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Current Events

February 2022

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The Current Events are tailored to the latest RTs trends and requirements of UPSC. To optimize exam performance, focus on the following key points:

- Cover current events from the past 18 months only, up to the date of the exam. For periodic events, such as the Budget, Economic Survey, Nobel Prize, or Tournaments, refer to only the latest ones. For instance, for an April 2023 exam, study the 2023 budget, not the 2022 budget.
- The UPSC RT exam is factual, so don't delve into details or implications.
- The Return on Investment (ROI) for studying current affairs is generally low. Therefore, devote an appropriate amount of time to them while prioritizing other topics that have a higher ROI. For instance, studying 100 pages of current affairs may result in solving only 5 questions, while studying 100 pages of Polity could yield 14-15 questions.
- A few questions will always be unsolvable, no matter how much you've studied. Don't get discouraged by them, as they won't affect your selection.
- Based on experience, you can expect to answer approximately 60-70% of question in exam, from these concise current affairs booklets.
- Current affairs for UPSC RT exams are purely factual, so self-study is better than coaching classes. In fact, coaching classes are counterproductive, as a teacher may only cover 10 events in 60 minutes, while you can cover 35-40 events in the same time frame.

Finally, note that these files are specifically prepared for RT exams of UPSC and should not be used for Civil Services Preliminary exam (GS Paper 1).

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February 2022

1. Sports and Games

24th edition of Winter Olympics Games 2022 concludes in Beijing

The 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, China, was held from 4 to 20 February 2022. The Games featured a record 109 events across 15 disciplines in 7 sports. The venues of the Games were distributed across 3 zones – Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou. Also, the successive Presidency of the Games was formally handed over to Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, in Italy, to host the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Note that, for the first time in the history of the Winter Olympics, athletes competed on 100% artificial snow in Beijing.

The Winter Olympic Games is a major international multi-sport event held once every 4 years for sports practiced on snow and ice. The first Winter Olympic Games, the 1924 Winter Olympics, were held in Chamonix, France. The modern Olympic Games were inspired by the ancient Olympic Games, which were held in Olympia, Greece, from the 8th century BC to the 4th century AD.

“*Together for a Shared Future*” is the official motto of the Olympic (and for the Paralympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 too scheduled in March 2022). Also, embodying China’s national animal, ‘*Bing Dwen Dwen*’ and ‘*Shuey Rhon Rhon*’ are the mascots for the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics.

Medal Tally

Norway has topped the medal table for the second successive Winter Olympics, winning a total of 37 medals, including 16 golds. This is a new record for the most amount of gold medals won at a single Winter Olympics. Germany (27 medals) and China (15 medals) held second and third position respectively.

Note that, the Indian team at the game was represented by 1 male alpine skier, Arif Khan. He was the country’s flagbearer during the opening ceremony, meanwhile, a volunteer was the flagbearer during the closing ceremony. India could not win any medal at the games.

India won 5th title of Under-19 World Cup 2022

India has beaten England in final to win 5th title of U19 World Cup 2022. India previously won the trophy in 2000, 2008, 2012, 2018. Yash Dhull has become the 5th Indian captain to win the title after Mohammad Kaif, Virat Kohli, Unmukt Chand and Prithvi Shaw.

Also, India’s Raj Angad Bawa was announced Player of the Match in the Finals while South Africa’s Dewald Brevis who broke all records to score 506 runs in only 6 innings, the most for any batter in any Under-19 World Cup ever, was named Player of the Series for his record-breaking showing.

World Games Athlete of the Year 2021

Indian hockey player PR Sreejesh has won the prestigious World Games Athlete of the Year 2021. He becomes 1st Indian man and only the 2nd Indian to receive the accolade. In 2020, Indian Women’s Hockey Captain Rani Rampal became the 1st Indian to win the honour. Sreejesh was part of the Tokyo Olympics-bronze medal winning side. The Award is organized by IWGA.

Founded in 1980, the International World Games Association (IWGA) is a non-governmental and non-profit-making international organisation constituted under Swiss law. Made up of International Sports Federations, it

administers a quadrennial and multidisciplinary sports event, The World Games, which aspires to equal and exceed the importance of World Championships, organised by each federation individually.

Chelsea defeated Brazil to win its first FIFA Club World Cup 2022

Chelsea Football Club have won their first FIFA Club World Cup 2022 by defeating Brazil's Palmeiras Football Club in the Finals held in Abu Dhabi. The decisive goal was scored by Kai Havertz. Chelsea became the third English team to win the Club World Cup after Manchester United and Liverpool.

India won 8 medals in Singapore International Weightlifting Tournament

Indian Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu has won the Gold Medal in the Singapore International Weightlifting tournament.

India has concluded its campaign at Singapore Weightlifting International 2022 with 8 medals, including 6 golds and 1 silver and bronze each. Each of the 8 Indian lifters who registered for Singapore International won medals and secured their spots at Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, scheduled to be held in July-August 2022.

2. Science and Technology

What are Data Centres?

Interest from companies such as Microsoft, Flipkart, Amazon Web Services etc. suggests that India is slowly becoming a favourable destination for corporations setting up data centres.

Data centre is a dedicated secure space within a building / centralized location where computing and networking equipment is concentrated for the purpose of collecting, storing, processing, distributing or allowing access to large amounts of data. Such physical facilities are available all across the world and are not restricted by geographical borders. It means anyone from anywhere in the world can use data centre services by paying a stipulated amount, without physically visiting the facility.

First woman to be cured of HIV – Stem Cell Transplant

A US patient has become the first woman reported to be cured of HIV after Stem Cell Transplant (SCT). She became the third person to date to be cured of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) after receiving a SCT from a donor who was naturally resistant to virus that causes AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

Stem cells are special human cells that are able to develop into many different cell types. Stem cells provide new cells for the body as it grows and replaces specialized cells that are damaged or lost. Based on the cell type/tissue of origin, stem cells are classified as ‘Somatic Stem Cells’ (SSCs), and ‘Embryonic Stem Cells’ (ESCs).

