeroes in on four major demographics: 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth), and 'Annadata' (Farmers).

III. Nine Dominant Priorities

1. Productivity and Resilience in Agriculture

- Introduction of 109 new high-yielding crop varieties.
- Support for natural farming, bio-input centres, and policies for self-sustainability.

2. Employment & Skilling

- Initiatives for skilling 20 lakh youth and upgrading 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes.
- Financial support for higher education, and skill-based loans.

3. Inclusive Human Resource Development & Social Justice

- Policy emphasis on marginalised groups, tribal communities, and women entrepreneurs.
- Launch of Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan.

4. Manufacturing & Services

- Policies advocating for MSMEs and labour-intensive manufacturing.
- A proposal for the revision of Mudra loan limits and internships in top companies.

5. Urban Development

- Allocation of Rs 10 lakh crore for PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0.
- Initiatives for water supply, sewage treatment, and solid waste management.

6. Energy Security

- PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana for providing free electricity.
- Asserts the importance of nuclear energy in India's energy mix.

7. Infrastructure

- Rs 11,11,111 crore allocation for capital expenditure.
- Financial aid for disaster management projects in Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim.

8. Innovation, Research & Development

- Establishment of Anusandhan National Research Fund with an allocation of Rs 1 lakh crore.
- Establishing a Rs 1,000 crore venture capital fund for expanding the space economy.

9. Next Generation Reforms

- Plans for an Economic Policy Framework, labour reforms, and simplification of FDI regulations.
- Introduction of Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to improve Ease of Doing Business.

IV. Noteworthy Aspects of the Union Budget 2024-25

- Direct Tax Reforms proposed a comprehensive review and simplification of direct and indirect tax regimes.
- Budget Estimates 2024-25 dropped total receipts and expenditure figures standing at Rs 32.07 lakh crore and Rs 48.21 lakh crore, respectively.
- The net tax receipts are estimated to be at Rs 25.83 lakh crore, and the fiscal deficit is estimated at 4.9% of GDP.
- The gross and net market borrowings through dated securities are figured at Rs 14.01 lakh crore and Rs 11.63 lakh crore respectively.

With the focus on diverse sectors, the Union Budget 2024-2025 aims to foster a more inclusive and resilient economy, intending to privilege various groups, significantly dominants – the poor, women, the youth, and farmers.

Economic Survey 2023-24: A Comprehensive Review

Introduction and History of the Economic Survey

- The Economic Survey 2023-24, an annual document reviewing the nation's economic performance, was recently tabled in the parliament.

- Prepared under Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran, it provides an outlook for the year ahead and summarises policy initiatives.
- Since its inception in 1950-51, the survey has evolved into a separate volume from the budget documents in 1964.

Key Highlights from Economic Survey 2023-24

- India's real GDP grew by 8.2% in FY24, and retail inflation decreased to 5.4%.
- The Current Account Deficit (CAD) improved to 0.7% of GDP in FY24 from 2.0% in FY23.
- The Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio dropped to 2.8% in March 2024 marking a 12-year low.
- India remains the top global recipient of remittances, totalling USD 120 billion in 2023.

Sector-wise Performance Review

- The services sector accounted for 55% of the economy and grew by 7.6% during FY24.
- Healthcare services expanded with over 34.7 crore Ayushman Bharat cards issued.
- The agriculture sector grew at a rate of 4.18% annually, and credit disbursed to agriculture mounted to Rs 22.84 lakh crore.
- The industrial growth rate of 9.5% supported the economic growth of 8.2% in FY24.

Looking Towards the Future

- With a focus on skill and job creation, agriculture, MSMEs, green transition, and educational-employment gap, India aims to sustain a 7%+ growth rate.
- Predicted to become one of the fastest-growing insurance markets globally, India expects its gig economy workforce to reach 2.35 crore by 2029-30.
- In adopting a nation-specific approach to climate change, India emphasises harmony with nature to offset Western overconsumption strategies.

Challenges and Solutions

- Despite various headwinds like reliance on China for imports, tepid private investment, and AI threat

to telecommunications and BPO sectors, India has identified potential solutions.

- The survey cites the necessity for the private sector to embrace job creation and traditional lifestyle practices.
- Revitalisation of the farm sector, reduction in regulatory burdens, and strengthening administrative capabilities are recommended for continued economic progress.

With such insightful analyses and valuable projections, the Economic Survey 2023-24 provides a comprehensive view of India's economic journey and its roadmap for future growth. The document serves as a vital resource for stakeholders across the spectrum, including policymakers, researchers, economists, students, and exam aspirants, with its wealth of economic indicators and analyses. The Economic survey is all about strategy- examining past actions, measuring current outcomes, and crafting future tactics- a reflection of India's strides in economic policymaking.

Implementation of New Criminal Laws - A Paradigm Shift in Indian Jurisdiction

New Criminal Laws Replacing Colonial Era Acts

- From 1st July 2024, three newly enacted criminal laws - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) replace the colonial-era laws, namely Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Indian Evidence Act.
- Aimed at decolonizing the punitive system, these new laws take a justice-focused approach.

Goals and Innovations

- Aiming at integrating technological advancements in police investigations and court proceedings,

these laws incorporate new offences like terrorism, mob lynching, and organized crime.

- Enhanced punishments for crimes against women and children are included.
- The transition to these new laws is being made smoother by permitting state-specific amendments, concurrent running of old and new laws, and enabling online filing of First Information Reports (FIRs) in multiple languages via the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network Systems (CCTNS).

Salient Features of the New Laws

- Community service introduced as a penalty for minor offences.
- Terrorist act expressly defined.
- Mob lynching by five or more vested with the possibility of capital punishment or life imprisonment.
- Enabling trials in absentia of fugitive criminals, extension of summary trials to cases with up to 3 years punishment, and mandatory videography during search and seizure operations to ensure transparency.
- A provision made for early release of first-time offenders upon completing a third of their sentence, and compulsory utilisation of forensic experts for investigations in major offences.

Breakdown of the New Laws

- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.
- Bharatiya Sakshya Act, 2023.
- Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

Complementary Government Initiatives

- National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms.
- The introduction of AI Portal SUPACE.
- Implementation of the Modernisation of Police Scheme.
- Introduction of Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023, and Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023.

In conclusion, these new criminal laws mark a significant shift in the Indian jurisdiction system, focusing on justice and incorporating technological advancements in policing and judiciary. It's a leap forward, ensuring a more efficient, effective, and just system.

An Overview of the Telecommunications Act 2023

Introduction and Evolution

The Telecommunications Act of 2023 has recently been notified by the central government, heralding a significant shift in India's telecommunication laws. The Act replaces antiquated laws such as the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraph Act, 1933, and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950. The 1950 Act was repealed by the Repealing and Amending Act, 2023, underpinning regulatory flexibility.

Key Features of the Telecommunications Act 2023

- **Clearly Defined Scope:** The Act meticulously outlines its scope, reducing ambiguities. It brings messages sent through internet-based messaging service providers into its ambit.
- **Right of Way (RoW) Framework:** The Act provides a robust RoW framework, on both public and private property, obligating public entities to provide RoW barring special circumstances.
- **Establishment of Common Ducts:** Aligned with the PM Gati Shakti's vision, the Act has provisions for the Central Government to create common ducts and cable corridors.
- **National Security Measures:** As per Section 20 (2), the Act empowers the government to halt the

transmission of any content in the interest of public safety or during emergencies, increasing government's oversight on message transmission.

- **Digital Bharat Nidhi:** The Act transforms the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) into Digital Bharat Nidhi, a fund that can be utilised for R&D and pilot projects instead of solely backing the establishment of telecom services in remote areas.
- **User Protection:** The Act legally obligates the telecom operators to protect users from unwanted commercial messaging and has established Do Not Disturb registers. Possessing more than 9 SIM cards may result in fines leading up to Rs 2 Lakh.

Historical Background and Regulatory Authorities

The Indian telecom sector, from the era of the Telegraph Act of 1885 to the present, has witnessed evolutionary changes in its legal framework. The crucial act of 1997, the TRAI Act, created TRAI and the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) to handle rate regulation, however ultimate licensing authority stays with the central government.

Merits and Demerits of the Telecommunications Act, 2023

The Telecommunications Act, 2023 comes with several merits. It is equipped to adapt to new communication technologies, promote competition, bolster R&D, enforce verifiable user identification, and protect users from spam. The law's jurisdiction encompasses the entire nation, and infractions made overseas, as provided by the Act.

However, the potential pitfalls and concerns of this Act remain to be seen as it gets implemented and its true impact unfolds.

Awards And Reports

Unfurling Bravery: Spotlight on Gallantry Awards 2024

Honouring the Valor of Indian Armed Forces

I. Introduction to Gallantry Awards

- The Gallantry Awards stand as glorious symbols of courage, valor, and sacrifice of officers/personnel of the Armed Forces and civilians in India.

- These awards are presented to the brave hearts who exhibit extraordinary courage and valour in the face of danger.

- Presented at a dignified event, the Defence Investiture Ceremony 2024, held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, these awards were recently handed over by the President of India.

- The Gallantry Awards are announced on two significant occasions in the nation's calendar - on Republic Day and Independence Day.

II. Classification of Gallantry Awards

- Gallantry awards are fundamentally divided into two categories - those conferred in the face of the enemy and the ones awarded otherwise.

A. Gallantry Awards Conferred in the Face of the Enemy

1. Param Vir Chakra (PVC)

-This medal features four replicas of "Indra's Vajra" with the Indian State Emblem embossed at the centre, symbolising the highest military honour in India.

2. Mahavir Chakra (MVC)

-With a five-pointed heraldic star touching the rim and a domed State Emblem at the centre, this award constitutes the second-highest military decoration.

3. Vir Chakra

-This medal is distinguished by featuring a Chakra at the centre with a domed centrepiece inside the Chakra bearing the gilded State Emblem.

B. Gallantry Awards conferred Otherwise Than in Face of the Enemy

1. Ashok Chakra
2. Kirti Chakra
3. Shaurya Chakra

-These categories of award medals capture a replica of their respective Chakra at the centre, surrounded by a lotus wreath. Both Hindi and English versions of the respective words are embossed on their reverse side, separated by two lotus flowers.

III. Sequence of Precedence of the Gallantry Awards

- The precedence of the gallantry awards, metaphorically representing their significance, is as follows:

1. Param Vir Chakra
2. Ashoka Chakra
3. Mahavir Chakra
4. Kirti Chakra
5. Vir Chakra
6. Shaurya Chakra

IV. Conclusion

- The Gallantry Awards uncover an invaluable, inspiring narrative of unwavering courage against all odds. They continue to command profound reverence and honour in the national psyche, uniting the country in collective pride and admiration for its brave hearts.

"Gopal Ratna Award 2024: Honouring India's Livestock and Dairy Industry"

Introduction and Prestige:

- The highly esteemed National Gopal Ratna Award is one of the premier recognitions in India's livestock and dairy sectors, given out annually by the Department of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. Introduced to stimulate India's dairy stakeholders, the award holds significant value in this vital industry.

