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Current Events

February 2023

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The download for Current Affairs for Recruitment Test (RTs) exams of UPSC, including ALC, LEO, APFC, EPFO EO/AO, Admin Officer, Store Officer, Deputy Director, and Investigator Grade-I is available.

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. Studying 100 pages of current affairs may result in 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).

If you want to report any correction/error/feedback, you are welcome at contact@humanperitus.com. We will check and respond within 1 working day.

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February 2023

1. Sports and Games

Hyderabad hosts maiden Formula E-Prix race

Hyderabad has hosted a maiden Formula E World Championship alongside the banks of the iconic Hussain Sagar Lake. It was organized as part of the 9th season of the Formula E World Championship. The winner was Jean-Eric Vergne (French).

Formula E is an electric equivalent of the widely followed Formula 1 which was staged in India from 2011 to 2013. Hyderabad has become the 30th location to host a Formula E race. It is the first global sport to be certified with a net zero carbon footprint. Note that Gen3 technology has been introduced this season. Gen3 is the fastest, lightest, most powerful and most efficient car in its history.

ITBP wins 12th edition of the National Ice Hockey Championship

The central ice hockey team of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has won the 12th edition of the IHAI National Ice Hockey Championship for men 2023 organized in Leh, Ladakh.

IHAI: *Ice Hockey Association of India*

Aditi Ashok wins 2023 Kenya Ladies Open Title in Golf Tournament

India's Aditi Ashok has won her 4th Ladies European Tour title at the Kenya Ladies Open 2023 Golf tournament organized at Vipingo Ridge, Kenya.

FIFA confirms US, Mexico, Canada automatically in 2026 World Cup

FIFA has confirmed that the U.S.A. Men's national team, along with Mexico and Canada, will automatically qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The three countries won the right to host the World Cup in a united North American bid.

Virat Kohli became 6th and the fastest batter in the world to score 25,000 runs

Indian Cricketer Virat Kohli has become the 6th and the fastest batsman in the world to score 25,000 runs across formats during the second Test against Australia.

Ben Stokes became the player to hit the most number of sixes

English Cricketer Ben Stokes has surpassed New Zealand Cricketer Brendon McCullum for the maximum number of sixes in Test match history on Saturday during the Test match between New Zealand and England.

Saurashtra wins its second Ranji Trophy 2022-23 Title

Saurashtra has won its second Ranji Trophy title after defeating Bengal in the final at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. Saurashtra is a peninsular region of Gujarat, India, located on the Arabian Sea coast.

Ranji Trophy is a domestic first-class cricket championship that is played in India between multiple teams representing regional and State cricket associations.

Lionel Messi wins the Best FIFA men's player prize for 2022

Lionel Messi has won the best FIFA men's player prize for 2022 on the back of his World Cup triumph with Argentina. It is the second time that Messi has won the honour inaugurated by FIFA in 2016 after football's world governing body split from Ballon d'Or organisers France Football.

2. Science and Technology

ChatGPT based chatbot to help Rural India

It was reported that Government of India is working on ChatGPT-powered WhatsApp chatbot to help farmers know about government schemes. Bhashini, a small team at the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), is building a WhatsApp-based chatbot that relies on information generated by ChatGPT to return appropriate responses to queries. *Bhasha Daan*, as an ambitious project which aims to crowdsource voice datasets in multiple Indian languages, is also being developed as part of Project BHASHINI.

ChatGPT is an AI-powered chatbot developed by the AI startup OpenAI. The technology functions by leveraging extensive data to learn how to respond to user prompts in a human-like manner, providing information similar to a search engine. It is built with a deep neural network that allows it to learn from the data it is trained on and continually improve its responses over time. It can understand the context and intent of a user's question and provide relevant and accurate answers.

Generative Artificial Intelligence: It refers to the capability of artificial intelligence-enabled machines to use existing text, audio files, or images to create new content. The software uses complex machine learning models to predict the next word based on previous word sequences, or the next image based on words describing previous images.

Natural Language Processing: AI chatbots are trained to have human-like conversations using a process known as Natural Language Processing (NLP). With NLP, they can interpret human language as it is written, which enables them to operate more or less on their own.

Bharat Electronics Ltd to Manufacture Israel's LORA Ballistic Missile

Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) has signed an MoU with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for domestic manufacture and supply of its Long-Range Artillery Weapon System (LORA) for Indian Tri-services.

LORA is a short-range, road-mobile, ground and sea launched solid fuelled ballistic missile developed and operated by Israel.

AICTE and BPRD jointly launched KAVACH-2023

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) and Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) have jointly launched KAVACH- 2023. KAVACH- 2023 is a national level hackathon to identify innovative ideas and technological solutions for addressing cyber security and cybercrime challenges of 21st century.

What are microLEDs, OLEDs and LCDs?

It was observed that the various electronic companies are showing their interest in microLED (mLED or μ LED) display technology.

microLEDs are a type of display technology that uses tiny light-emitting diodes (LEDs) to create individual pixels. These LEDs are so small that they can be arranged very densely, allowing for extremely high-resolution displays with excellent contrast and brightness. Compared to other types of display technologies such as LCDs or OLEDs, microLEDs offer several advantages, including lower power consumption, longer lifespan, and better color accuracy.

OLED displays use organic materials that emit light when an electric current is passed through them. Each pixel in an OLED display is made up of tiny organic molecules that emit light of different colors when they are activated.

Common Uses: *smartphones, smartwatches, and other wearable devices*

LCD displays, on the other hand, use a backlight to illuminate the pixels on the screen. Each pixel is made up of three sub-pixels that are colored red, green, and blue. By controlling the intensity of each sub-pixel, the display can create a wide range of colors.

Common Uses: *Televisions, computer monitors, and other large screen displays*

Jupiter beats Saturn to become the Planet with most Moons

Astronomers have discovered 12 new moons around Jupiter, putting the total count at a record-breaking 92. That's more than any other planet in our solar system. Saturn, the one-time leader, comes in a close second with 83 confirmed moons.

Jupiter's 4 largest moons are called Galilean satellites: *Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callist*

Study finds alarming levels of 'forever chemicals' in Norwegian Arctic ice

An Oxford University-led study has found alarming levels of toxic PFAS, also known as "forever chemicals" in the ice around Svalbard, Norway. This poses a risk to the region's wildlife.

PFAS (*Per- and Poly-Fluorinated Alkyl Substances*), also known as the Forever Chemicals, are a large chemical family of over 4,700 highly persistent man-made chemicals. They are the most persistent synthetic chemicals to date. These were first developed in the 1940s and are now found in a variety of products, including nonstick pans, water-resistant textiles and fire suppression foams.

3. Environment

What is Heat Dome?

It was reported that the maximum temperatures have been 5-11 degrees C higher than normal in most parts of northern and western India, in the month of February. The reason is attributed to heat dome.