What is Tokamak device?

Scientists in the United Kingdom have managed to produce the largest amount of energy so far from a nuclear fusion reaction. The energy was produced in a machine called a ‘*tokamak*’, a doughnut-shaped apparatus.

The tokamak is an experimental magnetic fusion device designed to harness the energy of fusion. Inside a tokamak, the energy produced through the fusion is absorbed as heat in the walls of the vessel, which will be used by a fusion power plant to produce steam and then electricity by way of turbines and generators.

India-based Neutrino Observatory

Tamil Nadu government has filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court stating that it would not permit the proposed India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) at Bodi West Hills in Theni district.

India-based Neutrino Observatory: It is a multi-institutional effort aimed at building a world-class underground laboratory and an Iron Calorimeter (ICAL) detector for studying neutrinos. It aims to assess the properties of neutrino particles and to make precision measurements of the parameters related to neutrino oscillations. It is jointly funded by the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Science and Technology.

Neutrinos, first proposed by Swiss scientist Wolfgang Pauli in 1930, are the second most widely occurring particle in the universe, only second to photons, the particle which makes up light.

IISc installed Supercomputer Param Pravega

Under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM), the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has installed and commissioned *Param Pravega*, one of the most powerful supercomputers in the country, and the largest in an Indian academic institution. NSM is steered jointly by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and implemented by C-DAC and IISc.

What are NFTs?

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) are gaining massive popularity now because they are becoming an increasingly popular way to showcase and sell one's digital artwork.

An NFT is a unique, irreplaceable token that can be used to prove ownership of digital assets such as music, artwork, even tweets and memes. Anything that can be converted into a digital form can be an NFT. Everything from your drawings, photos, videos, GIF, music, in-game items, selfies, and even a tweet can be turned into an NFT, which can then be traded online using cryptocurrency. NFT transactions are recorded on blockchains, which is a digital public ledger, with most NFTs being a part of the Ethereum blockchain.

ISRO launches EOS-04, INSPIRESat-1, INST2D

ISRO has successfully launched earth observation satellite EOS-04, two other satellites (INSPIRESat-1 and INST2D) onboard PSLV. It was launched from the first launch pad at the country's only spaceport in Sriharikota - Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Andhra Pradesh. This is ISRO's first launch in 2022. It was the first mission since the failure of the GSLV F10 mission in August 2021. This was the first mission of the space agency under the chairmanship of S Somanath.

EOS-04 is a radar imaging satellite capable of providing high-quality images under all weather conditions. It can be used to capture images for agriculture, forestry, flood mapping, soil moisture and hydrology. The satellite has a mission life of 10 years.

INS-2DT: It is a technology demonstrator satellite, which has a thermal imaging camera and can help in the assessment of land and water surface temperatures apart from mapping vegetation.

INSPIRESat-1 Satellite: This satellite will study ionosphere dynamics and the Sun's coronal heating process.

What is Spearphishing?

It was found by an American Agency ModifiedElephant, a hacking group, had allegedly planted incriminating evidence on the personal devices of Indian journalists, human rights activists, human rights defenders, academics, and lawyers. ModifiedElephant operators have been infecting their targets using Spearphishing emails with malicious file attachments.

Spearphishing refers to the practice of sending emails to targets that look like they are coming from a trusted source to either reveal important information or install different kinds of malware on their computer systems.

3. Environment

India's first Dugong conservation reserve in Gulf of Mannar

Tamil Nadu has declared India's first dugong conservation reserve in the Gulf of Mannar and the adjacent Palk Bay on the southeast coast of India. The dugong is a species of sea cow found throughout the warm latitudes of the Indian and western Pacific Oceans. The name sea cow refers to the fact that they graze on seagrass, which forms meadows in sheltered coastal waters.

Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia

The Ministry of Power has notified the first part of the Green Hydrogen/Green Ammonia Policy to enable production of Green Hydrogen/Green Ammonia using Renewable Sources of Energy.

Hydrogen and Ammonia have emerged as future fuels to replace fossil fuels in a cost-effective manner and achieve sustainable development along with Wind and Solar Energy. Within it, Green Ammonia, closely followed by Green Hydrogen, is the most advantageous zero-carbon fuels based on factors like – fuels' life cycle, GHG emissions, environmental factors, scalability, economic viability, and the technical and safety implications. The Government of India has also recognized their role to tackle global carbon challenge and ensure environmentally sustainable energy security of the nation.

One Ocean Summit

On the occasion of One Ocean Summit that took place in Brest (France), UNESCO has announced that at least 80% of the seabed will be mapped by 2030, compared to 20% currently.

Seafloor mapping, also called seabed imaging, is the measurement of water depth of a given body of water. Bathymetric survey measures the depth and map the underwater features of water body.

Note that, in 2017, UNESCO joined with Nippon Foundation, Japan's private foundation, to launch Seabed 2030 Project. The Project aims to bring together all available bathymetric data to produce the definitive map of the world ocean floor by 2030 and make it available to all.

One Ocean Summit: The Summit was organised by France (as part of French Presidency of Council of the European Union) in cooperation with United Nations and World Bank. Its objective is to mobilise international community to take tangible action towards preserving and supporting healthy and sustainable ocean ecosystems.

Aravali Biodiversity Park at Gurugram declared India's first OECM site

Aravali Biodiversity Park in Gurugram was declared as India's first OECM (the other effective area-based conservation measures) site. The Biodiversity Park in Aravali range was once a mining site, left wasted and scarred after mindless quarrying. It was later rehabilitated with Government, people and corporates support.

OECM tag is conferred upon areas of rich biodiversity, outside of protected areas like national parks and sanctuaries, for effective in-situ conservation. It is issued by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

White-Cheeked Macaque discovered in India

Scientists from Zoological Survey of India have recorded presence of White-Cheeked Macaque (*Macaca leucogenys*) from Arunachal Pradesh in India. The species was first discovered in 2015 in China and its existence was not known in India before this. It is the last mammal to have been discovered in Southeast Asia.