Special Emphasis on North Eastern Region:

- In recent years, the Department has initiated a special accolade for North Eastern Region (NER) States to promote and amplify dairy development activities therein. This is an effort to maximise the potential of these regions in contributing to the overall growth of the dairy and livestock sectors in the country.

Award Categories:

- The National Gopal Ratna Award recognizes exceptional performances across various facets of the industry. It is currently presented in the following categories:

1. Best Dairy farmer rearing Indigenous Cattle/buffalo breeds.
2. Best Dairy Cooperative Society (DCS) or Milk Producer Company (MPC) or Dairy Farmer Producer Organization (FPO).
3. Best Artificial Insemination Technician (AIT).

Background of the Award:

- The awarding of the National Gopal Ratna began in the year 2021 under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM).
- The RGM was launched in December 2014 with the primary aim to conserve and scientifically develop indigenous bovine breeds of the nation.

Relevance and GK part:

- Knowledge about the National Gopal Ratna Award is pertinent because of its high national significance in promoting and enhancing livestock and dairy stakeholders. Understanding its purpose and categories can be helpful, especially for individuals preparing for government exams focusing on agriculture.
- Furthermore, awareness about the Rashtriya Gokul Mission and its initiatives like these can provide insights on government efforts to conserve and progress local bovine breeds.
- Additionally, the particular emphasis on the North Eastern Region states portrays the regional diversity in India's dairy and livestock sector and emphasises the government's efforts to foster development across all regions.

Transformative Shift in Men's Tennis: Carlos Alcaraz Wins 4th Grand Slam at Wimbledon 2024!

I. Introduction and Overview

- In the intense Wimbledon finals of 2024, Spain's Carlos Alcaraz marked history by defeating Serbia's Novak Djokovic in the men's singles tennis match. This is Alcaraz's 4th Grand Slam victory.
- The young Spaniard has now become the youngest player ever to clinch 4 Grand Slam titles, all before reaching the age of 22.

II. The New Generation of Tennis and the Shift of Power

- The transition of power in men's tennis is apparent as the recent crop of players, led by Carlos Alcaraz and Italy's Jannik Sinner, have won 4 out of the last 5 Grand Slam titles.
- The stalwarts such as Federer, Nadal, and Djokovic, constituting the "Big Three" that ruled the sport for two sublime decades, are now seeing competition from emerging players.

III. Grand Slam: The Ultimate Achievement in Professional Tennis

- The term 'Grand Slam' in tennis refers to the lofty accomplishment of winning all four major annual tennis championships within the same calendar year, namely, the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open.
- This outstanding achievement has been realised six times by five different players.
- The first Grand Slam was clinched in 1938 by tennis legend Don Budge, winning all four major championships in that year.

IV. Snapshot of the Grand Slam Tournaments

- These tournaments stand as the four most crucial annual tennis events, each spanning almost two weeks.
- 1. *The Australian Open*
 - Occurs in mid-January.
 - Played on hard courts.
- 2. *The French Open* or *Roland-Garros de Paris*
 - Takes place in May and June.
 - Played on clay courts.
- 3. *Wimbledon*
 - Happens in June and July.
 - Played on grass courts.
- 4. *The US Open*
 - Takes place in August and September.
 - Played on hard courts.
- Wimbledon retains the title of being the oldest among all (established in 1877), followed by the US Open (1881), French Open (1891) and the Australian Open (1905).
- Prior to 1924–25, only Wimbledon was deemed a major tournament until all four were designated as Grand Slam tournaments.

V. Conclusion

This Grand Slam victory by Carlos Alcaraz signals the advent of a new era in international tennis, set to be a matter of great interest in the coming years. This underlines the dynamism and unpredictability of the sport, making it deeply intriguing for participants and viewers alike.

Abhinav Bindra Honoured with Prestigious Olympic Order

Introduction and Overview

- Recently, the esteemed athlete Abhinav Bindra was bestowed with the highly prestigious Olympic Order.
- Prime Minister of India extended his warm felicitations to the Olympic gold medallist for this noteworthy achievement.

Understanding the Olympic Order

- The Olympic Order is the pinnacle award given by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- It appreciates and rewards individuals for their significant contributions to the Olympic movement.
- This Order is designated to those having remarkable dedication in spreading the principles and ideals of the Olympics.
- This prestigious order was founded in the year 1975, replacing the erstwhile, the Olympic Diploma of Merit.
- The Olympic Order has three grades, namely Gold, Silver and Bronze, with the Gold Order generally earmarked for heads of states and outstanding situations.

Prominent Recipients of the Olympic Order

- Intriguingly, a number of distinguished personalities have been awarded the Olympic Order in the past.
- Renowned individuals that include the likes of former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the notably inspiring South African President, Nelson Mandela, have been past recipients of this Order.

Award Presentation Details

- The highly celebrated Olympic Order was presented to Abhinav Bindra during the 142nd

International Olympic Committee (IOC) Session held in Paris.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC)

- The International Olympic Committee, established in June 1894, is an independent, not-for-profit, international organisation that serves as the custodian of the Olympic Games.
- The IOC Headquarters is located in Lausanne, Switzerland - often designated as the Olympic Capital.

An Insight into Abhinav Bindra's Remarkable Career

- Abhinav Bindra has the honour of being India's first individual Olympic gold medallist.
- He achieved this feat in the men's 10-metre air rifle event at the 2008 Beijing Games.
- He continues to inspire many with his dedication and commitment to the sport.

In conclusion, the honourable recognition of Abhinav Bindra with the Olympic Order underscores his incredible contributions to the Olympic movement and his enduring legacy within the field of sports.

Trailblazer Shooter Manu Bhaker Clinches Bronze Medal at Paris 2024 Olympics

Manu Bhaker Makes Olympic History

- Manu Bhaker won a bronze medal in the women's 10m air pistol event at the Paris 2024 Olympics.
- This medal marks the first for India at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

- Manu Bhaker has created history by becoming the first Indian female shooter to win an Olympic medal.
- She is also the first Indian female shooter to reach an Olympic final in an individual event in the past two decades.

Continuation of India's Olympic Shooting Legacy

- This Olympic bronze medal in shooting is India's first since the London 2012 Games.
- Bhaker is the fifth Indian shooter to win an Olympic medal, following in the footsteps of shooting veterans such as Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore (2004 Athens), Abhinav Bindra (2008 Beijing), Vijay Kumar (2012 London), Gagan Narang (2012 London).

Manu Bhaker's Noteworthy Achievements

- Manu Bhaker, hailing from Jhajjar district in the state of Haryana, is known for her record-setting performances in various international competitions.
- She made headlines in the National Shooting Championships 2017 when she won 9 gold medals and set a record in the 10m Air Pistol final.
- Notably, in 2018, Bhaker shot into fame as a teenage sensation by winning a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games and secured a gold medal in the Women's 10m Air Pistol event at the ISSF World Cup in Guadalajara, Mexico.
- Her victory roster includes medals at Asian Games (2022), World Championship, Baku (2023), Asian Shooting Championship, Changwon (2023), World Cup, Bhopal (2023), World Championship, Cairo (2022), and at the World University Games, Chengdu (2021) sports events.

GK Insights: Shooting in India

- Shooting is one of the main Olympic events from which India has secured multiple medals in the past.

- Notable Indian shooters who have won Olympic medals include Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Abhinav Bindra, Vijay Kumar, and Gagan Narang.
- The achievements of these shooters have significantly contributed to popularise the sport in India and inspire many young aspirants like Manu Bhaker to achieve success in this field.

AIFF Annual Awards 2024: Recognizing Excellence in Indian Football

Indian Football Celebrates its Stars with AIFF Awards for the 2023-24 Season.

I. Introduction & About AIFF Awards:

- The All India Football Federation (AIFF) conducts its annual awards to recognize and celebrate the achievements and contributions of exceptional talents in Indian football.
- For the 2023-24 season, the AIFF awarded top honours to Lallianzuala Chhangte as the Men's Player of the Year and Indumathi Kathiresan as the Women's Player of the Year.

II. Stellar Performances of the Year:

1. Men's Player of the Year: Lallianzuala Chhangte

- The 27-year-old winger from Mumbai City FC, won the AIFF Men's Player of the Year award for the second consecutive time.
- Becoming the fifth player to win the award multiple times, his exceptional achievements included:
 - Scoring 11 goals and providing 7 assists for Mumbai City FC.
 - Ranking as the highest-scoring Indian in the Indian Super League (ISL).
 - Marking a successful goal against Qatar in Doha during the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in June 2024.

2. Women's Player of the Year: Indumathi Kathiresan

- Indumathi Kathiresan, a 30-year-old midfielder from Tamil Nadu, bagged the AIFF Women's Player of the Year award.
- She added several accomplishments to her accolades like:
 - Winning the 2023-24 Indian Women's League (IWL) title with Odisha FC.
 - Scoring 5 goals in the IWL and receiving the Best Midfielder award.
 - Scoring a crucial goal against Estonia in the Turkish Women's Cup in February 2024.

III. Emerging Talent of the Year:

1. Men's Promising Player of the Year: David Lalhlansanga

- David Lalhlansanga, the 22-year-old striker from Mohammedan Sporting, was honoured as AIFF Promising Men's Player of the Year.
- His outstanding performance for the 2023-24 season included:
 - Scoring 34 goals across various competitions.
 - Aiding Mohammedan Sporting in achieving the I-League and Calcutta Football League titles.
 - Earned his first national team call-up for the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in May 2024.

2. Women's Promising Player of the Year: Neha

- 18-year-old winger Neha bagged the AIFF Promising Women's Player of the Year award.
- Her achievements during the season included:
 - Scoring 2 goals leading India to the SAFF U19 Women's Championship victory.
 - Contributing 3 goals for Haryana in the Senior Women's National Football Championship final.
 - Scoring for HOPS FC during IWL and represented India in international friendlies.

IV. Coaches of the Year:

- Khalid Jamil of Jamshedpur FC and Sukla Dutta of India U-19 team and Sreebhumi FC were awarded Men's Coach of the Year and Women's Coach of the Year, respectively.

V. Other Awards:

- The Referee of the Year award was given to Ramachandran Venkatesh.
- Ujjal Halder was recognized as the Assistant Referee of the Year.

VI. General Knowledge Tid-Bit:

These awards serve to encourage the growth and recognition of football in India, adding to its long history dating back to the mid-19th century. Today, Indian football is governed by the All India Football Federation, established in 1937, and has been a member of the Asian Football Confederation and FIFA since 1948. AIFF has been vital in selecting and coaching the national football teams and conducting various leagues within the nation.

Decoding the NITI Aayog SDG India Index (2023-24): India's Progress towards Sustainable Development Goals

An Insight into NITI Aayog's SDG India Index

- The SDG India Index is a monitoring tool developed by NITI Aayog to track India's performance towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations.
- The index functions as a policy-making benchmark to identify gaps and highlight key focal areas for achieving sustainable development by 2030.
- The Index is based on an analysis of 113 indicators aligned with national priorities, with scores ranging from 0 to 100.
- NITI Aayog's SDG India Index fosters a sense of competitive and cooperative federalism, spurring states and UTs for progress based on their

individual scores which range from 'Aspirant' to 'Achiever'.