A 'heat dome' is a meteorological phenomenon that occurs when a high-pressure system traps hot air in a region, causing temperatures to rise and creating a dome of hot air. The dome of hot air can persist for several days or weeks, leading to prolonged periods of extreme heat and heat waves.

Climate Inequality Report 2023

Economists from the World Inequality Lab at the Paris School of Economics have released a report called Climate Inequality Report 2023. The objective of the report was to decode the magnitude of climate inequality based on a detailed systematic analysis focusing on low- and middle-income countries.

XDI Gross Domestic Climate Risk

Cross Dependency Initiative (XDI) has released a report called Gross Domestic Climate Risk. The index calculated the 'Physical climate risk' to build environments such as buildings and properties across 2,600 States and provinces globally in 2050.

XDI is a global organisation specializing in climate risk analysis for regions, banks and companies. It was established in 2006.

FAO publishes its first Global Assessment of Soil Carbon in Grasslands

Food and Agriculture Organization has published a report on its first global assessment of soil carbon in Grassland. The report measured the baseline of stocks of Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) — the carbon held within the soil that is measurable, expressed as a percentage by weight (gC/Kg soil)— in both semi-natural and managed grasslands and estimated their potential of SOC sequestration. Note that, after oceans, soils are the second largest carbon pool on Earth.

Related News: FAO and the SEED partnership launched the SDG Agrifood Accelerator Programme, an instrument designed to help agrifood system start-ups develop their businesses while contributing to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What is BBNJ?

India has urged the member nations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) for the early conclusion of the International Legally Binding Instrument – Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ).

The “*BBNJ Treaty*”, also known as the “*Treaty of the High Seas*”, is an international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. This new instrument was developed within the framework of the United Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the main international agreement governing human activities at sea.

WMO report titled – Global Sea-Level Rise and Implications

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has cautioned that sea level rise poses a serious threat to both China and India in a report titled “Global Sea-Level Rise and Implications.”

Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to begin the first synchronized vulture survey

The Kerala Forest and Wildlife department, along with its counterparts in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, has organized the first synchronized vulture survey in select regions of the Western Ghats. The 3 States used to conduct separate surveys, which often resulted in duplication of data as the surveys were conducted at different time periods.

Yaya Tso to be Ladakh's first biodiversity heritage site

The Biodiversity Management Committee, the Panchayat of Chumathang village, along with SECURE Himalaya Project recently resolved to declare Yaya Tso as Ladakh's first BHS under the Biological Diversity Act 2002.

Yaya Tso is a nesting habitat for a large number of birds and animals, such as the bar-headed goose, black-necked crane and brahminy duck. It also has the distinction of being one of the highest breeding sites of the black-necked crane in India.

SECURE Himalaya is a joint project of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), funded by Global Environment Facility. It is aimed at conservation and protection of the high-altitude ecosystems of the Himalayas.

22nd edition of World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) held in New Delhi

The 22nd edition of the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)—the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) was held in New Delhi.

Theme: *Mainstreaming Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience for Collective Action*

TERI is an independent, multi-dimensional organization, with expertise in research, policy, consultancy and implementation. It is one of the independently convened events in Global South that brings together world leaders, thinkers, scientists, industry etc to work towards long-term solutions for planet's health.

Mammatus Clouds over Nebraska, USA

NASA has released picture of Mammatus clouds, hovering over Nebraska, USA.

Mammatus clouds generally appear in connection with substantial cumulonimbus clouds, but they have also been sighted to form on other cloud types, such as stratocumulus, altostratus and altocumulus. They're composed primarily of ice and groups of them can extend hundreds of miles in any direction.

MoHUA signs MoU to develop Waste to Wealth plants in million plus cities

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Engineers India Limited to develop Waste to Energy and bio-methanation projects in cities with a population of million plus. This was done in furthering the 'Green Growth' agenda.

Bio-methanation is a process by which organic material is microbiologically converted under anaerobic conditions to biogas. 3 main physiological groups of microorganisms are involved: fermenting bacteria, organic acid oxidizing bacteria, and methanogenic archaea.

4. Scheme and Programs

Union Budget 2023-24 announces MISHTI Programme

The Union Budget for 2023-24 has announced an initiative for mangrove plantation along the coastline and on saltpan lands, under MISHTI (*Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes*).

Mangroves are salt-tolerant plant communities found in tropical and sub-tropical intertidal regions. They are important refuges of coastal biodiversity and act as bio-shields against extreme climatic events.

MISHTI will be implemented through convergence between the MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme), CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) Fund, and other sources. Organizations that have been involved in mangrove plantations say that the initiative requires extensive work with local communities.

Union Budget 2023-24 announces Mahila Samman Savings Certificate

The Union Budget for 2023-24 has announced the new small savings scheme "Mahila Samman Savings Certificate" for women. The Mahila Samman Savings Certificate is aimed at ensuring women's safety and welfare. The scheme is expected to provide a major boost to the government's initiatives for girls and women's empowerment. The one-time new small saving scheme will offer an interest rate of 7.5 % for a maximum deposit of Rs 2 lakh. The scheme will be available for years up to March 2025.

The *National Small Savings Fund (NSSF)* was established by the Union Government in 1999. All small savings collections are credited to the NSSF. Similarly, all small savings withdrawals are made out of the accumulations in this Fund.

The balance in the Fund is invested in Union and State Government securities. With effect from December 1, 2011, minimum 50 % of the net collections in a State or Union Territory (UT) with legislature are being invested in special securities issued by the concerned State or UT Governments. The remaining fund is invested in Central

Government securities or lent to other UT/State governments or in securities issued by infrastructure companies or agencies fully owned by the Central Government.

NSSF is administered by the Department of Economic Affairs, Union Ministry of Finance under the National Small Savings Fund (Custody and Investment) Rules, 2001, framed under Article 283(1) of the Constitution.

Govt. approves Vibrant Villages Programme Scheme

The Union Cabinet has approved Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) Scheme.

VVP, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, will provide funds for development of essential infrastructure and creation of livelihood opportunities along the northern land border. The Scheme will cover Himachal Pradesh (HP), Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh. The scheme will help in improving the quality of life of people and reversing outmigration adding to improved security of border.

Govt. launched 3 national flagship programmes related to Aquaculture

The Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has inaugurated and launched 3 national flagship programmes for the aquaculture sector.

1. *Genetic Improvement Programme of Indian White Shrimp (Penaeus indicus)*: Program sanctioned with an outlay of Rs. 25 crores under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), to establish a National Genetic Improvement Facility.

2. *Phase 2 National Surveillance Programme on Aquatic animal Diseases (NSPAAD)*: NSPAAD Phase 2 has been sanctioned under PMMSY. Phase 1 has been implemented since 2013. Envisages development of National Information System on Aquatic Diseases and trained ‘disease diagnostic personnel’ with involvement of states.