GAIL commences India's first of its kind blended Hydrogen into Natural Gas Project

In line with National Hydrogen Mission, Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) has commenced India's first-of-its-kind project in Indore of mixing hydrogen into the natural gas system to establish the techno-commercial feasibility of blending hydrogen in City Gas Distribution (CGD) network. The Government is planning to blend 15% Green Hydrogen with piped natural gas (PNG) for domestic, commercial and industrial consumption. GAIL started injection of grey hydrogen at City Gate Station (CGS), Indore. This grey hydrogen would subsequently be replaced by green hydrogen.

Depending on the source, the hydrogen is classified as blue, green or grey.

- *Blue hydrogen* is when natural gas is split into hydrogen and CO₂. The CO₂ is captured and then stored.
- *Grey hydrogen* is a similar process to blue hydrogen but the CO₂ is not captured and is released into the atmosphere.
- *Green hydrogen* is hydrogen produced by splitting water by electrolysis using electricity from renewable energy sources such as wind or solar. This produces only hydrogen and oxygen.

City Gas Distribution refers to transportation of natural gas to enable supply of cleaner cooking fuel (like Piped Natural Gas) to households, industrial and commercial units as well as transportation fuel (like Compressed Natural Gas) to vehicles through a network of pipelines. Under Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act (PNGRB Act) 2006, PNGRB grants authorization to entities for developing a CGD network in a specified geographic area of the country.

Proposal to link 5 rivers

The Government has proposed a project to link 5 rivers in India in Union budget 2022-23. The rivers identified for linking are Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar and Pennar-Cauvery, Damanganga-Pinjal and Par-Tapi-Narmada.

A brief overview of these rivers

- Krishna, the fourth largest river in India, originates in Mahabaleshwar in Maharashtra and flows through Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- Cauvery originates in Kodagu and flows through Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- Penna originates in Chikkaballapura and flows through Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- Godavari, which is the third largest river in India originates in Nashik and flows through Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa.

The Damanganga-Pinjal river linking aims to divert surplus water from the Damanganga basin to provide domestic water for Mumbai city. The Par-Tapi-Narmada project proposes to provide water to drought-prone regions of Kutch and Saurashtra by diverting excess water from 7 reservoirs in the Western Ghats in North Maharashtra and south Gujarat.

Government of India's 5 Nectar Elements

The Government of India has articulated and put across the concerns of developing countries at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Glasgow, United Kingdom.

5 Nectar Elements (Panchamrit)

India has presented the following 5 nectar elements (Panchamrit) of India's climate action:

- (i) Reach 500 GW Non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.
- (ii) 50% of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030.
- (iii) Reduction of total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now to 2030.
- (iv) Reduction of the carbon intensity of the economy by 45% by 2030, over 2005 levels.

(v) Achieving the target of net zero emissions by 2070.

Mantra of LIFE- Lifestyle: The mantra of LIFE- Lifestyle for Environment to combat climate change was also shared in COP 26. It was stated that Lifestyle for Environment has to be taken forward as a campaign to make it a mass movement of Environment Conscious Lifestyles. The message conveyed by India was that the world needs mindful and deliberate utilization, instead of mindless and destructive consumption.

21st edition of World Sustainable Development Summit held

21st edition of the World Sustainable Development Summit was held in virtual format.

Theme: *Towards a Resilient Planet: Ensuring a Sustainable and Equitable Future.*

World Sustainable Development Summit: It is the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). It provides a platform for global leaders and practitioners to discuss and deliberate over climatic issues of universal importance. It is continuing the legacy of Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) which was initiated in 2001 with the aim of making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal.

Kawal Tiger Reserve organizes first-of-its-kind Bird Walk

In a first-of-its kind, Kawal Tiger Reserve (KTR) has organized Bird Walk for bird watchers.

Kawal is home to a rich diversity in flora and fauna with more than 300 species of birds, and over 600 tree species with different forest compositions. The reserve is located in Telangana. The reserve is the oldest sanctuary in the northern Telangana region of the state. This Reserve is catchment for the rivers Godavari and Kadam. The Reserve is one of the richest teak forests in the state, with dense pristine areas free of human disturbance. The Government of India declared Kawal wildlife sanctuary as Tiger Reserve in 2012.

4. Schemes and Programmes

Government announces new scheme – PM-DevINE

A new scheme, Prime Minister’s Development Initiative for North-East (or PM-DevINE) has been announced in Union Budget 2022-23, which will fund infrastructure in the spirit of PM Gati Shakti, and social development projects based on felt needs of the North-East. PM-DevINE will enable livelihood activities for youth and women by filling the gaps in various sectors, but it will not be a substitute for existing Central or State schemes.

SVAMITVA Scheme

The Central Government is planning to prepare digital maps of all its 6,00,000 villages and pan-India 3D maps will be prepared for 100 cities under SVAMITVA scheme.

SVAMITVA is a central sector scheme launched in April 2020. It aims to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India. It engages the latest Drone Surveying technology and Continuously Operating Reference Station (CORS), for demarcating the inhabitant (*Aabadi*) land in rural areas. It also aims to update the ‘record-of-rights’ in the revenue/property registers and issue property cards to the property owners in rural areas. It is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) (Nodal Ministry for implementation of the scheme), State Panchayati Raj Departments, State Revenue / Land Records Departments and Survey of India (technology partner for implementation).

SVAMITVA stands for – *Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas*.

MoE approved continuation of RUSA Scheme

The Ministry of Education has approved the continuation of the RUSA scheme till March 31, 2026.

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a centrally sponsored scheme, launched in 2013, aims at providing strategic funding to eligible State higher educational institutions. The central funding (in the ratio of 60:40 for general category States and 90:10 for special category states) is norm based and outcome dependent. The funding would flow from the central ministry through the State governments/Union territories to the State Higher Education Councils before reaching the identified institutions. The funding to States would be made on the basis of critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, which would describe each state’s strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education. The scheme gives priority to the Aspirational Districts.