Analysing the Performance Trends in the SDG India Index 2023-24

- India's overall SDG score witnessed significant growth, rising from 57 in 2018 to 71 in 2023-24.
- Kerala and Uttarakhand led the way as the highest performing states, while Bihar and Jharkhand secured the lowest scores.
- Significant government interventions have propelled progress in various areas such as poverty reduction, economic growth and climate action.

Unpacking the Critical Goals of SDG India Index 2023-24

- The Index saw an impressive growth in goals like "No Poverty," "Decent Work and Economic Growth," and "Life on Land."
- Conversely, "Gender Equality" and "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution" experienced minor increments whereas "Reduced Inequalities" witnessed a slight downturn.
- "Quality of Education" goal highlighted that the central Indian states still face educational quality challenges that directly impact employment opportunities.

Discovering NITI Aayog and its Role in Economic Strategy

- NITI Aayog, which replaced the Planning Commission in 2015, advocates a 'bottom-up' approach, emphasising cooperative federalism.
- The Aayog comprises the Prime Minister as Chairperson, Chief Ministers of all states and Lt. Governors of Union Territories in the Governing Council, along with experts nominated by the Prime Minister as Special Invitees.
- The Aayog is instrumental in introducing a flexible approach to economic planning, incorporating national security and focusing on hitherto marginalised sections of society.

- Major initiatives by the Aayog include the SDG India Index and Composite Water Management Index, among others, exemplifying its critical role in directing the country towards sustainable development.

GK Section: Tracing the Evolution of NITI Aayog and its Impact

- The Planning Commission's relaunch as NITI Aayog in 2015 signals a paradigm shift in India's approach to economic planning.
- The integral inclusion of the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers of states and Union Territory Lt. Governors in its composition signals the emphasis on cooperative federalism.
- NITI Aayog focuses on promoting sustainable development practices, thus assisting India in meeting its goals on the global competitiveness index.
- The SDG India Index is among the Aayog's key initiatives towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Index serves as a significant indicator for India's developmental progress and pinpoints targeted areas for corrective policy interventions.

increased finance to combat hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition in all forms.

Global Snapshot from SOFI 2024

- Worldwide one in eleven people and one in five people in Africa faced hunger in 2023.
- Asia, although having a lower percentage, accommodates the most undernourished people, at approximately 384.5 million.
- Food insecurity affects an estimated 2.33 billion people, with over 864 million people facing severe food insecurity.
- The average cost of a healthy diet rose globally to \$3.96 in PPP terms per person daily in 2022, yet it remains unaffordable for 2.83 billion people.
- Latine America and the Caribbean have the highest cost of a healthy diet, while it's lowest in Oceania.
- Obstacles remain in reducing stunting and wasting among children below five and in achieving exclusive breastfeeding targets.
- Obesity rates and anaemia in women are trending upwards, impacting public health globally.
- Both public and private spending on food security and nutrition is inadequate, exacerbating the funding gap.

Global Food Security & Nutrition: Insights from the SOFI 2024 Report

About the SOFI 2024

- The 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024' (SOFI 2024) report has been published by five global organisations: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The report assesses the global condition of food security and nutrition, emphasising the urgency for

India-centric Findings

- India houses the most substantial portion of undernourished individuals worldwide at 194.6 million.
- The number has fallen from 240 million people in the 2004-06 period.
- Despite slight improvements, a significant proportion (55.6% or 790 million) of the Indian population can't afford a healthy diet.
- Chronic undernourishment affects 13% of the Indian population.
- India holds the 111th position in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2023.
- High rates of wasting (18.7%) and stunting (31.7%) in children under five are worrying. Furthermore, India has the highest percentage of

low birthweight babies worldwide, indicative of maternal malnutrition.

- Anaemia is prevalent in 53% of Indian women, while obesity stands at 2.8% among children under five and 7.3% in adults.
- The co-existence of undernutrition and obesity in the Indian population suggests common drivers, such as poor diet quality.
- Despite some increase in public spending on food security and nutrition, the allocation and utilisation of resources need to be more effective.

Actions Taken by India

- Several initiatives are active to improve nutrition and food security, such as NFSA 2013, National Food Processing Mission, and Mission Poshan 2.0.
- Other programs are designed to address the needs of children, women, and adolescents, including ICDS, PMMVY, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, SAG, MAA and Poshan Vatikas.
- Support for agricultural producers includes policies like MSP and PMFBY, complemented by the National Horticulture Mission.

Report's Key Recommendations

- Increase public investment in and encourage private sector participation in food security and nutrition.
- Strengthen global partnerships and align national policies with international frameworks.
- Promote climate-resilient agricultural practices.
- Improve efficiency and sustainability of agrifood systems to curb food loss and waste.
- Comprehensive nutrition programs to tackle both undernutrition and overnutrition.
- Targeted support for vulnerable groups like small farmers, women, and children.
- Enhance data collection, monitoring, and reporting for better policy-making.

Meeting and Submits

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit: A Panorama of Global Cooperation and Security

Introduction to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a leading political, economic, and defence organisation formed by China and Russia in 2001.
- Characterised as Eurasian, it encompasses around 80% of Eurasian geography and looks over 40% of the world population.
- Initiating as the Shanghai Five in 1996 joined by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, it saw expansion in 2001 with the inclusion of Uzbekistan and further growth with India's and Iran's accession in 2017 and 2023, respectively.
- It is noted for being the world's largest regional organisation by geographical scope and population.

The Latest SCO Summit and Its Relevance

- The forthcoming SCO summit is scheduled to happen on July 3-4 in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan.
- This year, the Indian delegation will be led by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, as PM Narendra Modi won't be attending.
- India previously held the presidency of the SCO and hosted the virtual summit in July 2023, post which Kazakhstan assumed the presidency.

Core Aims and Objectives of the SCO

- The key goals of the SCO range over a wide array of areas including maintenance of mutual trust, fostering multifaceted cooperation, combating

terrorism, facilitating economic growth, and promoting human rights.

- It also extends to facilitating regional integration into the world economy, conflict resolution, and confronting issues of the 21st century together.

The SCO's Organisational Structure and Decision-Making Procedure

- The SCO operates from its Secretariat in Beijing and its headquarters in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- Its principal decision-making body is the Heads of State Council (HSC) that hosts annual meetings.
- Additionally, the SCO houses a Regional Anti Terrorist Structure (RATS).
- Decisions within the organisation are made on a consensus basis where an agreement is considered adopted if no objections are raised. In matters relating to membership suspension or expulsion, a "consensus minus one" rule applies, deducting the vote of the concerned member state.

SCO's Contribution to World Affairs

- With its combined GDP amounting to approximately 20% of the global GDP in 2021, the SCO has made a significant impact on the world economy.
- Its prime focus on regional cooperation across multiple sectors including politics, defence, education, energy, and finance has propelled social and cultural development across the member states.
- Through its combined efforts in maintaining peace, fighting terrorism and crime, and promoting human rights, the SCO has established a distinctive role in the world's political-economic scenario.

In conclusion, the SCO serves as an instrumental organisation in fostering cooperative relations among member states, ensuring security, and contributing to socio-economic growth at the regional level with implications on a global scale.

Global INDIAai Summit and the Future of Artificial Intelligence

I. Overview of the Global INDIAai Summit and its Relevance

The Global INDIAai Summit, a significant gathering of AI experts, policymakers, and enthusiasts, recently concluded in Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. It served as a platform for exploring the future of Artificial Intelligence, both globally and within India.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund introduced a progressive measure known as the Artificial Intelligence Preparedness Index (AIPI) Dashboard, contributing to the global discourse on AI readiness.

II. Key Outcomes from the Global INDIAai Summit

- Setting Global AI Discourse: India plays a crucial role in shaping the global AI landscape by emphasising equal accessibility to AI technology. This approach aims to bridge the socio-economic gap and fulfil India's domestic requirements while aspiring for global AI leadership.
- Focus on INDIAai Mission: The summit focused on India's dedication to constructing a comprehensive AI ecosystem through the INDIAai Mission, covering various elements such as compute capacity, application development, safe AI practices, and more.
- Building Global Partnerships: The summit paved the way for strengthening international partnerships like the Collaborative AI on Global Partnership (CAIGP) and Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), intending to overcome the global AI divide.

III. Understanding the Artificial Intelligence Preparedness Index (AIPI)

AIPI is a tool to measure a country's readiness for AI implementation, based on factors such as digital infrastructure, innovation, workforce skill levels, labour policies, and regulatory systems. Countries are classified into categories: Advanced Economy (AE), Emerging Market Economy (EM), and Low-Income Country (LIC).

India, although strong among emerging economies, ranks 72nd on the index with a rating of 0.49, showcasing a potential area for development.

IV. International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its role

The IMF, headquartered in Washington, DC, is a significant international organisation consisting of 190 member countries, including India. The IMF fosters global monetary cooperation, promotes international trade, secures financial stability, and aims to reduce poverty. India, as a founding member, has an important role to play in the IMF. The organisation's origins date back to the Bretton Woods conference in 1944, where it was conceived to mitigate economic crises.

Summary Note

The Global India Summit's successful conclusion and the launch of the AIPI by the IMF are significant strides towards promoting AI accessibility and assessing global AI readiness. These developments underline India's promising role in shaping the AI discourse and its commitment to building a robust and inclusive AI ecosystem. Simultaneously, there is a need for further improvements for India to enhance its standing in the global AI Preparedness Index.

The 12th India-UAE Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) Meeting: Enhancing Defence and Security Relations

Strengthening Bilateral Defence Partnership with Comprehensive Approach

Introduction and About:

The 12th edition of the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was recently held in Abu Dhabi. Established in 2006, the JDCC has thus far seen 11 rounds of discussions aimed at fostering strong bilateral defence relations between the two countries.

Current Developments:

At this recent meeting, discussions were held on several key areas. Key points include:

- Discussions focused on enhancing bilateral defence and security cooperation.
- Areas covered in the meeting included training, joint exercises, defence industrial cooperation, and research & development.
- The goal was a comprehensive approach to strengthening the already flourishing partnership.

Why in News:

The consistent growth in bilateral defence interaction between India and UAE has been in the spotlight. Some notable collaborations include:

- Air Force: India and UAE held a trilateral air exercise on Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) in 2018.
- Navy: The naval forces participated in "Gulf Star 1" and "Zayed Talwar" exercises. They also engaged in the International Defence Exhibition and Conference (IDEX)/NAVDEX.

Geographical and Strategic Importance:

The UAE, located on the Arabian Peninsula, plays a pivotal role in the region due to its strategic location. Key insights include:

- It borders the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf and shares land borders with Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman.
- Additionally, its proximity to Qatar in the northwest further enhances its strategic position.
- Crucially, along with Iran and Oman, the UAE shares a coastline with the Strait of Hormuz, a vitally important waterway for global energy transportation.