3. *Launch of Shrimp Crop insurance product developed by ICARCIBA*: ICAR-CIBA develops a Shrimp Crop Insurance product to establish farmers’ access to insurance and institutional credit facilitated by an insurance scheme that will help in doubling farmers' income.

Govt. launches Yuva Sangam Portal

Government of India has launched Yuva Sangam registration portal. It aims to strengthen people to people connect especially between youth belonging to North-Eastern India and other States. It will focus on conducting exposure tours of youth between 8 North Eastern States and other States. It is conceptualized under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB).

Govt. inaugurates Mission Antyodaya Survey (MAS) 2022-23

Government of India has inaugurated the Mission Antyodaya Survey (MAS) 2022-23 and launched its portal and mobile application.

Key Features

- The Department of Rural Development has been conducting Mission Antyodaya Survey across all Gram Panchayats in the country since 2017-18 with the purpose of transforming lives and livelihoods of people on measurable outcomes through convergence of various schemes.
- Annual survey in Gram Panchayats across the country is an important aspect of Mission Antyodaya framework.

- The survey aims to lend support to the process of participatory planning for Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) which will improve service delivery, enhance citizenship, create pace for an alliance of people's institutions, and groups and improve governance at the local level.
- The village-wise survey is expected to be conducted over a period of one month involving Community Resource Persons (CRPs).
- The survey questions have been categorized into 5 stratum: (i) Panchayat Infrastructure; (ii) Panchayat Services; (iii) Village Infrastructure; (iv) Village Services; and (v) Village Practices.

Jal Jan Abhiyan inaugurated by Prime Minister

Prime Minister of India has virtually inaugurated the Jal Jan Abhiyan in Abu Road in Sirohi district of Rajasthan. It is jointly run by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, and the Brahma Kumaris organization. The campaign is aimed at creating collective consciousness among people towards water conservation.

The *Brahma Kumaris* is a spiritual, educational, and Philanthropic movement that originated in Hyderabad, Sindh, during the 1930s. The Brahma Kumaris movement was founded by Lekhraj Kripalani. The organisation is known for the prominent role that women play in the movement.

5. Polity

SC ruling in 1994 Bommai vs Union of India

Prime Minister of India has mentioned the misuse of Article 356 in the Parliament. Commonly known as President's Rule, Article 356 allows the President to assume any and all functions of the state.

SC ruling in 1994 Bommai vs Union of India:

The Supreme Court in the landmark 1994 Bommai vs Union of India case, dealing with Article 356 outlined strict guidelines on dealing with the dismissal of a State Government. The case arose out of the dismissal of the Government of Karnataka by the Union Government led by the Congress Party in 1989. The then Chief Minister of Karnataka, S.R. Bommai, challenged the dismissal in the Supreme Court. The case was heard by a nine-judge bench, which delivered its verdict in March 1994.

Key Points:

- For one, it made it mandatory for a no-confidence motion to be passed in the House.
- It also made the President's Rule subject to judicial review.
- The court held that Article 356 can be invoked in situations of the physical breakdown of the government or when there is a 'hung assembly', but that it cannot be used without giving the State Government a chance to either prove its majority in the House or without instances of a violent breakdown of the constitutional machinery.
- The judgment also made it clear that the Governor should act in a non-partisan manner and not as an agent of the Union Government.

Also, the Sarkaria Commission in 1983 recommended it only be used in extreme cases.

SC celebrates its anniversary for the first-time ever

For the first time ever, the Supreme Court of India celebrated the anniversary of its establishment on February 4. This is the 73rd anniversary, which was attended by the Chief Justice of Singapore, Justice Sundaresh Menon, as chief guest. Note that, the Supreme Court came into existence on 28 January 1950, two days after India became a republic on 26 January.

CAG Girish Chandra Murmu selected as External Auditor of ILO in Geneva

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has chosen the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) to serve as its external auditor for a 4-year term from 2024 to 2027.

Lok Sabha Speaker inaugurates 19th Annual Zone III CPA Conference in Sikkim

Lok Sabha Speaker Shri. Om Birla has inaugurated the 19th Annual Zone III Conference of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) India Region in Gangtok, Sikkim. Note that CPA, established in 1911, is made up of over 180 legislatures (or Branches) divided up between 9 geographic regions of the Commonwealth.

Who is a Puisne Judge?

The term Puisne Judge is used in common law countries to refer to judges who are ranked lower in seniority, i.e., any judge other than the Chief Justice of that Court.

Common law is the body of law that is created by judges through their written opinions, rather than through statutes or constitutions (statutory law). The United Kingdom (UK) and the Commonwealth countries, including India, are common law countries.

SC says Constitution doesn't allow aldermen right to vote

The Supreme Court has held that members nominated by the Lieutenant Governor to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) cannot vote to elect a Mayor.

Municipal Corporation constitutes of elected representatives called Councillors. Councillors can nominate eminent personalities of the city to become members of this body. These nominated members are called 'Aldermen'. The Municipal Commissioner is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and head of the executive arm of the Municipal Corporation. All executive powers are vested in the Municipal Commissioner.

Note that, *Article 243R* of the Constitution says that "all the seats in a Municipality shall be filled by persons chosen by direct election from the territorial constituencies in the Municipal area and for this purpose, each Municipal area shall be divided into territorial constituencies to be known as wards". However, the State legislature by law may provide for the nominated councilors for their special knowledge or experience in municipal administration but they do not possess the right to vote in the meetings of the Municipality.

Children's privacy: SC ruling welcome

The Supreme Court has made an important ruling affirming the right to privacy of children, which is often ignored as an idea and in practice. The court's ruling is in the specific context of conducting a DNA test on a child, but its scope could be larger and can cover other issues related to children's rights. SC make a note that a child's genetic information is part of his fundamental right to privacy. The right to Privacy is an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21. Hence, Family Courts should direct a DNA test to ascertain the paternity of a child only as a last resort.

Term of 22nd Law Commission extended till August 2024

The Government has approved the extension of the term of the 22nd Law Commission of India up to August 31, 2024.

Supreme Court of India will adopt a "neutral citation system"

CJI of India has announced that the Supreme Court will adopt a "neutral citation system" for its judgments.

A case *citation* is essentially an identification tag for a judgement. Typically, it would contain a reference number, the year of the judgement, the name of the court that delivered that judgement, and a shorthand for the journal publishing the judgement. A *neutral citation* would mean that the court would assign its own citation — distinct from those given by traditional Law Reporters.

Law Reporters are periodicals or annual digests that publish judgments, often with an editorial note to make it accessible for lawyers to refer to precedents. For example, for the landmark Kesavananda Bharati case, the citation in ‘Supreme Court Cases’, a journal published by the Eastern Book Company, is (1973) 4 SCC 225. In the All-India Reporter (AIR), the citation is AIR 1973 SC 1461.