Government launched New India Literacy Programme

Central Government has approved a new scheme “New India Literacy Programme for the period FYs 2022-2027” to cover all the aspects of Adult Education.

The objective of the scheme is to impart not only foundational literacy and numeracy but also to cover other components which are necessary for a citizen of 21st century such as:

- critical life skills
- vocational skills development
- basic education and
- continuing education

It aligns with National Education Policy 2020 and from now on, term “Education for All” will be used in place of “Adult Education”. The National Education Policy 2020 has recommendations for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK)

Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports has decided to continue RYSK Scheme for another 5 years from 2021 -22 to 2025-26.

Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK) is a Central-Sector scheme that aims to develop personality and leadership qualities of youth and to engage them in nation building activities. It is an umbrella scheme with several sub-schemes under it, including Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, National Youth Corps, National Young Leaders Programme etc. Scheme beneficiaries are in age-group of 15-29 years. For adolescents' specific components, beneficiaries are in age-group of 10-19 years.

5. Polity

What is Contempt of Court in Indian context?

The Chief Justice of India, N.V. Ramana has agreed to immediately list for hearing a petition to initiate contempt action against Haryana authorities for not reining in ‘hooligans’ who have created an ‘atmosphere of communal hatred and terror’ for worshippers.

Contempt of Court

While the basic idea of a contempt law is to punish those who do not respect the orders of the courts, in the Indian context, contempt is also used to punish speech that lowers the dignity of the court and interferes with the administration of justice.

The Contempt of Court can be of 2 kinds:

- (i) *Civil*, that is the willful disobedience of a court order or judgment, or willful breach of an undertaking given to a court.
- (ii) *Criminal*, that is written or spoken words or any act that scandalises the court or lowers its authority or prejudices or interferes with the due course of a judicial proceeding or interferes/obstructs the administration of justice.

Constitutional Provisions

- Article 129 and 215 of the Constitution of India empowers the Supreme Court and High Court respectively to punish people for contempt.
- Section 10 of The Contempt of Courts Act of 1971 defines the power of the High Court to punish contempt of its subordinate courts.
- Contempt of court is a reasonable restriction to the freedom of speech and expression under Article 19.

President’s Address and Motion of Thanks

Article 87(1) of the Constitution provides that at the commencement of the first Session after each general election to the Lok Sabha, and also at the commencement of the first Session of each year, the President addresses both the Houses assembled together in the Joint Session and informs Parliament of the causes of its summons. The President’s speech at the start of the Budget Session usually highlights the government’s achievements over the past year and outlines targets and plans for the future.

This speech is followed by the discussion on ‘Motion of Thanks’ to the President’s address. It is available to the Members of Parliament to raise discussions and debates to examine and criticize the government and administration for its lapses and failures. The Motion of Thanks is then put to vote of the House. Note that, the Motion of Thanks must be passed in the House. Otherwise, it amounts to the defeat of the government. Note that, no Member can raise questions on the address by the President.

What is Lokayukta?

The Kerala Governor has signed the ordinance proposing amendments to the Kerala Lokayukta Act, 1999, that makes the agency’s orders not binding on the government.

Lokayukta is an anti-corruption authority or ombudsman – an official appointed by the government to represent the interests of the public. Most importantly, it investigates allegations of corruption and mal-administration against public servants and is tasked with speedy redressal of public grievances.

The *Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013*, commonly known as “*The Lokpal Act*” was passed by the Parliament of India in December 2013. It provides for the appointment of a Lokayukta “to investigate and report on allegations or grievances relating to the conduct of public servants.” It also called for establishment of Lokpal at the Centre. The Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) headed by Late Morarji Desai in 1966 recommended the setting up of the institution of Lokayukta.

6. Governance

EIA launches star rating system to assess State EIA Authority governance

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Division of the (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change) MoEF&CC has introduced a star-rating system to assess the performance of each State Environment Impact Assessment Authority based on the time taken to process the environmental clearance applications. The move has aimed at encouraging the efficiency, transparency and accountability in the functioning of SEIAAs without diluting any regulatory safeguards. The ranking system is based on the provisions of EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) Notification 2006 and various guidelines issued by ministry without diluting any regulatory safeguards.

Government to amend Criminal laws

The Central Government has initiated the process for comprehensive amendment of criminal laws in consultation with all stakeholders. Criminal law and criminal procedure fall under the Concurrent List while matters relating to Police and Prisons fall under the State List of the Constitution.

The laws that govern criminal law in India are the Indian Penal Code 1860; the Indian Evidence Act, 1872; and the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CrPC).

7. International Relations

Russia-Ukraine Military Conflict

Russia has deployed a military operation in Ukraine. Brief background and related developments are given below.

Background

Russia-Ukraine ties go back to late 1700s, when Catherine the Great brought most of the present Ukrainian territory under the Russian empire. After a brief period of autonomous existence (1917-20), Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union. Finally, in 1991 it declared its independence as the Soviet Union collapsed.

Further, tensions between Ukraine and Russia, both former Soviet states, escalated in late 2013 over a landmark political and trade deal with the European Union. After the pro-Russian then-President, Viktor Yanukovich, suspended the talks, weeks of protests in Kiev erupted into violence. Then, in March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, an autonomous peninsula in southern Ukraine with strong Russian loyalties, on the pretext that it was defending its interests and those of Russian-speaking citizens. Shortly afterwards, pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions declared their independence from Kiev, prompting months of heavy fighting. Despite Kiev and Moscow signing a peace deal in Minsk in 2015 (Minsk II Agreement), brokered by France and Germany, there have been repeated ceasefire violations.

Minsk Agreement

Minsk I: Ukraine and the Russian-backed separatists agreed a 12-point ceasefire deal in the capital of Belarus in September 2014. Its provisions included prisoner exchanges, deliveries of humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. The agreement quickly broke down, with violations by both sides.