GK Part: Know the UAE:

The UAE is a federation of seven Emirates, governed by a Federal Supreme Council. These include:

- Abu Dhabi, which is the largest emirate.
- Dubai, the commercial capital.
- Ajman, Fujairah, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, and Umm al-Qaiwain.

Conclusion:

Understanding the growing bilateral defence interaction between India and UAE is critical, particularly for aspirants of government exams. This takes on new importance given the UAE's increasing role not just in the Gulf, but also in international geopolitics. The ongoing collaboration and strengthened ties between India and the UAE are set to create new opportunities and enhance the security and strategic scenario in the region.

BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat: Addressing Regional Challenges and Myanmar Crisis

I. Introduction and Overview of BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat

- The 2nd Retreat of the Foreign Ministers of BIMSTEC was held in New Delhi, focusing on major developments and escalating issues in Myanmar.
- It was the first major event since the BIMSTEC Charter got enforced in 2024, marking a significant step of progression for the organisation.
- The 1st retreat of the BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers took place in Bangkok, Thailand in 2023.

II. Key Highlights of the BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat

- Emphasis was put on addressing regional challenges internally by the External Affairs Minister of India.
- The urgency of tackling long-standing goals like capacity building and economic cooperation was accentuated due to the prevailing global and regional challenges.
- The Myanmar crisis and its impact on regional stability and developmental projects formed the centre of discussions.
- The instability in Myanmar has adversely impacted various developmental and connectivity projects linking Nepal, Bhutan, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand.

III. Grave Concern: Myanmar Crisis

- Myanmar's military junta overthrow the elected democratic government in February 2021, prompting mass protests and a civil disobedience movement advocating for democracy restoration.
- In reaction to the military junta's repressive tactics, opposition groups, including Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), established the People's Defence Forces (PDFs) to resist military rule.
- Widespread displacement and a severe humanitarian crisis resulted from intensified fighting between the military and EAOs since October 2023.
- Around 2.6 million individuals have been displaced, with a remarkable 18.6 million people needing humanitarian assistance.

IV. Discussions on Humanitarian Assistance & India's Stand on the Myanmar Crisis

- Possibilities for humanitarian aid were discussed, with India's current aid being confined to dislocated populations and military personnel taking refuge in Mizoram.
- India maintains a cautious stance, particularly since EAOs have gained control over crucial trade routes and territories near international borders.
- India engages with the military junta, remaining concerned about democracy's disruption while safeguarding its interests.
- Forces against the military junta have seized strategic towns near the India-Myanmar border, hampering significant connectivity projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway.

IV. Outlook on Transnational Crimes

- India continues to cooperate on countering transnational crimes such as cybercrime, narcotics, and illegal arms dealings.

In conclusion, the BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat conveyed the urgency of addressing regional challenges, with the Myanmar crisis being a key point of concern. Despite the complex and continuously evolving situation, cooperation and dialogue remain crucial tools for tackling regional issues within BIMSTEC.

Assam's Moidams Proposed for Inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage Sites List

I. Introduction and Context

- Recently, India proposed the 'Moidams' of the Ahom dynasty for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list. This noteworthy proposal came

during the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee.

II. Hosting the World Heritage Committee's Session

- In a notable first, India is set to host the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi in July 2024.
- As of now, UNESCO's World Heritage list features 1,199 properties spanning 168 countries.

III. Insights into the Historic Moidams

- Dating back to the late mediaeval period from the 13th to 19th century CE, the Moidams are the embodiment of the mound burial tradition of Assam's Tai Ahom Dynasty.
- Made primarily of earth, bricks, and stone, the Moidams comprise mound structures typically encased by brick or stone walls.
- These ancient structures, mostly located in Assam's Charaideo district, were the final resting places for Assam's royal families.
- The Mortal remains of Ahom royalty, complete with their royal paraphernalia, were traditionally buried within these Moidams.
- The 18th century saw Ahom rulers adopting the Hindu cremation method, beginning the practice of entombing cremated remains in a Moidam.
- The burial customs of the Ahom dynasty have been compared to ancient China's royal tombs and the Pharaohs' Pyramids of Egypt, testifying their historic and cultural significance.

IV. Important Information About the Ahom Kingdom

- The Ahom kingdom, founded by Chaolung Sukapha in 1228, ruled Assam's Brahmaputra valley for about 600 years.
- The initial capital was Charaideo, located over 400 km east of Guwahati.
- In 1826, the British annexed Assam under the Treaty of Yandaboo, bringing an end to Ahom rule.
- The state created by Ahoms involved the suppression of the older political system of the

bhuiyans (landlords) and relied on forced labour, known as paiks.

V. A Look at UNESCO's World Heritage Sites

- A World Heritage Site is recognized by UNESCO for its exceptional cultural or physical significance.
- UNESCO's World Heritage Programme, responsible for the maintenance of the World Heritage Sites list, operates under the international treaty, 'Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage', adopted in 1972.
- India, with 42 World Heritage Sites (broken down as 34 cultural, 7 natural, and 1 mixed site), is an active participant. The recent additions from India include Santiniketan (2023) and the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas (2023).

State Current Affairs

Puducherry Foundation Day: An In-Depth Analysis of its Legacy and Significance

Celebrating the Formation of Puducherry

- On 1st July, Puducherry celebrates its foundation day, marking the day in 1963 when the Government of Union Territories Act was put into effect, providing Puducherry with Legislative Assemblies and Council of Ministers.

Key Facts about the Union Territory of Puducherry

- Formed in 1962, the Union Territory of Puducherry comprises the former French colonies of Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam.

- The diverse cultural landscape of Puducherry is an outcome of its geographical distribution as it is surrounded by the Indian states of Tamilnadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh.

Delving into the Historical Tapestry of Puducherry

- Ancient History: With evidence of Roman trade as early as the 1st Century AD, Puducherry's history is layered with rulers from the Pallava Kingdom of Kanchipuram, Chola dynasty, Muslim rulers of the North, Vijayanagar Empire, and the Sultan of Bijapur.
- Colonial History: Modern Puducherry owes its development as a prominent port town to the French East India Company. The company ruled until the decisive Battle of Wandiwash in 1763, when English won and French could only undertake trading activities.
- Post Independence: On 1st November 1954, Puducherry joined the Indian Union marking an end of 280 years of French rule. Puducherry became an integral part of India in 1963 and got its current name in 2006. There has been a long-standing demand for statehood by Puducherry residents.

Cultural Confluence in Puducherry

- Puducherry, with its Franco Tamil architecture and French colonial history, offers a rich cultural confluence.
- Notable points of interest include the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville, which stands as a manifestation of Sri Aurobindo's vision of a harmonious communal living.

Puducherry's Push for Greater Autonomy

- Despite being recognised as a Union Territory, this vibrant enclave has long desired statehood. This aspiration stems from its urge to wield greater power in attracting industries, enhancing infrastructure for tourism, and creating more employment opportunities.

By tracing the journey of Puducherry from an ancient trade hub to a French colony, and now as a

Union Territory, one can better understand its cultural diversity, historical heritage, and its aspirational drive towards statehood.

The Deadly Chandipura Virus (CHPV): Pathogen Unravelling and Responsive Measures

The Deadly Outbreak of Chandipura Virus in Gujarat

- The recent fatalities in Gujarat have been linked to a rare and highly lethal pathogen called the Chandipura virus (CHPV).
- The virus is also suspected to have caused 13 other recent deaths.
- Hence, the core concern stems from an abrupt rise in fatalities caused by CHPV.

A Glimpse into Chandipura Virus (CHPV)

- The Chandipura Virus was first recognized in 1965 in Maharashtra.
- Primarily transmitted by sandflies, especially of the Phlebotomus genus, the virus thrives in the dry, tropical conditions found in north Gujarat.
- CHPV primarily affects children below 15 years of age due to their relatively weak immunity.

Symptoms and Diagnosis of CHPV

- CHPV leads to severe symptoms like sudden high fever, intense headaches, muscle pain, altered consciousness, and seizures.
- In critical cases, it may result in a coma, and ultimately death.
- Diagnosing the disease can be a daunting task due to the proximity of its symptoms to other forms of viral encephalitis.

Tackling CHPV: Treatment and Prevention

- Unfortunately, no specific antiviral treatment is available for CHPV as of now.
- Medical care, therefore, aims at symptom management and intensive care for the critical patients.
- Preventive measures encapsulate reducing exposure to sandflies which involves the use of insecticides, protective clothing, insect repellents, and enhanced sanitation.

GK Insight:

- The Chandipura virus is named after Chandipura village in Maharashtra where it was first identified in 1965. It's an RNA virus belonging to the Rhabdoviridae family.
- The virus is known to cause a severe form of encephalitis and is endemic to tropical regions, notably in the Indian subcontinent.
- Public health response and preventive strategies against insect-borne diseases like CHPV are imperative for better health outcomes.

In conclusion, the rising cases of Chandipura virus calls for immediate reinforcement of preventive measures and research investments for the development of viable treatment options.

Inauguration of Uttarakhand's First Bird Gallery: A Step towards Avian Conservation

1. Introduction and Overview:

-The Uttarakhand Forest Department recently launched its first bird gallery. Situated at the Nature Education Centre in the state's capital, Dehradun, this is a milestone in enhancing the understanding and appreciation of avian species in the region.

2. What's New & Why It's in News:

-The gallery highlights the variety of bird species in the state by displaying high-resolution images of the birds found in Uttarakhand.

-This initiative aims to heighten the awareness amongst visitors about the avian diversity of the state and towards the various functions these species perform in our ecosystem.

-The inauguration of a dedicated gallery for birds in the state has garnered attention as a productive effort towards the conservation of avian species and their habitats.

3. Avian Diversity in Uttarakhand:

-Uttarakhand, home to more than 710 bird species, harbours more than 50% of India's bird species, making this region extraordinarily significant from an ornithological point of view.

-This richness in bird species showcases the healthy and diverse ecosystems present in Uttarakhand, which range from lowland jungles to high-altitude alpine meadows.

4. Promoting Awareness and Conservation:

-The gallery, through its educational impact, aims to create a sense of admiration and respect for these bird species among its visitors and local populations.

-By highlighting the vital roles these species play in maintaining ecosystem balance, it strives to emphasise the need for avian conservation.

-The Bird Gallery exhibits have the potential to attract bird enthusiasts and nature lovers from across the country, further promoting ecotourism in the state.

5. General Knowledge Insights:

-Location: Uttarakhand is a state in northern India crossed by the Himalayas, known for its Hindu pilgrimage sites and its natural beauty, from the Himalayan peaks to the Terai lowlands, all of which contribute to its rich avian diversity.

-Importance: Avian species are a vital part of the ecosystem, contributing to processes such as pollination, seed dispersal and controlling pests.

-Conservation efforts like this bird gallery are crucial in protecting our biodiversity and ensuring the stability of our ecosystems.

In conclusion, the creation of the Bird Gallery in Uttarakhand is a significant step towards promoting avian biodiversity conservation and generating public awareness on the importance of preserving our natural heritage. This initiative also highlights the immense potential of such measures to contribute to sustainable ecotourism.