Aurangabad and Osmanabad renamed as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar and Dharashiv

Government of India has renamed Maharashtra’s Aurangabad and Osmanabad cities as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar and Dharashiv respectively.

Process of changing the name of a city or place in a State:

- *State Assembly*: A resolution is proposed by any Member of the Legislative Assembly as a request to change the name of a particular city or place in the State.
- *Discussion*: In the discussion, the reasons for and possible consequences of altering the name are discussed.
- *The passing of the resolution in the State Assembly*: Only a simple majority is required.
- *The resolution sent to Central Government*: The resolution as a proposal is submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- *Approvals*: The Home Ministry seeks approval from the Ministry of Railways, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Posts, Survey of India, and Registrar General of India.
- A ‘No Objection’ certificate is issued by the Ministry if the proposal is approved by the ministry and all the agencies.
- After getting approval from the ministry, the State Government can issue an official notification in the Gazette.

6. Governance

National Data and Analytics Platform

The Government of India is drawing up a data ecosystem (through NDAP) thus enabling policymakers and researchers to exploit the potential of public data.

The National Data & Analytics Platform (NDAP) was launched in May 2022 by NITI Aayog in collaboration with different ministries and state governments in India. NDAP aims to democratize access to public government data by making it accessible, interoperable, interactive, and available on a user-friendly platform. It hosts foundational datasets from various government agencies, presents them coherently, and provides tools for analytics and visualization. It has been part of the State Support Mission of NITI Aayog.

SC intrigued by the lack of ‘protection officers’ for domestic violence cases

The Supreme Court has sought more information from the Government about Mission Shakti, an umbrella scheme for the safety, security, and empowerment of women, intrigued by a possible chronic shortage in protection officers to deal with domestic violence cases. Appointment of Protection Officers (*ideally women*) is mandated under Section 8 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

7. International Relations

International Charter on Space and Major Disasters

3 earthquakes have devastated Turkey and Syria, while impacting regions as far away as Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt. Turkey announced a Level 4 alert calling for international aid. Region where earthquake has struck lies along a seismic fault line called Anatolia tectonic block that runs through northern, central, and eastern Turkey.

Turkey invoked the International Charter on “Space and Major Disasters”, just after the Earthquake. The charter was created by the National Space Research Centre and the European Space Agency in 1999, (now have multiple member space agencies). It aims to provide free satellite imagery as quickly as possible over the disaster area.

Related News: India has launched Operation Dost for life-saving Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in earthquake hit Türkiye and Syria.

50 Years of Bilateral ties (India-Qatar and India-South Korea)

The year 2023 marks 50 years (ties established in 1973) of the establishment of full diplomatic relations between India and Qatar as well as India-South Korea.

U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)

The National Security Advisors of India and USA have launched the US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) in Washington DC, USA.

U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) was launched by the US President and Indian Prime Minister on the sidelines of the Quad summit in May 2022. The initiative would help forge links between the government, academia, and industry in areas such as AI, quantum computing, 5G/6G, biotech, space, and semiconductors. Under iCET, the two sides have identified 6 focus areas of co-development and co-production:

- strengthening innovation ecosystems;
- defense innovation and technology cooperation;
- resilient semiconductor supply chains;
- space;
- STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) talent;
- next-generation telecom;

First meeting of the IFCMA held in Paris

The first meeting of the Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches (IFCMA) was held at the OECD event in Paris, France. India also participated in the event..

IFCMA is a new forum by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). IFCMA aims to help improve the global impact of emissions reduction efforts through better data and information sharing, evidence-based mutual learning etc.

PM inaugurates India Energy Week 2023 in Bengaluru

Prime Minister of India has inaugurated the India Energy Week (IEW) 2023 in Bengaluru Karnataka. It aims to create a favourable ecosystem for promoting development and deployment of biofuels with key stakeholders including US, Brazil, EU, IEA etc. as a clean mobility alternative under India’s G20 Presidency.

Biofuel is defined as liquid, solid, or gaseous fuel produced by conversion of biomass such as bioethanol from sugar cane or corn, charcoal or woodchips, and biogas from anaerobic decomposition of waste.

18th World Security Congress jointly organized by Railway Protection Force and UIC

18th UIC World Security Congress, jointly organized by Railway Protection Force (RPF) and International Union of Railways (UIC), concluded with adoption of 'Jaipur Declaration'. Declaration outlines an actionable agenda for UIC to explore innovative approaches that can help global Railway organizations to achieve their long-term goal of safety and security.

UIC HQ: Paris

Theme: "Railway Security Strategy: Responses and Vision for Future"

Navy's IFC-IOR ties up with Seychelles centre for enhancing maritime domain awareness

Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC) of Seychelles. It aims to promote collaboration between the two centres towards enhancing maritime domain awareness, information sharing and expertise development.

Related News: Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) was launched in 2015. It aimed at safeguarding maritime interests of India's mainland and islands. It promotes cooperation among the state actors and creates an environment of peace and stability.

World's first global summit on Responsible AI in the Military (REAIM 2023) held in Hague

World's first international summit on Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in Military (REAIM) 2023 was held in Hague, Netherlands. It's the first global attempt to prevent proliferation of Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWS) and insert ethics, moral factor into rapidly developing weaponization technology that has potential for cataclysmic damage.

5th IMPAC5 concluded in Vancouver, Canada

5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) concluded in Vancouver, Canada. IMPAC5 is a global forum that brings together ocean conservation professionals and high-level officials to inform, inspire and act on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). It aims to protect 30 % of the global ocean by 2030.

Puducherry launches country's first Marine Spatial Planning Framework

Puducherry has launched the country's first Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) framework as part of a pact under the Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative. Puducherry and Lakshadweep were chosen as coastlines to pilot the MSP initiative after a 2019 Memorandum of understanding (MoU) between India and Norway.

Marine Spatial Planning is an ecosystem-based spatial planning process for analysing current and anticipated ocean and coastal uses and identifying areas most suitable for various activities. Ministry of Earth Sciences oversees the implementation of the MSP through National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management, the Puducherry Coastal Zone Management Authority and Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Puducherry in collaboration with Norwegian Environment Agency.

Ruchira Kamboj elected as India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Senior diplomat Ruchira Kamboj has been appointed as India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York by UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD). She is presently serving as India's envoy to

Bhutan. Also note that Ruchira Kamboj is the first female Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bhutan. She will succeed T.S. Tirumurti as the Indian Ambassador to the UN.

UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD) is one of the 9 functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It advises ECOSOC on social policies.

Union Cabinet approves the ratification of 3 Protocols on International Civil Aviation

The Union Cabinet has approved the ratification of 3 Protocols on Articles relating to amendments in the convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention), 1944. The articles of the Chicago Convention establish the privileges and obligations of all contracting States and promote international ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) adoption that regulate international air transport.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (*est. 1944, HQ: Montreal, Canada*) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (linked to ECOSOC) that coordinates the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth. It has 193 state parties including all UN members except Liechtenstein. The Chicago Convention led to the creation of ICAO. India is a founding member of ICAO.