Minsk II: In 2015, an open conflict was averted after the 'Minsk II' peace agreement was signed, under the mediation of France and Germany. It was designed to end the fighting in the rebel regions and hand over the border to Ukraine's national troops.

Donetsk and Luhansk Region

Russia's President has recognized 2 separatist eastern Ukrainian regions – Donetsk and Luhansk. Donetsk and Luhansk regions are collectively known as the Donbas. The region comprises both Ukraine-controlled parts as well as separatist-controlled areas. Its main industries are coal mining and steel production.

Russia's Issue with NATO

Russia stated that only if NATO withdraws their forces from all countries in Europe that joined the alliance after May 1997, would they de-escalate the military build-up. This would effectively mean that NATO cannot operate in any of the Baltic nations that border Russia (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania), central European states such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and Balkan states such as Croatia and Slovenia. Russia also wants NATO to drop plans of any further 'enlargement', which means committing to not accepting Ukraine and Georgia as members. Another demand is that NATO must not hold drills in eastern Europe, Ukraine and Georgia without prior approval from Russia.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an intergovernmental military alliance established by Washington Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949. It is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.

Russia's membership of Council of Europe suspended

Russia's membership in the Council of Europe has been suspended after its invasion of Ukraine. The Council of Europe is an international organization founded in the wake of World War II to uphold human rights, democracy

and the rule of law in Europe. Founded in 1949 (Treaty of London -1949), it has 46 member states, including all EU members.

Headquarters: Palace of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

India's Stand at UNSC

UNSC Resolution called for Russia to cease the use of force against Ukraine, withdraw all its forces etc. But it cannot be passed since Russia vetoed it. India, along with China and the United Arab Emirates, abstained from a vote in UNSC.

India launches Operation Ganga

Operation Ganga has been launched by Government of India for the evacuation of Indian Nationals from Ukraine due to Russia-Ukraine war. Due to the ongoing tension between Ukraine and Russia, Ukraine has been declared as a no-fly zone by the authorities for the safety and security of the nations. Due to this many Indian nationals were left stranded in Ukraine.

Certification of Russia Gas pipeline suspended by Germany

Germany has suspended the certification process of *Nord Stream 2* gas pipeline from Russia. The undersea pipeline directly links Russian gas to Europe via Germany and is complete but not yet operating.

Nord Stream 2 is 1,230-kilometer-long natural gas pipeline run from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany. It runs parallel to an earlier Nord Stream and would double its capacity to 110 billion cubic meters of gas a year.

Russian banks to disconnect from SWIFT Code

Few Russian banks have been disconnected from SWIFT amidst Russia-Ukraine crisis. SWIFT stands for *Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication*.

SWIFT: Founded in 1973, SWIFT is a messaging network used by banks and financial institutions globally that provides safe and secure exchange of information pertaining to financial transactions. It works by assigning each member institution a unique 8-digit SWIFT ID code or a Bank Identification Code that identifies not only the bank name but the country, city, and branch. If a person, say, in New York with a Citibank account, wants to send money to someone with an HSBC account in London, the payee would have to submit to his bank, the London-based beneficiary's account number along with the eight-digit SWIFT code of the latter's bank. Citibank would, then, send a SWIFT message to HSBC. Once that is received and approved, the money would be credited to the required account. Note that, SWIFT is merely a platform that sends messages and does not hold any securities or money.

SWIFT is regulated by G-10 central banks from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, Switzerland, and Sweden, alongside the European Central Bank. Its lead overseer is the National Bank of Belgium. SWIFT India is a joint venture of top Indian public and private sector banks which was created to deliver high quality domestic financial messaging services to the Indian financial community.

India-Nepal signed MoU for constructing bridge over Mahakali River

India and Nepal have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the construction of a motorable Bridge over Mahakali River. It will connect Dharchula in India to Darchula in Nepal. It will be constructed under Indian grant assistance.

Mahakali River originates at Kalapani in the Himalayas at an elevation of 3,600 m in the Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand, India. It flows along Nepal's western border with India and joins Ghaghra River, a tributary of the Ganges.

India signed Roadmap on Blue Economy and Ocean Governance Agreement with France

India has signed a Roadmap on Blue Economy and Ocean Governance agreement with France. This tie-up will help to explore the potential for collaboration in marine science research for a better understanding of oceans, and ensure that ocean remains a global common, a space of freedom and trade, based on the rule of law.

India-UAE signed CEPA

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

India participated in Munich Security Conference

India has participated in the Munich Security Conference 2022 held in Munich, Germany. MSC is an annual conference, which has taken place since 1963, on International Security Policy that takes place each year in February in Munich, Germany.

Conference Motto: *“Turning the Tide. Unlearning Helplessness”*

PSA announced Swachhta Saarthi Fellowship 2022

The Office of the Principle Scientific Advisor (PSA) to the Government of India under its “Waste to Wealth” Mission has announced the “Swachhta Saarthi Fellowship 2022” to empower young innovators who are engaged in community work of waste management, waste awareness campaigns, waste surveys etc. as ‘*Swachhta Saarthis*’, and implement actions to reduce waste for a greener planet.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Pakistani officials have said that they are ready to scrap the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) if USA could offer a similar deal.

The *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor* is the flagship project of the multi-billion-dollar ‘Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)’. The 3,000 km-long China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.

What is AUKUS Alliance?

China has equated India, U.S., Australia, Japan Quad grouping with the AUKUS (Australia, U.K., U.S.) defense pact, calling both ‘*exclusive cliques*’ part of the USA administration’s ‘ill-intentioned’ Indo-Pacific strategy.

AUKUS Alliance: The UK, US and Australia, in 2021, announced a historic security pact in the Asia-Pacific region, called the AUKUS pact and AUKUS alliance.

Bangladesh to purchase broad gauge railway wagons from India

Bangladesh has signed an agreement to purchase 420 broad-gauge railway wagons from India. The Project is being implemented with the joint funding of the Government of Bangladesh and Asian Development Bank (ADB) under the Rolling Stock Operation Improvement Project.