Indore Sets Guinness World Record for Most Saplings Planted in 24 Hours

Introduction and Overview

- Indore, a city in central India, has achieved a Guinness World Record for planting the most saplings by a team in 24 hours.

- The certificate for this achievement was presented by Guinness World Records officials to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Mohan Yadav.

- This new record was established during a massive plantation drive organised by the state government at Revati Range in Indore.

About the Plantation Drive

- The plantation drive aimed at planting 11 lakh saplings in a single day.

- More than 60,000 people from varied professions and backgrounds participated in the event.

- For the convenience of participants, the targeted area for plantation, Revati Range, was divided into nine zones and 98 sub-zones. Each organisation/group was assigned a particular zone for planting.

Surpassing the Previous Record

- The previous record was held by the Forest Department, Government of Assam, where 9,21,730 saplings were planted in a single day on September 14, 2023, at Udalguri, Assam.

- Indore's plantation drive toppled this record, further adding a new page in the history of Guinness World Records.

Geographical and Environmental Significance

- Indore, known as the cleanest city in India, is located in the state of Madhya Pradesh. This record further solidifies its commitment to cleanliness, sustainability and environmental conservation.
- The Revati Range, which is a part of the Vindhya Mountain Range, has been significantly benefited from this mega afforestation initiative.
- The drive will help in increasing the region's green cover, contributing towards biodiversity conservation, and combating climate change.

Record and its Importance

- This achievement underlines the significance of collective effort in sustainable practices and conservation of the environment.
- It highlights the role of citizens and collaborative measures in achieving large-scale environmental improvements and goals.
- This Guinness World Record serves as an inspiration for other cities and countries to understand the importance of organised plantation drives in battling environmental concerns.

Facts for GK

- Indore is renowned for consecutively winning the title of 'Cleanest City in India' for four years from 2017 to 2020 in the Swachh Survekshan survey.
- Revati Range is a part of the Vindhya Mountain Range which runs across the states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
- Guinness World Records, earlier known as The Guinness Book of Records, was first published in 1955 and has been published annually ever since.
- The Guinness World Record for the largest number of trees planted in a single day by an individual is held by Ken Chaplin (Canada), who planted 15,170 red pine seedlings in 2001.

Respecting Our Constitution: 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman' Campaign Lights Up Uttar Pradesh

Introduction – Commemorating 75 Years of India's Constitution in UP

- The 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman' campaign, an initiative under the DISHA program, is set to host its second regional event in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on July 16, 2024.
- The event commemorates the 75th year of the adoption of the Indian Constitution and India becoming a Republic.
- The central aim of the campaign is to enlighten citizens about the Constitution and instil awareness about their legal rights.

Greater Insight about the campaign and Its Impact

- The event plans to launch the 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman' portal, a comprehensive platform providing easy access to information regarding the Constitution and legal rights.
- To extend its outreach, sub-campaigns like 'Sabko Nyaya Har Ghar Nyaya', 'Nav Bharat Nav Sankalp', and 'Vidhi Jagriti Abhiyaan' will be organised.

Event Details and Participation

- The Allahabad Medical Association Convention Centre in Prayagraj is the chosen venue for this historic event.
- Prizes will be awarded to winners of various online competitions like the Samvidhan Quiz, Panch Pran Rangotsav, and Panch Pran Anubhav, all conducted on the MyGov platform.
- Pro bono advocates registered under the Nyaya Bandhu program will also receive recognition for their significant legal contributions.

Portal Launch - Spreading Knowledge about Constitutional Rights

- The portal will be launched at the event to serve as a knowledge repository.
- The site will feature campaign activities, an event calendar, and interactive tools for learning about constitutional rights using a community-based approach.

Who's Attending?

- The event is attracting a significant crowd, including the Minister of State for Law and Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Arun Ram Meghwal.
- The Honourable Chief Justice of the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad, Shri Justice Arun Bhansali, is another noteworthy attendee.
- Around 800 participants including legal professionals, government counsels, judicial officers, village-level entrepreneurs, law students, senior officials, and common citizens will participate both in-person and digitally.

Tracing the Campaign's Journey

- The inaugural event of the 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman' campaign was held on 24th January 2024 at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi, presided over by the Hon'ble Vice-President of India.
- The first regional event took place in Bikaner, Rajasthan, with the Honourable Chief Justice of India, Shri Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, on March 9, 2024.
- Key milestones of this campaign entail promoting constitutional awareness at the regional level, organising sub-campaigns, and fostering active citizen participation via the portal.

Schemes and Initiative

A Comprehensive Overview of 'Sampoornata Abhiyan' by NITI Aayog

Introduction to the Sampoornata Abhiyan

- The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog launched a three-month campaign, 'Sampoornata Abhiyan' from 4th to 30th September 2024.
- The primary goal of this initiative is to achieve saturation in six specific indicators in Aspirational Districts and six indicators in Aspirational Blocks across the country.

Reason Behind the Headlines: Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks

- Aspirational Districts/Blocs refer to those districts/blocks in India that are negatively impacted due to poor socio-economic factors.
- The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) and Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) were introduced to address these disparities.
- The 'Sampoornata Abhiyan' is in news primarily because of its attempt to transform these Aspirational areas.

Relevance to Geography and Socio-Economic Indicators

- The campaign underscores the geographical differences within India, where some regions lag behind due to poor socio-economic indicators.
- This campaign is a key step towards mitigating regional disparities and promoting balanced regional development across India.

Importance of the Sampoonata Abhiyan

- The Sampoonata Abhiyan is significant because it focuses on achieving saturation in essential socio-economic parameters in the most backward districts.
- It is a holistic approach to uplift these regions and integrate them with the mainstream development of the nation.
- The campaign would greatly benefit the citizens of these regions, improving their living standards and overall quality of life.

Everything You Need to Know About the Aspirational Districts Programme and Aspirational Blocks Programme

- Both ADP and ABP are aimed at uplifting the districts/blocks suffering from poor socio-economic conditions.
- They were established to ensure the focused development of these areas.

In conclusion, the launch of the 'Sampoonata Abhiyan' could be a gamechanger for the socio-economic upliftment of underdeveloped regions in India. If successful, it would set a new precedence for inclusive development policies in the country. It is therefore essential to follow the developments associated with the campaign closely, both for the benefits it may bring and for its relevance to current affairs and general knowledge examinations.

Pushing Forward the Anand Marriage Act: A Dialogue between NCM and 18 States/UTs

Introduction to the Anand Marriage Act

- Anand Marriage Act is a law enacted primarily for the Sikh community in India.

- It permits Sikhs to formalise their marriages under an independent act rather than being registered under the Hindu Marriage Act.
- It provides recognition for the Sikh marriage ceremony, known as 'Anand Karaj.'

Current Focus on the Anand Marriage Act

- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has initiated discussions with 18 States and Union Territories (UTs) about the implementation and registration of Sikh marriages under the Anand Marriage Act.
- Some States/UTs like Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Meghalaya stated that they have already implemented the Act.
- The remaining States and UTs have committed to implement the Act within a time span of two months.

Reasons for the Current Dialogue

- There's a need to ensure all states recognize and implement the Anand Marriage Act to ensure the Sikh community can carry out and register their marriages as per their cultural and religious norms.
- Furthermore, successful implementation promotes cultural diversity, fosters religious tolerance, and encourages the recognition of the unique Sikh marriage ceremony—Anand Karaj.

Geographic Significance

- Although the Act is of national importance, the recent dialogue surrounding it primarily involves 18 States/UTs.
- A special mention goes to the states of Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Meghalaya as they have already implemented the relevant provisions.

Historical Context and Importance

- The Anand Marriage Act came into being in the early 20th century but the Act's consistent and

nationwide implementation has remained a contentious issue.

- Its effective enforcement and nationwide acceptance will mark an important milestone in the recognition of Sikh rights and cultural practices.

Note: The Anand Marriage Act allows Sikhs to register their nuptials under a separate Act without compromising on their rituals, customs, and religious principles. This recent dialogue involving NCM signals a positive and inclusive step towards recognizing the distinctive customs of minority communities in India.

Unravelling the Cultural Revamp - An Insight into Project PARI & WHC's 46th Session

Introduction to Project PARI

- Project PARI (Public Art of India) is a novel initiative recently rolled out by the Ministry of Culture aimed at promoting and preserving Indian traditional arts.
- This project was unveiled during the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee Meeting held in New Delhi.
- The inception of Project PARI intends to revive the glory of India's artistic heritage, focusing on folk art/sculptures (lok kala/lok sanskriti) blended seamlessly with contemporary themes and styles.

The Artistic Endeavor and Aspirations of Project PARI

- Over 150 visual artists from various parts of the country are invited to display their craftsmanship through various artworks such as wall paintings, murals, sculptures, and installations.

- This art-progression targets the beautification of public spaces in the capital city, Delhi.

- The envisioned sculptures are expected to pay tribute to multifaceted themes such as nature, Gandhian ideology, Indian toys, ancient knowledge systems, Natyashastra (ancient Indian treatise on performing arts), the concept of Naad (primal sound), the harmony of life, and the divine tree, Kalpataru.

An Overview of the World Heritage Committee (WHC)

- The World Heritage Committee (WHC) is responsible for making vital decisions concerning the inscription of new sites into the renowned UNESCO World Heritage List.
- The Committee's 46th session marked India as the host for the first time and slated to continue in July 2024.
- India presently boasts 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, with the recent addition being the 'Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala'. These encompass 34 cultural sites, seven natural landscapes, and one mixed site.

Significance and General Knowledge

- Project PARI emphasises the mainstreaming of indigenous art forms, thereby aiding to conserve and promote India's rich cultural heritage.
 - It can boost domestic and international tourism in Delhi and provide livelihood opportunities for artists.
 - The WHC's decision to let India host its prestigious meeting for the first time validates India's growing influence and recognition in conserving global heritage.
 - Knowledge of India's 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, their location, and features would be key information for aspirants of government exams.
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The SHREYAS Scheme: Empowering Marginalised Communities through Education

Overview of the SHREYAS Scheme

- The Scholarships for Higher Education for Young Achievers Scheme (SHREYAS) is a landmark initiative by the Indian government.
- The scheme seeks to support higher education for marginalised communities including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and Economically Backward Classes (EBCs).
- SHREYAS is managed by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

Updates on SHREYAS's Reach and Investment

- Recent figures show the scheme reaching expansive breadth, indicating its pivotal role in endorsing educational progression for disadvantaged classes.
- Around Rs. 2708.64 crore has been utilised for the benefits of 97,928 SCs from 2014-15 to 2023-24.
- A total of Rs. 585.02 crore has been spent for the welfare of 38,011 OBCs and EBCs over the same period.

Division into Specialized Programs

- The SHREYAS Scheme is divided into two programs aimed at higher education support for different cohorts: SHREYAS for SCs and SHREYAS for OBCs and EBCs.
- Under the SHREYAS for SCs, scholarships are awarded to SC students to study in top institutions, including IITs, IIITs, IIMs, and AIIMS.
- It features the National Overseas Scholarship which provides an annual scholarship for 125 SC students to study in the top 500 QS Ranking institutions abroad.
- 2000 fellowships are granted yearly for Ph.D. studies in India along with UGC Fellowships.