EU sets up Trade & Technology Council with India

India and the EU have announced the establishment of the three Working Groups under the India-EU Trade and Technology Council and their Terms of Reference.

The TTC is a strategic coordination mechanism that will allow both partners to tackle challenges at the nexus of trade, trusted technology and security, and thus deepen cooperation in these fields between India and the EU.

Under the TTC, the following three Working Groups have been established:

- (i) *Working Group on Strategic Technologies, Digital Governance and Digital Connectivity*: Chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- (ii) *Working Group on Green & Clean Energy Technologies*: Chaired by Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India
- (iii) *Working Group on Trade, Investment & Resilient Value Chains*: Chaired by Secretary, Department of Commerce.

Prime Minister inaugurates the event Aero India 2023 in Bengaluru

The 14th edition of Asia's largest aero show 'Aero India 2023' was held in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The objective is to showcase India's growth in aerospace and defence capabilities. The focus was on displaying indigenous equipment/technologies and forging partnerships with foreign companies, in line with 'Make in India, Make for the World' vision.

Theme: *"The runway to a billion opportunities"*

What are Nordic countries?

It was reported that, the Nordic countries are ready to offer their technologies and expertise to India as it moves towards a green, digital, and innovative future. The Nordic countries include the sovereign states of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

Related News: India's Arctic policy titled 'India and the Arctic: building a partnership for sustainable development' lays down 6 pillars:

1. strengthening India's scientific research and cooperation,

2. climate and environmental protection,
3. economic and human development,
4. transportation and connectivity,
5. governance and international cooperation, and
6. national capacity building in the Arctic region.

Defence Exercises in News

TARKASH: It is a joint Indo-US exercise between National Security Guard (NSG)- and US Special Operations Forces. For the first time, this exercise simulated a validation exercise for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) terror response mission.

Dharam Guardian: It is a joint military exercise between India and Japan.

Dustlik: It is a joint military exercise between India and Uzbekistan.

Exercise desert flag VIII: It is an annual international multilateral air exercise with participation from UAE, India, France, Kuwait, Australia, UK, Bahrain, Morocco, Spain, Republic of Korea, and USA.

Exercise Trishakti Prahar: The Indian Defense Forces conducted firepower exercises called the “Trishakti Prahar” to synergize the firepower assets and to orchestrate a battle. The exercise was conducted by the Indian Air Force, CAPF, and the Indian Army. It was a firepower exercise.

8. Awards and Recognition

President’s Colour Award given to the Haryana Police

President’s Colour Award was presented to the Haryana Police in recognition of its outstanding service to the nation. The President’s Colour is a prestigious honour, awarded by the President to armed forces or a police unit that has rendered exceptional service to the nation.

Who is Sonam Wangchuk?

Sonam Wangchuk has claimed that the Government of India’s approach was alienating the youth by sowing the seeds of militancy as the demand for the preservation of land, culture, and jobs under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution grows in Ladakh.

Notable Points related to Sonam Wangchuk:

- Sonam Wangchuk is an Indian engineer, innovator, and education reformist (born and works in Ladakh).
- He launched Operation New Hope (1994) – a collaboration of government, village communities and civil society to bring reforms in the government school system.
- He invented the Ice Stupa technique that creates artificial glaciers, used for storing winter water in the form of conical-shaped ice heaps.
- He is a recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award as well as numerous other honours.
- He is being appointed as a member of the National Innovation Council in 2019, which advises the Indian government on policies to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Manmohan Singh awarded Lifetime Achievement award in United Kingdom

Former Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh was conferred with a Lifetime Achievement Honour by the India-UK Achievers Honours in London for his contribution to economic and political life.

The India-UK Achievers Honours by NISAU UK, in partnership with the British Council in India and the UK's Department for International Trade (DIT), celebrate the achievements of Indian students who studied at British Universities and the Lifetime Achievement Honour is a nod to Dr. Singh's academic achievements at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

NTPC Limited has been honoured with 'ATD Best Awards 2023'

NTPC Limited has been honoured with 'ATD Best Awards 2023' by the Association for Talent Development (ATD), USA. This is the 6th time that NTPC Limited has won this award for demonstrating enterprise success in the field of talent development.

German former Chancellor Angela Merkel awarded the UNESCO Peace Prize

Angela Merkel, former Chancellor of Germany, has received the UNESCO peace prize award for welcoming refugees and asylum seekers to Germany in 2015 and 2016. She was awarded the Felix Houphouet-Boigny UNESCO Peace Prize in Ivory Coast's capital Yamoussoukro.

Poet V. Madhusoodanan Nair wins Jnanappana Award 2023

Poet V. Madhusoodanan Nair has given the Jnanappana Award 2023, award instituted by the Guruvayur Devaswom in memory of 'Poonthanam Namboothiri', the ardent devotee of Guruvayoorappan, who wrote Jnanappana.

Hari Balakrishnan wins 2023 Marconi Prize

The 2023 Marconi Prize has been awarded to Hari Balakrishnan, the Fujitsu Professor in MIT's Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) and a principal investigator in the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL). The Marconi Prize is the top honor within the field of communications technology and is given annually to "innovators who have made significant contributions to increasing digital inclusivity through the advancement of information and communications technology."

9. Social Development

India ranked 5th in the world in Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII) 2021

India's national accreditation system under the Quality Council of India (QCI) has been ranked 5th in the world in the latest Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII) 2021. India's overall QI system ranking continues to be in the Top 10 at the 10th position, with the standardization system (under BIS) at 9th and the metrology system (under NPL-CSIR) at 21st position in the world.

The GQII ranks among the 184 economies in the world on the basis of the quality infrastructure (QI). GQII program is an initiative to research and disseminate data on Quality Infrastructure (QI). It is supported by Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) and Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany.

India to be most populous in 2023

According to the report of UN World Population Prospects 2022, India is projected to overtake China as the world's most populous country in 2023.

Govt. releases 2nd edition of FLN Report

Government of India has released the 2nd edition of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) report.

FLN report is a benchmark for States and UTs to track their performance in achieving universal foundational learning by 2026-27. Its findings cover the role of nutrition, access to digital technology and language-focused instructional approach.

Key Points

- The Report highlights the focus on language as a critical foundational skill and its importance in acquiring early literacy.
- A special section in the report covers insights into states/UTs to assess children's learning outcomes on the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and Foundational Learning Study (FLS) 2022.
- State profiles and their performance on Distance from the Frontier are covered, enabling states/Union Territories to track progress on foundational learning.
- The report's findings cover the role of nutrition, access to digital technology and language-focused instructional approach/

UNEP releases report on Antimicrobial Resistance

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has released a new report titled – “Bracing for Superbugs: Strengthening environmental action in the One Health response to Antimicrobial Resistance.” It provides evidence that the environment plays a key role in the development, transmission, and spread of Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR).