Defence Exercises in news

MILAN 2022: Latest edition of Indian Navy's (IN) biennial multilateral exercise was held in Visakhapatnam with participation of more than 40 countries. It was first conceived in 1995 at Andaman and Nicobar Command with participation of 4 countries (Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand).

EASTERN BRIDGE-VI: The 6th edition of bilateral exercise, 'Eastern Bridge VI' Air Force Exercise took place between India and Oman at Air Force Station Jodhpur.

8. Awards and Recognition

Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2022

The prestigious ceremony of Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2022 was held in Mumbai.

Prominent Awardees are given below.

- Film of the Year Award: Pushpa – The Rise
- Best Film Award – Shershaah
- Best Actor Award – Ranveer Singh for film 83
- Best Actress Award – Kriti Sanon for film Mimi
- Outstanding Contribution to Films – Asha Parekh

UP Tableau picked as best Tableau in Republic Day Parade

The tableau of Uttar Pradesh has been picked as the best tableau among the 12 States/UTs which participated in the Republic Day parade.

Theme of the tableau of Uttar Pradesh – *‘One District One Product and Kashi Vishwanath Dham’*

Best marching contingent among 3 Services – *Indian Navy*

Also, the Popular Choice Category Award was introduced for the first time in 2022, wherein the general public was invited to vote for the best marching contingents and best tableaux through the MyGov platform.

According to it, best State/UTs Tableau was Maharashtra with the theme *‘Biodiversity and State Bio-symbols of Maharashtra’*. Also, best marching contingent among 3 Services was *‘Indian Air Force’*.

Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematician

The Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians was awarded to Professor Neena Gupta, a mathematician of the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata, in a virtual ceremony. She received the award for the year 2021 for her outstanding work in affine algebraic geometry and commutative algebra.

UNEP celebrates 50th anniversary

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is celebrating its 50th anniversary in the year 2022.

UNEP was founded in 1972 following the landmark UN Conference on the Human Environment. The organization was conceived to monitor the state of the environment, inform policy making with science and coordinate responses to the world’s environmental challenges.

Major Reports: Emission Gap Report, Global Environment Outlook, Frontiers, Invest into Healthy Planet. *Major Campaigns:* Beat Pollution, UN75, World Environment Day, Wild for Life.

9. Social Development

NAAC relaxed eligibility criteria for accreditation of higher education

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has relaxed the eligibility criteria for accreditation of higher educational institutions. The new guidelines will allow newer institutions — those with one academic year or more — to apply for provisional accreditation. So far, colleges and universities needed to be at least 6 years old in order to apply. The purpose of the change, according to the guidelines, is to “widen the horizon of accreditation”.

Paramarsh Scheme: In July 2019, the Government of India launched ‘Paramarsh’ – a University Grants Commission (UGC) scheme for Mentoring NAAC accreditation aspirant institutions to promote quality assurance in Higher Education. The National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) is an autonomous body that assesses and accredits Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India.

World Food Programme

India has signed an agreement with the United Nation’s World Food Programme for the distribution of 50,000 MT of wheat, that India has committed to sending Afghanistan as part of a humanitarian assistance.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world’s largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security. Started in 1961, the WFP strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the need for food aid itself. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group, and part of its Executive Committee.

UNEP released 4th edition of Frontier’s Report

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has released its latest annual Frontiers Report. This is the 4th edition of the Frontiers Report, which was first published in 2016 with an alert to the growing risk of zoonotic diseases, 4 years before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Report identifies and offers solutions to 3 environmental issues that merit attention and action from governments, and the public at large. These issues are – Urban noise pollution, wildfires and phenological shifts. A *zoonosis* is an infectious disease caused by a pathogen that has jumped from an animal (usually a vertebrate) to a human.

What is Euthanasia?

A man in Colombia has become the first person with non-terminal illness to die by legal euthanasia.

Euthanasia can be defined as the intentional killing by act or omission of a dependent human being for his or her alleged benefit. The term was derived from the Greek words ‘*eu*’ and ‘*thanatos*’ which means ‘*good or easy death*’.

10. Economy

Companies now mandated to submit comprehensive CSR Report under CSR-2 Form

Companies in India have been mandated to submit a comprehensive report on their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in a new form – CSR-2.

Applicability: A company satisfying any of the following criteria during the immediately preceding financial year is required to comply with CSR provisions:

- Net worth of rupees 500 crore or more, or
- Turnover of rupees 1000 crore or more, or
- Net profit of rupees 5 crore or more.

After fulfilling the applicability criteria, the Companies Act mandates the Companies to spend 2% of their average net profits in the last 3 financial years, towards its CSR policy.

Multi-modal Logistics Park

Government has announced that contracts for implementation of Multimodal Logistics Parks (MMLPs) at 4 locations through PPP mode will be awarded in 2022-23. The MMLPs are to be set up under the Logistics Efficiency Enhancement Program, proposed in 2015 under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to improve India's logistics efficiency.

A *Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP)* is an inter-modal freight-handling establishment comprising of warehouses, dedicated cold chain facilities, freight or container terminals and bulk cargo terminals. It aims at easing and optimizing merchandise movement via road, rail, waterway and air, consequently, rationalizing the cost of logistics and improving the competitiveness of logistics.

What is Green Finance?

The Economic survey 2021-22 has made a strong case for boosting green financing, emphasizing the regulatory initiatives of the finance ministry and that of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), given that India is part of global sustainable finance initiatives.

Green Finance refers to the financial arrangements that are specific to the use for projects that are environmentally sustainable or projects that adopt the aspects of climate change. These include clean energy projects, clean transportation, energy-efficient projects like green building and waste management, sustainable water management projects etc. In order to meet the financial needs for these types of projects, new financial instruments such as green bonds; carbon market instruments (*e.g., carbon tax*); and new financial institutions (*e.g., green banks and green funds*) are being established.