- SHREYAS for OBCs and EBCs offers free coaching for 3500 SC and OBC candidates annually, facilitating competitive exams and higher education admissions.

SHREYAS - An Umbrella Scheme

- SHREYAS, an umbrella scheme under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, is intended to empower OBC & EBC students through scholarships and interest subsidies on educational loans for overseas studies.
- The umbrella scheme of SHREYAS is a cluster of four central sector sub-schemes.

Free Coaching Scheme Details

- Free coaching is provided to SCs and OBCs for competitive exams and admission to technical and professional institutions.
- The maximum family income under this scheme is capped at 8 lakh per annum.
- The scheme maintains gender inclusivity, with a reservation of 30% slots for female candidates.
- The allocation ratio between SC and OBC is kept at 70:30 to ensure fair access to all.
- From 2014-15 to 2022-23, close to 19,995 beneficiaries have availed of the benefits under this scheme.

Relation to Other Education Schemes in India

- Besides SHREYAS, the Indian government has implemented several other schemes such as the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, PM SHRI Schools, and National Means cum Merit Scholarship (NMMS).

The Resurgence of Nalanda – A Look into the Past and the Future

The Historical Grandeur of Nalanda

- Nalanda, a prestigious ancient learning centre, was rediscovered in the 19th century after fading into oblivion.
- Emperor Kumaragupta-I of the Gupta dynasty established the university around 427 AD.
- It reached its zenith under the care of the Pala Kings and the patronisation of the monks of Nalanda by the Pithipatis of Bodh Gaya.
- Notable subjects taught at the university included music, Sanskrit, astronomy, yoga, Ayurveda, and philosophy.
- Nalanda was known for its eminent scholars from Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, such as Aryabhata and Hiuen Tsang.
- Scholar Hiuen Tsang described Nalanda's thorough admission process and academic atmosphere during his five-year stay in the 7th century.

The Fall and Destruction of Nalanda

- Nalanda's descent began around 1200 AD when Bakhtiyar Khalji reportedly attacked and plundered the university.
- The assault led to the significant loss of Nalanda's vast collection of scriptural and philosophical books.

The Modern Resurgence of Nalanda

- Recently, Nalanda has been put back on the map with the inauguration of the new Nalanda University Campus in Rajgir, Bihar by the Prime Minister.

- This contemporary establishment signifies a revival of Nalanda's historical prominence, reinstating its role as an educational hub.

Significance from the GK Perspective

- For government exams, it is essential to note that Nalanda is a significant archaeological and historical site linked to the Gupta and Pala kings.
- It's also critical to remember Nalanda's significance in the domains of ancient Indian education and Buddhism.
- The inauguration of the New Nalanda University symbolises the government's commitment to re-establishing and promoting India's rich historical and educational heritage.
- From a geography standpoint, knowing Nalanda's location (Rajgir, Bihar) is crucial for exams.
- It's noteworthy that the chief subjects taught in ancient Nalanda such as music, Sanskrit, astronomy, yoga, Ayurveda, and philosophy reflect India's diversified educational heritage.

Fueling Linguistic Diversity: The Launch of Project ASMITA

The Linguistic Renaissance: Unveiling Project ASMITA

- Launched recently, Project ASMITA is a governmental initiative aiming to produce 22,000 books in Indian languages over the next five years.
- It has been birthed as part of the larger efforts by the government to promote Indian languages in education, following the guidelines of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Founding Pillars: Origins and Implementers of Project ASMITA

- The project was launched by the Union Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- This is a joint endeavor by UGC and the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, both aiming to enhance the value of Indian languages in education.
- UGC, a body forged in 1953 and made a statutory organization in 1956, oversees teaching, examination, and research standards in university education.
- The Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, established by the Ministry of Education in 2021, serves as a High Powered Committee for Promotion of Indian Languages.

Blueprint for Execution: The Plan and Platforms for Project ASMITA

- Thirteen nodal universities along with various member universities have been selected to headline this project across different regions.
- For consistent execution, UGC has developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for each language-specific book-writing process.
- The project's ambitious goal is to produce 1,000 books in each of the 22 languages in a span of five years. This will result in a grand total of 22,000 books in Bharatiya Bhasha (Indian languages).
- Furthermore, the commission aims to rollout 1,800 textbooks in Arts, Science, and Commerce streams by June 2025.

The Linguistic Companions: Additional Initiatives Launched With Project ASMITA

- Bahubhasha Shabdkosh: A comprehensive multilingual dictionary repository, initiated by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) and the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti. The resource will facilitate the usage of Bharatiya words, phrases, and sentences across IT, Industry, Research, and Education.
- Real-time Translation Architecture: Developed by the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)

and the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti. This is meant to enhance real-time translation in Indian languages.

Project ASMITA's Objectives: Envisioning a Linguistically Inclusive Future

- The project envisages creating an extensive pool of academic resources in 22 scheduled languages, initiating a linguistic bridge for improved social cohesion, unity, and transforming India's youth into globally conscious, socially responsible citizens.

Linguistic Spectrum: The Languages Encompassed by Project ASMITA

- The project encapsulates the variety of India's linguistic richness by addressing all 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili, and Dogri.

"Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" Campaign: A National Drive for Greener Future

I. Introduction and Overview

- 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign stands as a symbol of the holistic commitment of the Ministry of Defence towards environmental sustainability.
- This campaign was launched on the occasion of World Environment Day 2024 by the Prime Minister of India.
- The objective of this campaign is to encourage every individual nationwide to plant a tree as a tribute to their respected mothers.
- On the backdrop of the 78th Independence Day, scheduled on 15th August 2024, the Ministry of Defence has planned to execute a substantial plantation drive across the nation.

II. "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" in the Limelight

- This campaign returns to the spotlight due to the grandiose tree plantation endeavour planned for the 78th Independence Day.
- The Ministry of Defence aims to plant 15 lakh trees nationwide as part of this campaign.
- Implementing this initiative will be through the concerted efforts of the three Services, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Defence PSUs, Controller General Defence Accounts (CGDA), National Cadet Corps (NCC), Sainik Schools, and Ordnance factories.

III. Historical Aspects of Tree Plantation Drives in India

- India has a longstanding history of tree plantation drives as an essential component of environmental conservation initiatives.
- Several major plantation drives like Van Mahotsav, Chipko Movement have been instrumental in the conservation and restoration of our natural habitats.
- These initiatives are significant in maintaining ecological balance and combating climate change.

IV. Geographical and Environmental Implications

- The 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign underlines the importance of a green cover in maintaining the health of the planet.
- Widespread tree plantation exercises have the potential to significantly improve the percentage of forest cover in India, which is currently nearly 24.56% according to the Forest Survey of India 2019.
- Efforts like these can greatly contribute towards India's commitment to the Paris Agreement, intending to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ through increased forest and tree cover by 2030.

V. Conclusion: The Significance and Future Endeavours

- Beyond being a mark of tribute to mothers, the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign underscores the interconnectedness of human actions and the health of the Earth.
- Such campaigns indicate the direction for future initiatives regarding environment conversation.
- They pave the way for a greener, more sustainable future while underscoring the importance of individual actions in contributing to the larger collective effort.

ICAR's Innovative Initiative 'One Scientist-One Product'

ICAR's Impact on Agricultural Research & Innovation

Introduction to Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR):

- ICAR was founded in 1929 as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860
- This autonomous organisation operates under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- It stands as the apex body responsible for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in diverse sectors including agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences across India
- ICAR, with its innovative research and technology developments, has spearheaded the Green Revolution and subsequent progress in Indian agriculture
- The headquarters of ICAR is located in New Delhi

A Glimpse into the 'One Scientist-One Product' Program

Why in the News?

- ICAR's 'One Scientist-One Product' programme will be launched on July 16 to elevate research in the agriculture and animal husbandry sector

Understanding the 'One Scientist-One Product' Program:

- The design of the program stipulates that each of ICAR's 5521 scientists will be given a task of developing a unique product, a technology, a model, a concept, or a significant publication
- At the dawn of each year, scientists will set their project and their progress would then be scrutinised quarterly at the institute level and biannually at the headquarters
- With an initial focus on boosting the production of oilseeds and pulses, the program will run for a span of five years

The Potential Impact and Significance of the Program

- This new initiative by ICAR is deemed to bring about a transformation in the prodigious field of agricultural and animal husbandry research
- By allotting individual tasks to each scientist, it will stimulate new ideas, innovation and will pave the path for the development of advanced agricultural productivity solutions
- Additionally, the program will aid in India's quest to fortify its agricultural yields particularly oilseeds and pulses in the initial stage which has a significant impact on India's agri-economy
- Regular evaluation of individual progress will ensure accountability and promote a speedy and efficient realisation of the project objectives

In conclusion, the innovative 'One Scientist-One Product' program by ICAR has the potential to strengthen India's agricultural research landscape, central to the country's economy and sustenance.

eSankhyiki Portal - A Boon for Planners, Policymakers and Researchers

Introduction and Overview

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has developed a new portal named eSankhyiki.
- The portal aims to offer real-time inputs for planners, policymakers, researchers, and the public at large.
- eSankhyiki is devised to establish a comprehensive data management and sharing system for the efficient dissemination of official statistics within the country.

Key Components of eSankhyiki

- eSankhyiki comprises of two primary modules namely:
 1. Data Catalogue Module: It accumulates the major data assets of the Ministry in one place to enhance access ease.
 2. Macro Indicators Module: This segment offers time series data of key macro indicators, thus enhancing accessibility for users.
- The Data Catalogue module holds seven data products such as National Accounts Statistics, Consumer Price Index, Index of Industrial Production, Annual Survey of Industries, Periodic Labour Force Survey, Household Consumption Expenditure Survey and Multiple Indicator Survey.

User Accessibility and Tools

- eSankhyiki empowers users to search within datasets and download data for increased usability.
- It currently includes over 2291 datasets coupled with specific metadata and visualisation for user ease.
- This portal also allows users to download custom datasets, enhancing the reuse of data.

Official Rollout Date and Significance

- eSankhyiki portal was officially launched on Statistics Day aligning with its theme 'Use of data for Decision making'
- It serves as a user-centric data portal facilitating the use and reuse of information, thereby creating real-world impact through data analysis and value addition.

General Knowledge (GK) Facts

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is responsible for developing and maintaining statistical standards in India.
- Statistics Day is observed annually in India on June 29th in memory of Professor P C Mahalanobis, whose contribution in the field of statistical development in India was monumental.
- The portal currently hosts more than 1.7 million records and is foreseen to be an essential tool for evidence-based decision making.

Science And Tech

NASA's Mars Odyssey Captures Epic View of Olympus Mons - Largest Volcano in the Solar System

Introduction to Mars Odyssey and Olympus Mons

- Mars Odyssey, a NASA spacecraft, has recently gained attention for successfully capturing the grand vista of the largest volcano in the solar system, called Olympus Mons.