Antimicrobials are agents intended to kill or inhibit the growth of microorganisms. They include antibiotics, fungicides, antiviral agents, and parasiticides. AMR occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi become resistant to anti-microbial treatments to which they were previously susceptible.

DHARA – Annual Meeting of Members of the River Cities Alliance held in Pune

DHARA which stands for Driving Holistic Action for Urban Rivers, the annual meeting of the members of the River Cities Alliance (RCA), is being organised by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) in association with National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in Pune.

River Cities Alliance (RCA) was launched in 2021 as a dedicated platform for river cities in India to ideate, discuss and exchange information for sustainable management of urban rivers. River Cities Alliance is the first-of-its-kind Alliance in the world, and launched in partnership of the 2 Ministries i.e., Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. The Alliance focuses on 3 broad themes - (i) Networking, (ii) Capacity Building and (iii) Technical Support.

Dar-es-Salaam Declaration

12 African countries, which forms the Global Alliance to end AIDS in children, have laid out plans to end Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in children by 2030 through early testing, treatment and prevention programmes. The goal was first set in a meeting held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and hence termed as Tanzania Declaration.

MoH&FW launches nationwide campaign to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare launched nationwide ‘Sarva Dawa Sevan’ or ‘Mass Drug Administration (MDA)’ campaign to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (LF). Lymphatic filariasis, commonly known as elephantiasis is a neglected tropical disease, which causes tissue or limb swelling.

10. Economy

Govt. proposes Angel Tax

In Union Budget 2023-24, the Government has proposed that foreign/angel investors may be required to pay the “angel tax,” which was previously only supposed to be paid for investments raised by resident Indian investors.

Angle investors are wealthy individuals who provide capital to promising early-stage business entities usually in exchange for a portion of their equity.

Angel Tax is a term basically used to refer to the income tax payable on the capital raised by unlisted companies via the issue of shares through off-market transactions. This tax is levied on the capital raised via the issue of shares by unlisted companies from an Indian investor if the share price of issued shares is seen in excess of the fair market value of the company. For example, if the fair market value of a start-up share is Rs 10 a piece, and in a subsequent funding round they offer it to an investor for Rs 20, then the difference of Rs 10 would be taxed as income.

SC calls for SEBI’s investor-protection Framework

The Supreme Court has asked the SEBI and the government about the existing regulatory framework in place to protect Indian middle-class investors. This comes after the Adani Group was accused of stock manipulation and accounting fraud by the American firm Hindenburg Research.

The securities market in India is regulated by 4 key laws:

- *The Companies Act, 2013*: It regulates the incorporation of a company, responsibilities of a company, directors, and dissolution of a company.
- *The Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992*: It empowers SEBI to register intermediaries like stockbrokers, merchant bankers, and portfolio managers, regulate their functioning, impose penalties including suspending/cancelling the registration.
- *The Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956 (SCRA)*: It empowers SEBI to recognize (and derecognize) stock exchanges, prescribe rules and byelaws for their functioning, and regulate trading, clearing and settlement on stock exchanges.
- *The Depositories Act, 1996*: It introduced and legitimized the concept of dematerialized securities being held in an electronic form. SEBI set up the infrastructure for doing this by registering depositories and depository participants.

A ‘*share*’ /a ‘*stock*’ market is a component of a free-market economy, where various kinds of stock shares/bonds/securities are traded. It allows companies to raise money and investors to participate in the financial achievements of the companies, makes profits through capital gains, and earn income through dividends.

A ‘*stockbroker*’ (registered with SEBI) is a member of a recognised stock exchange, who is permitted to do trades on the screen-based trading system of different stock exchanges.

A ‘*depository*’ is an organisation which holds securities (like shares, debentures, bonds, etc.) of investors in electronic form at the request of the investors through a registered depository participant.

A ‘*depository participant*’ is an agent of the depository - National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) and Central Depository Services (India) Ltd (CDSL) - through which it interfaces with the investor and provides depository services.

20 Russian banks open rupee vostro accounts for trade with India

20 Russian banks have opened Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA) with partner banks in India.

Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) is an account that domestic banks hold for foreign banks in the former's domestic currency, the rupee, which allows domestic banks to provide international banking services to their clients who have global banking needs without having to be physically present abroad.

SEBI proposed regulatory framework on ESG disclosure, ratings, investing

Earlier, SEBI in May 2022 constituted ESG Advisory Committee (EAC) under Shri. Navneet Munot to make recommendations to streamline regulatory framework for ESG disclosures, ESG ratings and ESG investing.

Based on the recommendations of this Committee, SEBI has now proposed a regulatory framework on ESG disclosures by listed entities, ESG ratings in the securities market and ESG investing by mutual funds in order to facilitate balance between transparency, simplification and ease of doing business in an evolving domain. This comes amid growing recognition of the significant economic and financial impact of climate change and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) risks.

Also note that, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has mandated the top 1,000 listed companies by market capitalisation to make filings as per the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) from FY-23.

NSE introduced country's first ever Municipal Bond Index

NSE Indices Ltd., an NSE (National Stock Exchange) arm, has introduced the country's first ever Municipal Bond Index. The new Nifty India Municipal Bond Index will track the performance of municipal bonds issued by Indian Municipal Corporations (MCs) across maturities and having investment grade credit rating. The index has a base date of 1st January 2021, and a base value of 1,000.

Earlier, Indian municipal bond market showed a push when the Sebi's Issue and Listing of Municipal Debt Securities Regulations, 2015 came into effect. The raised money helps municipal corporations fund new projects and in turn improve civic infrastructure. It also encourages them to become financially disciplined and governance oriented.

NSE gets nod to launch Social Stock Exchanges

The National Stock Exchange of India has received final approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch Social Stock Exchange (SSE) as a separate segment of the NSE. Also in October 2022, stock exchange Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) had got an in-principal nod from the capital market regulator SEBI for the SSE as a separate segment.

Social Stock Exchange (SSE) functions as a regulated funding platform to allow For-Profit Social Enterprises (FPEs) and Not-for-Profit Organisations (NPO) with a social purpose, to raise funds. At present, avenues through which the social sector (FPEs and NPO) receive funding include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), impact investing, philanthropic/Government grants etc.

Some of the most prominent SSEs are UK (*Social Stock Exchange*), Canada (*Social Venture Connexion*), South Africa (*South African Social Investment Exchange*), Singapore (*Impact Investment Exchange*).

A *social enterprise* is a revenue-generating business. Its primary objective is to achieve a social objective, for example, providing healthcare or clean energy.

NCAER Report on Farm Machinery Industry in India

The National Council of Applied Economic Research's (NCAER) has released a report on "Making India a Global Power House on Farm Machinery Industry". The report highlighted that Farm mechanisation in India is marked by 'tractorization'. The NCAER is the India's premier economic policy research thinktanks. This study was sponsored by Mahendra & Mahendra.