Nepal to adopt India's UPI System

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced that Nepal will be the first foreign country to adopt India's UPI system. It is expected to serve the larger digital public good in Nepal and bolster interoperable real-time Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank), merging several banking features.

Government announces National Ropeway Development Programme – Parvatmala

Government of India, in Union Budget for 2022-23, has announced National Ropeways Development Programme – “Parvatmala”, a preferred ecologically sustainable alternative in place of conventional roads in difficult hilly areas. The idea is to improve connectivity and convenience for commuters, besides promoting tourism. It is being presently developed in regions like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Jammu & Kashmir and other North-Eastern states.

In February 2021, Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, was amended, enabling Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to also look after the development of Ropeways and Alternate Mobility Solutions.

Lavender designated as Doda brand Product

Lavender has been designated as a Doda brand product. Doda is a town and a notified area committee in Doda district in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. According to the Government, Lavender can be promoted under ‘One District, One Product’ initiative of the Government of India to attract Agri- StartUps, entrepreneurs and farmers. Lavender water, which separates from lavender oil, is used to make incense sticks. Hydrosol, which is formed after distillation from the flowers, is used to make soaps and room fresheners.

Note that, Doda is the birthplace of India's Purple Revolution (*Aroma Mission*). The Mission aims to promote the cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils that are in great demand by the aroma industry.

Revolution	Theme
Black Revolution	Petroleum Products
Blue Revolution	Fisheries
Green Revolution	Food Grains
Golden Revolution	Horticulture/Fruits
White Revolution	Milk
Yellow Revolution	Oil Seeds
Silver Revolution	Eggs
Red Revolution	Tomato/Meat
Round Revolution	Potato
Brown Revolution	Leather/Cocoa Production
Golden Fibre Revolution	Jute Products
Grey Revolution	Fertilizers
Pink Revolution	Onion/Pharmaceuticals/Prawn Production
Silver Fibre Revolution	Cotton Production

India’s first Water Taxi Service inaugurated

India’s first water taxi service connecting the twin cities, Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, was inaugurated. The water taxi will ply between Domestic Cruise Terminal in South Mumbai and the newly inaugurated Belapur Jetty in Navi Mumbai.

India’s first National Maritime Security Coordinator appointed

Vice Admiral (retd.) G. Ashok Kumar has been appointed as India's first National Maritime Security Coordinator to strengthen the country's maritime security. Proposed after the 26/11 terror attacks (2008), the National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) will be part of the National Security Council Secretariat, and will report to National Security Advisor (NSA). NMSC has been a long pending requirement since the Kargil Group of Ministers (GoM) recommended it.

Role

- Principal advisor to the government on maritime security domain.
- Coordinate the Indian Navy, the Coast Guard, security agencies involved in coastal and maritime security and 13 coastal states and UTs.

Government announced setting up of International Arbitration Centre at GIFT City

To speed up dispute resolution, Government has announced the setting up of an international arbitration centre at GIFT City.

International Intellectual Property Index 2022 released

International Intellectual Property Index 2022 was released by the Global Innovation Policy Center of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. As per it, India has improved its overall IP score from 38.4 per cent to 38.6 per cent, and the country is ranked 43 out of 55 countries. The index is topped by United States followed by UK, Germany, Sweden, and France.

J&K become the first UT to integrate with National Single Window System (NSWS)

Jammu and Kashmir has become the first Union Territory to be integrated with the National Single Window System (NSWS).

National Single Window System (NSWS) was launched in September 2021 by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. It is a digital platform that serves as a guide for investors to identify and to apply for approvals as per their business requirements. The platform is built to serve as an advisory tool to identify approvals based on user input and is to be used for guidance purpose only.

Economist Intelligence Unit released Democracy Index 2021

Democracy Index 2021 was released by Economist Intelligence Unit. The report described the state of democracy in 165 countries. The report was prepared based on 5 parameters viz. functioning of the government, electoral process and pluralism, political participation, civil liberties and political culture.

As per it, India ranked at 46th position (ranked 53rd in 2021). The index is topped by Norway.

CSK becomes first-ever sports Unicorn in India

Chennai Super Kings has become the first-ever sports Unicorn in the country. A privately held startup company valued at over \$1 billion is called a unicorn.

11. Important Days

World Wetland Day observed as UN International Day

This year, for the first time since it was established by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1972, World Wetlands Day (February 2) was observed as a United Nations International day.

A wetland is defined as any land area that is saturated or flooded with water, either seasonally or permanently such as lakes, aquifers and marshes, mangroves, peatlands, estuaries, coral reefs etc.

Theme for 2022: *"Wetlands Action for People and Nature"*

Ramsar Convention, adopted in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Also note that, with the latest addition, as of Feb 2022, India now has 49 Ramsar Sites (Wetlands of International importance). Two of the additions are given below:

- *Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary*, a freshwater wetland near the coast of the Gulf of Kutch (Gujarat). It provides habitat for endangered Pallas's fish-eagle, vulnerable common pochard, Dalmatian pelican, greylag goose, and common crane.
- *Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary*, a freshwater marsh in the Sant Kabir Nagar district (UP). It is an "eco-sensitive zone", protected under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972). It provides habitat for endangered Egyptian vulture, vulnerable greater spotted eagle, common pochard, wamp francolin, and woolly-necked stork.

National Science Day

National Science Day is observed every year on 28th February to mark the discovery of the Raman effect.

Theme of the Year 2022: *"Integrated Approach in Science and Technology for Sustainable Future"*

C.V. Raman founded the Indian Journal of Physics in 1926, Indian Academy of Sciences in 1933 and established Raman Institute of Research at Bangalore in 1948. He was awarded with the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1930 for the discovery of the Raman effect and Bharat Ratna in 1954.

Raman effect/ Raman scattering: In 1922 he published his work on the 'Molecular Diffraction of Light', which ultimately led to his discovery of 'Raman Effect' in 1928. Light consists of particles called photons; whose energy is directly proportional to the frequency with which they travel. When they strike molecules in a medium at high speeds, they bounce back and scatter in different directions depending on the angle with which they hit the molecules. This is known as Raman effect.