- The Mars Odyssey, which was launched on April 7, 2001, from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida, aims at space exploration and has been instrumental in studying the chemical elements and minerals on the Martian surface.
- Olympus Mons, the subject of this breakthrough capture, is the largest volcano in our solar system.

Role of Mars Odyssey in Understanding Mars

- The different images captured by Mars Odyssey at different times throughout the year assist scientists in studying the atmospheric changes over Mars' four seasons. This information is vital for comprehending the planet's climate dynamics and weather patterns.
- A vital contribution of the Mars Odyssey was that it helped create the first global map of Mars, providing valuable insights into its composition.
- Mars Odyssey holds the record for the most extended continually active mission around a planet other than the Earth, successfully completing its prime science mission from February 2002 through August 2004.

Objectives of the Mars Odyssey Mission

- The main mission of Mars Odyssey involves various objectives that majorly contribute to our understanding of the Red Planet.
- The spacecraft was designed to detect the presence of water and ice on the planet's surface, a significant step towards the search for potential life on Mars.
- Studying the geology and the radiation environment of Mars is another crucial aspect of the mission.
- One of the critical functions Mars Odyssey plays is that it acts as a communication relay for future Mars missions, thus strengthening our quest for space exploration.

General Knowledge Insights:

- Mars Odyssey's recent feat adds to the valuable data we hold about the Martian landscape, climate, and the potential for life.
- It is useful to note that Mars has four seasons, like Earth, which is essential information in understanding its weather patterns.
- The importance of Mars Odyssey's mission stretches beyond Mars' exploration as it sets the stage for future planned missions to the Red Planet by providing a communication relay.

This recent capture by NASA's Mars Odyssey of the mighty Olympus Mons offers fascinating insights into our understanding of the solar system's biggest volcano and the alien planet's environment.

Indian Astronauts for Axiom-4 and the State of ISRO's Gaganyaan Program

Indian Astronauts Picked for Axiom-4 Mission

- * The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has chosen two astronauts from those trained for the Gaganyaan mission to participate in the Axiom-4 mission.
- * These astronauts will be sent to the International Space Station (ISS), in collaboration with NASA, based in the United States.

The Axiom-4 Mission

- * Axiom-4 mission is a collaborative project between NASA and Axiom Space, a privately funded space infrastructure developer from America.
- * The mission, which is the fourth one by private astronauts, aims to launch in August 2024 from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.
- * Aspirations for the mission include docking with the ISS for a span of fourteen days.

- * Indian astronauts will be trained by NASA, alongside international partners and SpaceX, focussing on spacecraft systems and emergency readiness.

Status of India's Gaganyaan Program

- * The Gaganyaan human spaceflight is projected to fly post-2025.
- * The launch of manned flights will only occur following two successful unmanned missions.

About the International Space Station (ISS)

- * The ISS is a continuously crewed laboratory orbiting Earth, 400 kilometres above the surface.
- * It hosts astronauts and cosmonauts and serves as a unique science lab with research in various fields such as medicine, technology, and science.
- * The ISS is a collaborative effort involving 15 countries and five space agencies including NASA, Roscosmos, ESA, JAXA, and CSA.
- * The ISS crew orbits the Earth every 90 minutes at a speed of 7.66 km/sec. Hence, in 24 hours, it orbits the Earth 16 times, witnessing 16 sunrises and sunsets.
- * American astronaut, Peggy Whitson, holds the US record for spending the most total time in space, totaling 665 days.
- * The ISS began its journey in 1998, with parts sent and assembled in orbit. It has been continuously crewed since the year 2000.

Upcoming ISRO Initiatives

- * India is preparing to establish the country's first-ever space station by 2035.
- * ISRO has plans to construct a 20-ton space station to support microgravity experiments within the coming decade.

Lunar Cave's Confirmation: An Impetus for Lunar Habitation

Introduction to the Lunar Cave Discovery

- Scientists have confirmed the discovery of a large lunar cave which is linked to a pit in Mare

Tranquillitatis on the Moon's surface. This recent revelation could potentially foster long-term human habitation on the moon by providing a natural barrier against its extreme conditions.

- This fascinating cave was discovered using archival radar measurements from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter - a robotic spacecraft that was launched by NASA to map the Moon's surface.

Significance of the Lunar Cave for Space Missions

- Lunar caves, birthed by volcanic activities, can act as natural shields protecting humans from radiation and micrometeorites. Additionally, these caves can also provide some form of temperature regulation in the Moon's harsh environment.

- The existence of such lunar caves is a key factor in discussions about long-term lunar habitation and could potentially provide the necessary geological conditions for astronauts to sustain longer stays on the moon.

Exploring the Lunar Cave's Geological Significance

- Further examination and exploration of these lunar caves could offer insightful information on the Moon's volcanic history as well as its internal structure. This knowledge could be exceedingly advantageous in planning future lunar missions.
- Future missions have been planned to scrutinise these caves in detail, paving the way for interesting discoveries about lunar geology and asteroids hitting the moon.

General Knowledge Inferences

- The cave is located in Mare Tranquillitatis, also known as the Sea of Tranquility, which is a large lunar mare on the Moon. Notably, it was the landing

site of Apollo 11, the mission that gave mankind its first ever successful human landing on the Moon.

- This confirmed existence of a lunar cave could spearhead motivation for missions aiming to establish human colonies on extraterrestrial bodies. As a strategic location, this discovery could play a pivotal role in the future of space exploration and habitation.

- Knowledge about lunar caves and their potential for providing shelter against radiation, temperature extremes, and micrometeorites is an important aspect of Lunar Geography. It brings about an engaging premise to further studies and research in Lunar Geology.

Miscellaneous

Commemorating Pride Month: A Celebration of LGBTQ+ Rights and Recognition

What is Pride Month?

-Pride Month is celebrated every June as a period of reflection, celebration, and advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community.

-Its origins trace back to the Stonewall Uprising in 1969.

-Over the years, Pride Month has transformed from a single day of remembrance to a month-long global celebration.

Significance of June in LGBTQ+ History

-The Stonewall Uprising, a crucial incident in the LGBTQ+ rights movement, occurred in June 1969 in New York. Pride Month commemorates this event.

-In 1999, President Bill Clinton was the first to declare June as "Gay and Lesbian Pride Month". Successive presidents, including Barack Obama and Joe Biden, have kept this tradition going.

The Stonewall Riots: Catalyst for Change

-In the 1960s, homosexuality was an illegal act in the US, with severe punishment for solicitation.

-The Stonewall Inn in New York was a haven for the LGBTQ+ community, who sought acceptance and community.

-On June 28, 1969, New York police raided the Stonewall Inn, sparking outrage in the LGBTQ+ community and resulting in six days of riots. These riots are viewed as a watershed moment for LGBTQ+ rights.

-Marsha P. Johnson, a transgender activist, played a pivotal role in these riots and is now hailed as a notable figure in the LGBTQ+ community.

Post-Stonewall: Pride and Unity

-Post-riots, activists initiated a march on its anniversary themed "gay pride", symbolising the community's sense of pride and unity in their identities.

-The Stonewall riots were a watershed moment against discrimination and police brutality faced by the LGBTQ+ community. This event gave broader visibility to non-conventional identities and orientations, a legacy which Pride Month continues to uphold.

LGBTQIA+ Rights in the United States and India

-In the US, despite the absence of a federal law specifically prohibiting discrimination based on orientation or identity, the Supreme Court's ruling that this discrimination is a form of sex discrimination is significant.

-In India, progress for LGBTQIA+ rights has been substantial with: voting rights for third sex individuals in 1994; Supreme Court recognition of transgender people as a third gender category in

2014; freedom to express sexual orientation protected by the Right to Privacy in 2017; passage of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

-While same-sex marriage is not explicitly recognised as a constitutional right in India, cohabiting same-sex couples receive some limited recognition.

-As per Indian Constitution, LGBTQIA+ community members enjoy equal protection under the law, and the right to marry a person of their choice is considered integral to Article 21 of the Constitution.

Celebrating Key Anniversaries – The 248th US Independence Day and 89th Birthday of Dalai Lama

Remembering the 248th US Independence Day

- Significance: The 4th of July, widely known as the US Independence Day, demarcates the USA's declaration of sovereignty in 1776. The nation recently celebrated its 248th anniversary on the 4th of July, 2024.

- Journey to Independence: The historical event marked the severance of 13 American colonies from Great Britain.

- Precursor to Independence: The quest for independence initiated in 1775 with the colonies striving for self-governance, reckoning with unpopular British policies.

- Declaration and Approval: The colonies heralded independence on the 2nd of July, 1776, two days prior to the approval of the Declaration of Independence.

- Causes: The primary sparks included British-imposed trade restrictions, an embargo on

westward expansion, lack of representation in the British Parliament, and the stringent Coercive Acts. These factors cumulatively fuelled the legendary American Revolutionary War.

Commemorating the 89th Birthday of the Dalai Lama

- Significance: The 89th birthday of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th and current Dalai Lama, was recently celebrated, marking another milestone in the venerable life of the Buddhist spiritual leader.
- The Dalai Lama Lineage: Dalai Lama is a title given to the spiritual leaders of the Tibetan people who belong to the Gelugpa tradition, the most substantial and influential sect in Tibetan Buddhism.
- Lineage History: A total of 14 spiritual leaders have served under this title in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, with the first two being bestowed this honour posthumously.
- Spiritual Belief: The Dalai Lama is revered as a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet. Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings committed to achieving Buddhahood for the welfare of humanity.
- The 14th Dalai Lama: Tenzin Gyatso, the current Dalai Lama, had to leave Tibet along with numerous followers during the Tibetan uprising in 1959. Since then, he has been residing in India.

World Population Day 2024: Emphasis on Reproductive Health and Rights

World Population Day: An Overview

- World Population Day is an annual observance held on 11th July to create awareness about

globally pertinent population issues and the significance of reproductive health and rights.

- It is an initiative of the United Nations, initially established in 1989.
- The day encourages global action and solutions, aiming to encompass global population concerns and reproductive health in essential dialogues.

Parsing through History

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) suggested 11th July to be acknowledged as World Population Day in 1989. The goal was to cultivate international awareness about the importance and urgency of dealing with population issues.
- "Five Billion Day", observed on 11th July 1987 when the world population hit 5 billion, had evoked global public interest and influenced the conception of World Population Day.

Theme of the Year: 'Leave No One Behind, Count Everyone'

- The theme for World Population Day 2024 is "Leave no one behind, count everyone", aiming to ensure every person is considered in population-related discussions, plans, and actions.
- The theme emphasises inclusivity and equal consideration for all, irrespective of their social, economic, or geographical status.

Monitoring Global Population Growth

- The world's population is progressively rising; it reached 7 billion in 2011 and stood at nearly 7.9 billion in 2021.
- Future predictions suggest that the global population will continue to grow, potentially hitting around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050, and a staggering 10.9 billion by 2100.
- As per the UN's World Population dashboard, India's population stands at around 1.428 billion in 2024.