India-Singapore launches UPI-Paynow Linkage

India and Singapore have launched UPI (Unified Payments Interface)-PayNow linkage.

UPI-PayNow integration will enable people in both countries to send money real-time via QR-code based or simply by entering mobile numbers linked to bank account. With this, Singapore became the first country to allow cross-border Person to Person (P2P) payment facility. Earlier, at selected merchant outlets in Singapore, UPI payments through QR codes were made available.

South India's first Industrial Corridor Project

Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone of South India's first Industrial Corridor Project to be implemented at Tumakuru which is spread over 8500 Acre of land under the Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (as part of National Industrial Corridor programme). Note that, the Government's project includes the development of industrial townships at 3 nodes: (i) Krishnapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), (ii) Tumakuru (Karnataka), and (iii) Ponneri (Tamil Nadu).

Note that, Government of India is developing various industrial corridor projects as part of the National Industrial Corridor Programme which is aimed at development of futuristic industrial cities in India.

US Chamber of Commerce releases International IP Index 2023

U.S. Chamber of Commerce has released the International IP Index 2023. It is an annual Index which evaluates protection of Intellectual Property (IP) rights in 55 of the world's leading economies, together.

India Rank: 42nd

Index Topped by: USA

Indian Startups are Looking at Reverse Flipping

The Economic Survey 2023 stated that Indian startups are exploring 'reverse flipping', or shifting their domicile back to India, with easy access to capital from private equity and venture capital, changes in rules regarding round-tripping, and the growing maturity of India's capital market. The Survey said many Indian companies have been getting headquartered overseas, especially in destinations with favourable environments and taxation policies, where it is technically denoted as 'flipping'.

Flipping refers to the process of transferring the entire ownership of an Indian company to an overseas entity, accompanied by a transfer of Intellectual Property (IP) and all data hitherto owned by the Indian company. Reverse flipping is shifting their domicile back to India.

Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports, and Ambuja Cements under Additional Surveillance Mechanism

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) have put 3 Adani Group companies – Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports and Ambuja Cements – under short-term additional surveillance measure (ST-ASM) framework. This means trading in their shares will require a 100% margin, which is aimed at curbing speculation and short selling.

Additional Surveillance Mechanism (ASM) was introduced in 2018 with the intention to protect investors from market volatility and unusual changes in share price. ASM in the stock market functions as a control measure for speculative trading to safeguard the interests of retail investors and keep them out of potentially dangerous trading situations.

UPI Payment for Foreign travellers

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has permitted all inbound travellers from the Group of Twenty (G-20) countries and non-resident Indians to access Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for their merchant payments (P2M) at select airports while they are in the country. According to the RBI, banks and non-banks authorised to issue prepaid payment instruments (PPIs) can issue rupee-denominated full-KYC PPIs to foreign nationals and NRIs visiting India. Such PPIs can also be issued in co-branding arrangement with entities authorised to deal in foreign exchange under FEMA.

First Edition of upnext India 2023 held in Gurugram

The first edition of upnext India 2023 was held at Apparel House, Gurugram. It is organized by Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) and supported by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry under the Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme. It was attended by the prominent buyers from Japan.

Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme is an Export Promotion Scheme envisaged to act as a catalyst to promote India's exports on a sustained basis. The scheme is formulated on focus product-focus country approach to evolve specific market and specific product through market studies/survey.

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) is the official body of apparel exporters in India that provides assistance to Indian exporters as well as importers/international buyers who choose India as their preferred sourcing destination for garments.

Government announced the setting up of Data Embassies

Government has announced that India would facilitate the establishment of 'data embassies.' Globally, data embassies have become a viable option to store copies of critical state information extra-territorially — in case the main servers back home get compromised.

Data Embassies are a set of servers that store one country's data and are under that country's jurisdiction while being located in another country. It is a physical data centre of trusted nations which enjoy diplomatic immunity from local laws.

North India's first nuclear plant in Haryana

Government has disclosed that North India's first Nuclear Plant is coming up in Haryana in the town of Gorakhpur, which is about 150 km north of the national capital of New Delhi.

Singareni Thermal Power Plant (STPP) first public sector coal-based power generating station

Singareni Thermal Power Plant (STPP) in Telangana is set to become the first public sector coal-based power generating station in the South and first among the State PSUs in the country to have a Flu Gas Desulphurization (FGD) plant.

The *Flu Gas Desulphurization (FGD)* plant would process the sulphur and other gases (nitrogen oxides) generated by firing the coal for power generation. The FGD plant removes Sulphur Dioxide from the flue gas before it is released into the atmosphere and hence reduces its impact on the environment.

India-UAE explore virtual trade corridor to fast-track shipments

India and the UAE are exploring creating a virtual trade corridor to facilitate the quicker clearance of shipments. It will complement the bilateral comprehensive free trade agreement signed between India and the UAE in 2022. A virtual trade corridor is an online platform that enables faster and more efficient customs clearance for international trade between two countries.

What is Blue Food?

Blue food is food derived from aquatic animals, plants or algae that are caught or cultivated in freshwater and marine environments. They tend to be more nutritious than terrestrial animal-source foods.

What are Green debt securities?

SEBI has broadly defined green debt security as one that is issued for the purpose of raising capital to be used for the cause of sustainable development or furthering energy efficiency.

Under the sub-categories of green debt securities:

- *Blue bonds*: It is a debt instrument issued by governments, development banks or others to raise capital to finance marine and ocean-based projects that have positive environmental, economic and climate benefits.
- *Yellow bonds*: It pertains to solar energy.
- *Transition bonds*: To fund a firm's transition or to reduce their carbon emissions.

These measures have been taken to align India's framework for green debt securities with the updated Green Bond Principles (GBP) recognised by IOSCO.

The International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) (Est. 1983, HQ: Madrid, Spain) is an association of organizations that regulate the world's securities and futures markets. SEBI is a member of it.

What is Off-Budget financing?

Former Economic Adviser, Arvind Subramanian, in his book has mentioned that the accounting techniques ('creative accounting') used made it difficult to gauge the precise extent of the fiscal deficit. Hence, the government should make efforts to draft a more transparent and accessible budget for India's citizens and investors.

Off-Budget financing refers to expenditure that's not funded through the budget. For instance, the government may set up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to borrow money for a particular task such as constructing a bridge. Since the loan is not taken directly by the govt, it is not reflected in the budget document. Since such off-budget financing is not mentioned in the Budget document, the numbers also do not reflect in the fiscal deficit. Such financing tends to hide the actual extent of government spending, borrowings, and debt and increase the interest burden.

11. Important Days

International Mother Language Day

International Mother Language Day is celebrated every year on 21st February. The day was declared in 1999 by the UNESCO in response to the declining state of many languages all over the world.