National Women's Day – birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu

To commemorate the Birth Anniversary of independence activist, Sarojini Naidu (also named Nightingale of India), every year India observes February 13 as 'National Women Day'. She was born in 13 February, 1879 in Hyderabad British India (now in Telangana, India). It should be noted that the International Women's Day is observed on 8th March annually.

Sarojini Naidu was a poet and a great politician. Her literary works gained popularity all over the world. Her work as a poet earned her the sobriquet Nightingale of India (Bharat Kokila) by Mahatma Gandhi. She became the first women Governor of India. In 1925 Sarojini Naidu became the president of the Indian National Congress. When she graces the United Provinces as Governor in 1947, she rewrites the history by becoming the first woman

to hold the office of Governor in the Dominion of India. For Women's Rights, suffrage and representation in organizations and assemblies she established the Women's India Association in 1917.

12. Culture

Ministry of Culture organizes Global Summit on ‘Reimagining Museums in India’

Ministry of Culture has organized first of its kind 2-day Global Summit on ‘Reimagining Museums in India’ in Hyderabad. The aim is to celebrate the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements, as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav marking 75 years of Independence of the country.

Prime Minister unveiled Statue of Equality in Hyderabad

Prime Minister has inaugurated the world’s second-largest statue (*Statue of Equality*) in Hyderabad. The 216-foot-tall statue of 11th-century social reformer and saint, Ramanujacharya is in a sitting position. The statue has been inaugurated in the backdrop of celebrations of ‘Festival of equality’, marking the 1000th birth anniversary of the Saint. The statue has been conceptualized by Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swami of Sri Ramanujacharya Ashram. Note that, India’s Statue of Unity is the largest statue in the world.

Sri Ramanujacharya: Born in 1017 CE in Tamil Nadu, he is the most respected Acharya in the philosophy of Sri Vaishnavism. He was also referred to as ‘*Ilaya Perumal*’ which means the radiant one. His philosophical foundations for devotionalism were influential to the Bhakti movement. He is considered as the chief proponent of Vishishtadvaita sub-school of *Vedānta*. He wrote influential texts, such as *bhāṣya* on the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, all in Sanskrit.

100 years of Chauri Chaura Incident

Year 2022 marks 100 years of Chauri Chaura Incident. The incident occurred in the last phase of the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement (NCM).

Chauri Chaura was a village in Gorakhpur district in United Province (presently in Uttar Pradesh), which awoke to violence on 5th February 1922 owing to a clash between the police and the protesters. The police had opened fire on the protestors who were protesting against liquor sale and high food prices. In retaliation, the agitated crowd torched the Police Station with policemen inside resulting in the death of 22 policemen. In response to the violence at Chauri Chaura in 1922, Mahatma Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement unilaterally and thus, on 12th February 1922, the Non-Cooperation Movement came to an end.

Karakattam Dance

The Kerala Nattukala Kshema Sabha (KNKS), an outfit that works for the promotion of local art forms in the state, has demanded that *Karakattam* (also known as *Kumbakkali* in certain parts) be recognized as the agricultural art form of Kerala.

Karakattam is a form of folk dance performed at festivals, conferences, roadshows and primarily at Mariamman festivals. It is one of the many creative traditions that owe their existence to Mariamman, the rain goddess.

Guru Ravidas Jayanti

The Birth Anniversary of Guru Ravidas was celebrated across the country. The exact date of the birth of Guru Ravidas is not known, but, it is widely believed that he was born in 1377 C.E. in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. His birth anniversary is celebrated on *Magh Poornima* (the full moon day in the month of *Magh*). This year, it fell on February 16.

Guru Ravidas was a 14th-century poet-saint, social reformer and a spiritual figure and founder of the Bhakti movement in North India. His devotional songs were included in the Sikh scriptures, *Guru Granth Sahib*. Ravidas taught removal of social divisions of caste and gender and promoted unity in the pursuit of personal spiritual freedoms. The Adi Granth of Sikhs (Guru Granth Sahib first rendition), in addition to the ‘*Panchvani*’,

are the 2 of the oldest documented sources of the literary works of Guru Ravidas. Also, one of his famous disciples was the saint, Mirabai.

400th Birth Anniversary of Lachit Borphukan

President Ram Nath Kovind has inaugurated the year-long celebration of the 400th birth anniversary of Lachit Borphukan, commander of the Ahom forces and an icon of Assamese nationalism.

Lachit Borphukan:

- He was a commander in the Ahom kingdom.
- Known for his leadership in the 1671 *Battle of Saraighat* that thwarted a drawn-out attempt by Mughal forces under the command of Ramsingh I to take over Ahom kingdom.
- The battle of Saraighat was fought on the banks of the Brahmaputra in Guwahati.
- The National Defence Academy (NDA), ever since 1999, has been conferring the best passing out cadet with the Lachit Borphukan gold medal.

8th century statue of reclining Lord Vishnu restored

1,000 years old sandstone sculpture of the reclining Lord Vishnu has been restored by Indian National Trust for Art and Culture Heritage (INTACH). The Statue is situated in Bandhavgarh National Park (Madhya Pradesh). This is the first conservation and restoration project undertaken by INTACH in Madhya Pradesh. Popularly known as *Shesh Shaiyya*, the sculpture belongs to Kalchuri period (8th century, feudatories of the Rashtrakutas at central part of India).

Century old parallel banking system – Angadia System

The Angadia system is a century-old parallel banking system in the country where traders send cash generally from one state to another through a person called *Angadia* that stands for courier. It is by and large used in the jewellery business with Mumbai – Surat being the most popular route as they are 2 ends of the diamond trade. The cash involved is huge and it is the responsibility of the Angadia to transfer cash from 1 State to another for which they charge a nominal fee. Generally, it is the Gujarati, Marwari and Malbari community that are involved in the business.