Importance of World Population Day

- World Population Day encourages collective cognizance and action on global population-related issues such as human rights, poverty, maternal health, gender equality, and sustainable development.
- It promotes the significance of reproductive health and rights, enabling individuals globally to have a deeper understanding and play their part in encouraging responsible behaviours and policies.
- The day also persuasively underscores the pressing need to manage unruly population growth which confronts existing resources and sustainable development.

Trivia: Globally, China and India are the two countries with the highest populations. On a continental scale, Asia houses more than half of the world's population. Each year, more than 80 million people are being added to the world's population.

Ancient Treasures Resurfaced: Odisha Government Unlocks Puri Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar After 46 Years

The Revered Ratna Bhandar of Jagannath Temple

- The Odisha Government recently unlocked the revered Ratna Bhandar of the 12th-century Jagannath temple in Puri after 46 long years.
- The Ratna Bhandar, located on the northern side of the Jagamohana (assembly hall of the temple), is a collection of priceless treasures.
- The treasure trove includes jewellery and adornments of the sibling deities Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra offered

by former kings and devotees from around the globe over centuries.

- The precious collection also contains 128.38 kg of gold and 221.53 kg of silver as per the last inventory made in 1978.
- The Ratna Bhandar includes two chambers - the outer chamber (Bahara Bhandar) and the inner chamber (Bhitar Bhandar) that remained closed for 46 years.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) maintains the custody of the temple and inspected Ratna Bhandar structurally in 2008 but hadn't entered the inner chamber.

Key Facts about the Jagannath Temple in Puri

- The 12th-century Jagannath temple in Puri, dedicated to the worship of Lord Jagannath, is one of the most sacred Hindu shrines in India and is referred to as 'White Pagoda'.
- It forms a part of the Char Dhams, four of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Hindus, and the Golden Triangle of Odisha, known for their tourist interest.
- The Golden Triangle includes the City of Temples, Bhubaneswar, and the Sun Temple of Konark, also referred to as the 'Black Pagoda'.
- The temple was constructed by King Ananta Varman Chodaganga Deva from the Ganga Dynasty in the 12th century and stands as a fine specimen of Kalinga architecture.
- The architecture includes distinctive curvilinear towers, intricate carvings, and ornate sculptures with four gates each facing in cardinal directions, named after different animals.
- Hindus believe the power of 'Yama', the god of death, is nullified in Puri due to the presence of Lord Jagannath, dubbing it as 'Yamanika Tirtha'.
- The temple hosts major festivals like Snana Yatra, Netrotsava, Rath Yatra, and Sayan Ekadasi.

Architecture of the Temple (Odisha or Kalinga School of Architecture)

- The Jagannath temple showcases the Kalinga style of architecture, a sub-school of the Nagara school that developed under the reign of the Kalinga Empire.
 - The exterior walls of the temple were elaborately adorned with intricate carvings while the interior walls were kept plain.
 - The architecture deviated from the use of pillars in the porch and opted for iron girders to support the roof.
 - The shikhara (mountain peak) of the temple, referred to as 'rekha deul' in the Odisha School of Architecture, features vertical roofs that curve inwards sharply.
-

Recognizing the Significance of Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas

Introduction to Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas

- Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas, recognized on 25th June, serves as a powerful reminder of a time in history when the sanctity of the Indian Constitution was compromised.
- The day specifically points to the Emergency declared in 1975, under the government of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- The government's announcement of this day stresses its significance not just as a day of remembrance, but also as an educational tool for the Indian citizens to comprehend their constitutional rights and the importance of democracy.

Reason Behind the Commemoration

- The declaration was predominantly framed to remember and pay tribute to those who suffered during the oppressive period of the Emergency.
- This period stretched from 25th June 1975 to 21st March 1977, during which the government instigated significant legislative and executive

changes in the country using special constitutional provisions.

- This configuration enabled the Union to centralise power, asserting full control over state governments, which in essence created a unitary governing system.

Historical Perspective - Emergencies in India

- The declaration of National Emergency has occurred three times in the history of India.
- The first occasion was the India-China war from 1962 to 1968, followed by the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, and the last was from 1975 to 1977 owing to political instability.
- The proclamations were significant events in the country's history, impacting the constitutionally established federal system of governance.

Significance of Emergency Provisions in the Constitution

- The Indian Constitution vests power in the President to declare an emergency that significantly alters the federal structure.
- An understanding of these provisions is crucial for citizens as it benefits them in gaining insight into the potential infringements on their rights during such times.
- Also, such understanding underscores the prime importance of democratic principles such as liberty, equality and fraternity, which constitute the bulwark against the imposition of what may otherwise materialise into autocratic rule.

Bottom Line: The observance of Samvidhaan Hatya Diwas serves as a stark reminder of the value of democracy and the indispensable role of the Constitution in safeguarding it. It affirms our commitment to uphold the Constitution and its principles, recognizing the sacrifices of those who endured the hardships of the emergencies imposed in our history.

Kargil Vijay Diwas: A Tribute to Supreme Bravery and Sacrifice

Understanding Kargil Vijay Diwas

- Celebrated every year on July 26, Kargil Vijay Diwas commemorates India's significant victory in the 1999 Kargil War against Pakistan.
- It pays tribute to Indian soldiers' bravery and sacrifice during the war, which marked the first military confrontation in a nuclearized South Asia.

Unfolding the Background

- The event followed a series of geopolitical conflicts and tensions between India and Pakistan, post the major 1971 conflict, which led to the creation of Bangladesh.
- During the winter of 1998-1999, Pakistani armed forces covertly trained and deployed troops across the Line of Control, leading to a well-organised military operation against India.
- India launched Operation Vijay in response, deploying over 200,000 troops to the region to counter the incursion.

The Significance and Impact of Kargil Vijay Diwas

- Kargil Vijay Diwas remembers and honours supreme sacrifices made by Indian soldiers during the war.
- The day has a high significance as it globally recognized the Line of Control as the default border between India and Pakistan, reinforcing India's stance on Jammu and Kashmir's territorial integrity.
- It marked a turnaround in Indo-US relationships as India was regarded as a responsible nuclear actor, thus solidifying its diplomatic gains.
- Moreover, it accentuated India's military capabilities and its ability to manage and respond to regional conflicts effectively.

Diving into the Associated Operations

- Operation Vijay aimed to clear the infiltrators from the Indian side of the LOC.

- Operation Safed Sagar, managed by the Indian Air Force, supported ground operations.
- The Indian Navy's Operation Talwar ensured maritime security and deterrence.

Post-Kargil War Reforms

- The Kargil War led to a comprehensive review of India's security structure, resulting in increased transparency and vital reforms.
- Post-war reforms included the creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), establishment of Tri-Service Commands, implementation of intelligence reforms and counter-terrorism measures.
- The war also accelerated the need for indigenous satellite navigation systems like the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).
- The need for a holistic doctrine to address multi-dimensional proxy wars was highlighted, which paved the way for doctrinal changes like the Cold Start Doctrine.

World Hepatitis Day: Uniting to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis

Understanding Hepatitis and Its Global Impact **Introduction and About:**

- World Hepatitis Day is globally observed annually on July 28th to raise public awareness about hepatitis, an inflammation of the liver that can lead to severe liver complications and cancer. This commemoration sheds light on the necessity of understanding this disease, its causes, effects, and prevention methods.

Significance of the Date:

- The date, 28th July, marks the birth anniversary of Nobel laureate Dr. Baruch Blumberg. He is celebrated for his ground-breaking discovery of the Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and the development of a diagnostic test and vaccine to combat the virus.

Theme 2024: "It's Time for Action":

- The theme for year 2024 is a call to intensify efforts and actions towards eradicating Hepatitis,

underscoring the urgency of achieving the WHO's 2030 target for eliminating hepatitis.

Hepatitis: Causes, Symptoms, and Forms:

- Hepatitis exhibits an array of symptoms including fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, jaundice, and more.
- There are five primary strains of hepatitis - A, B, C, D, and E. Each strain has its unique transmission methods and health impacts. Among these, Hepatitis B and C are the most common and deadly, causing 1.3 million deaths and 2.2 million new infections globally each year.
- Besides the viral strains, additional causes of hepatitis include drug and alcohol misuse, fatty liver hepatitis, and certain autoimmune responses.

Global Initiatives to Tackle Hepatitis

National and International Endeavours:

- Nationally, India has introduced the 'National Viral Hepatitis Control Program' aiming to alleviate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030. Furthermore, India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) provides free Hepatitis B vaccinations to the public.
- On a larger scale, the World Health Organization (WHO) has targeted the elimination of hepatitis by 2030. The initiative plans to reduce new hepatitis infections by 90% and cut down the hepatitis-related death rate by 65% between the years 2016 and 2030.

This information about World Hepatitis Day establishes its relevance in the public health domain and its significance in various competitive government exams which often include sections dedicated to events of national and international importance. Awareness and understanding about Hepatitis are steps towards eliminating this public health threat.

Important Days

Date	Important Days
July 1, 2024	National Doctor's Day
July 01, 2024	National Chartered Accountants Day
July 01, 2024	GST Day
July 02, 2024	World Sports Journalists Day
July 02, 2024	World UFO Day
July 03, 2024	International Plastic Bag Free Day
July 06, 2024	World Zoonoses Day
July 06, 2024	International Day of Cooperatives
July 07, 2024	World Kiswahili Language Day
July 11, 2024	World Population Day
July 11, 2024	International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica
July 12, 2024	Malala Day
July 12, 2024	International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms
July 15, 2024	World Youth Skills Day
Jul 17, 2024	World Day for International Justice
July 18, 2024	International Nelson Mandela Day

July 20, 2024	World Chess Day
July 20, 2024	International Moon Day
July 22, 2024	National Mango Day
July 22, 2024	World Brain Day
July 23, 2024	National Broadcasting Day
July 24, 2024	National Income Tax Day
July 25, 2024	World Drowning Prevention Day
July 26, 2024	Kargil Vijay Diwas

July 28, 2024	World Hepatitis Day
July 29, 2024	International Tiger Day
July 30, 2024	International Day of Friendship
July 30, 2024	World Day against Trafficking in Persons
July 31, 2024	World Ranger Day

Books and Author

Author/Editor	Book Title	Notes
Late Col M B Ravindranath, Vir Chakra (VrC)	"Kargil War: The Turning Point"	
Shri S Nagesh Kumar	"Venkaiah Naidu – Life in Service"	Biography of the former Vice President.
Dr I.V. Subba Rao	"Celebrating Bharat – The Mission and Message of Shri M Venkaiah Naidu as 13th Vice-President of India"	Photo chronicle compiled by the Former Secretary to Vice-President of India.
Shri Sanjay Kishore	"Mahaneta – Life and Journey of Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu"	Pictorial biography in Telugu.
Piyush Pandey	"Manoj Bajpayee: The Definitive Biography"	Offers an intimate look into the life of one of India's most respected actors.
Tim Walker	"The Prisoner of Bhopal"	Walker, a graphic designer, connects with the Bhopal disaster of 1984 through his work on a leaflet for Union Carbide.

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