Theme for the year 2023: "*Multilingual education — a necessity to transform education*"

Related News: Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, an eminent linguist and a folklorist from Odisha, has been nominated to receive the UNESCO's International Mother Language Award 2023 for his lifetime service for promotion of mother language in India.

World Wetland Day

World Wetlands Day is celebrated annually on 2nd February. The day is observed to create awareness among people about the importance of wetlands and different ways to restore their rapid loss and degradation. The day is aimed at highlighting the vital role wetlands play in maintaining biodiversity and supporting human well-being.

Theme for the year 2023: *"It's Time for Wetlands Restoration"*

The International Day of Human Fraternity

The International Day of Human Fraternity is observed every year on February 4. The Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2020. The International Day of Human Fraternity commemorates the historic signing of the Document on Human Fraternity by His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on February 4, 2019. The Day highlights the principles and values of the Document on Human Fraternity, while exploring good practices towards its implementation as a pathway to building a more peaceful world.

World Cancer Day

Each year on February 4, World Cancer Day is celebrated worldwide. World Cancer Day seeks to save millions of lives by educating the public, promoting awareness, and pressuring individuals and governments around the world to take action every year.

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is celebrated on February 6.

This year, the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Delivering the Global Promise launched the 2023 theme; *"Partnership with Men and Boys to transform Social and gender Norms to End FGM"*.

Since 2008, UNFPA, jointly with UNICEF, leads the largest global programme to accelerate the elimination of female genital mutilation. The Joint Programme currently focuses on 17 countries in Africa and the Middle East and also supports regional and global initiatives.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights, the health and the integrity of girls and women.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

International Day of Women and Girls in Science is celebrated every year on 11th February.

The International Day of Women and Girls in Science is implemented by UNESCO and UN-Women, in collaboration institutions and civil society partners that aim to promote women and girls in science. This Day is an opportunity to promote full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls. Gender equality is a global priority for UNESCO, and the support of young girls, their education and their full ability to make their ideas heard are levers for development and peace.

The theme for the year 2022: *“Innovate. Demonstrate. Elevate. Advance (IDEA): Bringing communities Forward for sustainable and equitable development.”*

World Unani Day

World Unani Day is celebrated on February 11 marking birth anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan. He was a famous Indian Unani scholar. Unani, also called Yunani is Greek medicine.

The theme for the year 2023: *“Unani Medicine for Public Health”*

Central Excise Day

Central Excise Day is observed in India on February 24 every year to commemorate the establishment of the Central Excise and Salt Act in 1944.

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 2023: *“Global Science for Global Wellness.”*

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 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 the Raman effect.

12. Culture

PM inaugurates 200th Jayanti celebrations of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati

The Prime Minister of India has inaugurated the year-long celebrations commemorating the 200th birth anniversary (12th February 1823) of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati.

Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) was an Indian social reformer and the founder of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement. He was born in Gujarat. After a spiritual awakening, he renounced his family and worldly life and became a wandering ascetic, studying various religious texts and philosophies. In 1875, he founded the Arya Samaj, which aimed to reform Hinduism and promote the principles of truth, non-violence, and social justice. The organization established schools, hospitals, and other social institutions. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati also wrote several books, including “Satyarth Prakash” (*The Light of Truth*), which outlines the principles of the Arya Samaj. American Spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis called Maharishi Dayanand the “Son of God”. He started the Shuddhi Movement (for those who sought their way back to Hinduism). DAV schools and colleges were started by his disciples.

Siang Unying Festival of Arunachal Pradesh

Siang Unying Festival is an important festival of the Adi community and is celebrated at Boleng, Arunachal Pradesh. The festival of Unying is celebrated to herald the season of cultivation, beginning of the Adi

community's new year, arrival of spring seasons as well as a great way to strengthen the bond among the community.

Attukal Pongala of Kerala

The Attukal Pongala was held in Attukal Temple, Thiruvananthapuram. It is the largest congregation of women for a festival in the world. Pongala, which means 'to boil over', is the ritual in which women prepare sweet payasam (a pudding made from rice, jaggery, coconut and plantains cooked together) and offer it to the Goddess or 'Bhagavathy'.

Lavani Folk Dance of Maharashtra

There was some controversy reported related to the public performances in the name of Lavani, a folk song and dance popular in Maharashtra.

The word Lavani comes from '*Lavanya*' or beauty. Lavani is a traditional folk-art form in which women dancers wearing nine-yard-long sarees in bright colours, make-up, and ghunghroos perform on dholak beats on a stage before a live audience.

Classical dancer Kanak Rele Passed Away – Mohiniyattam

Classical dancer Dr. Kanak Rele has passed away. She was an Indian Dancer, Choreographer, and Academician. She was also an exponent of Mohiniyattam. Kanak Rele was awarded the first Guru Gopinath National Puraskaram by the Government of Kerala. She was awarded various awards including Padma Shri (1989), Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1994), M.S. Subbulakshmi Award, Kalidas Samman (2006), and Padma Bhushan (2013).

The term Mohiniyattam comes from the words '*mohini*' meaning a woman who enchants onlookers and '*aattam*' meaning graceful and sensuous body movements. Thus, the word Mohiniyattam literally means – dance of the enchantress. Mohiniyattam has a legend attached to it as per the Hindu mythology.

Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav

Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav is celebrated in Bikaner, Rajasthan. It is an annual flagship festival of the Ministry of Culture. It is organized in different states of India to promote National Unity and integrity through cultural exchange. It was started in 2015 to exhibit the rich cultural heritage of the country.

Dawoodi Bohras community

The Supreme Court has referred a petition challenging the constitutional validity of the practice in the Dawoodi Bohra community to excommunicate members, to the nine-judge bench.

The Dawoodi Bohras are Shia Muslims whose leader is known as the Al-Dai-Al-Mutlaq. There are around 1 million Dawoodi Bohras spread around the world. For over 400 years, the leader of the community has been based in India, including the current and the 53rd leader, His Holiness Dr. Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin. The leader of the community is recognised by the members as having the right to excommunicate its members. In practical terms, excommunication means not being allowed to access a mosque belonging to the community or a burial dedicated to the community.

13. Books and Authors

Book Released: Victory City

Salman Rushdie has released a new novel "Victory City" – a fictionalized story of the Vijayanagara Kingdom.

Vijaynagar Kingdom (1336 AD to 1646 AD): Founded by Harihara I of the Sangama dynasty, Vijayanagara expanded from a strategic position on the banks of the Tungabhadra River with Hampi as its capital. The kingdom reached its peak under Krishna Deva Raya (reign 1509-1529), a period in which it enjoyed military superiority to its rival kingdoms such as the Bahmani Sultanate, the Golconda Sultanate, and the Gajapatis of Odisha. Vijayanagara's capital Hampi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its sophisticated fortifications as well as innumerable temples and other architectural marvels.