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Current Events

March 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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March 2023

1. Sports and Games

Asia's longest-ever cycle race flagged off Srinagar (J&K)

The Asia's longest-ever cycle race was flagged off from Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir. The race, after covering a distance of more than 3,000 km, will culminate at Kanyakumari. The race has been accorded the status of Asian Ultracycling Championship by the World Ultracycling Association, USA. It is organised by J&K sports council.

Karnataka beats Meghalaya to win Santosh Trophy after 54 years

Karnataka has defeated Meghalaya in the final of the 76th National football championship for Santosh Trophy, at the King Fahd International Stadium, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia). This was the first trophy for Karnataka, which had previously won four times as the princely state of Mysore, after a gap of 54 years.

Khelo India Dus Ka Dum Tournament

Government has organized the Khelo India Dus Ka Dum Tournament at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi. The tournament, organized as a part of the International Women's Day 2023 celebrations, kicked off simultaneously in over 50 cities of the country.

Carlos Alcaraz wins Indian Wells title 2023

Spain's tennis player Carlos Alcaraz has won the Men's Singles Final of the Indian Wells 2023 tennis tournament. Carlos Alcaraz is the youngest player in the world to win the Indian Wells 2023 tennis title. After winning the final, Carlos Alcaraz got the chair of the world's No.1 tennis player.

Hockey stadium in Raebareli renamed after Rani Rampal

The Indian Railways's Modern Coach Factory Stadium in Raebareli, Uttar Pradesh, was renamed as Rani's Girls Hockey Turf. Rani Rampal has become the first woman in the sport to have a stadium named after her. She is a former Indian women's hockey team captain.

India won men's and women's titles of the Asian Kho Kho Championship 2023

The Indian men's and women's teams have clinched the titles at the 4th Asian Kho Kho Championships that concluded at Tamulpur in north-central Assam's Baksa district. Both the title won by defeating Nepal.

Mumbai Indians wins Women's Premier League Final

Mumbai Indians have won the inaugural Women's Premier League after defeating Delhi Capitals by 7 wickets. The final match was played at Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai.

2. Science and Technology

Scientists is planning research on Organoid Intelligence

Scientists at John Hopkins University (USA) have planned research on "Organoid Intelligence (OI)" to create biocomputers.

Organoids are three-dimensional miniature versions of organs that are grown in a laboratory setting from stem cells or tissue samples. They mimic the structure and function of real organs, providing a valuable tool for

studying organ development, disease modeling, drug testing, and personalized medicine. Planned research will use brain organoids, i.e., cultures of brain cells, as biological hardware.

Henceforth, Biocomputers can be defined as computers that use components of biological origin (such as molecules of DNA) instead of electrical components.

Govt. plans to irradiate Onions for preservation purposes

Government of India is planning to irradiate onions with Gamma rays before sending them into cold storage on a pilot basis. Irradiation prevents sprouting and thus brings down post-harvest losses.

Food irradiation involves controlled application of energy from ionizing radiations such as gamma rays, electrons and X-rays for food preservation. Irradiation works by disrupting the biological processes that lead to decay. Gamma ray, X-ray or electrons do not induce any radioactivity in food.

Govt. unveils India's 6G vision document – Bharat 6G Vision

India has released “Bharat 6G Vision” document which eyes 6G services rollout by 2030 and launched the 6G research and development test bed.

Bharat 6G vision document is prepared by the Technology Innovation Group on 6G (TIG-6G) that was constituted in 2021 by Department of Telecommunications (DoT) under Ministry of Communications.

India Centre for Lab grown Diamond (InCent-LGD) proposed to be established at IIT Madras

In Union Budget 23-24, a five-year research grant for one of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) was announced to encourage the indigenous production of Lab-Grown Diamonds (LGD) machinery, seeds and recipe. It has been decided to give this project to IIT Madras after a joint determination of its capabilities by a joint committee of Government, export promotion council and Industry representatives.

The aim of this project is to provide, in mission mode, technical assistance to the industries, and entrepreneurs in the country, in promote indigenous manufacturing of both Chemical Vapour Deposition (CVD) and High Pressure and High Temperature (HPHT) systems along with the recipes for expanding the Lab Grown Diamond (LGD) business at the upstream end. Research efforts would make the technology available for start ups at affordable cost, increase employment opportunities, increase exports of LGD thus play a significant role in fuelling India's economic growth.

Instagram influencers found to be using Russian bots to boost reach

Top Instagram profiles with up to 40 million followers were found to be allegedly using Russian bots to boost their presence on the image-sharing platform. The profiles were found to be associated with eco-conscious clothing, as well as glasses, jewellery and furniture brands.

A ‘bot’ is a computer programme designed to work automatically. It is mainly used to gather information on the Internet or perform repetitive jobs. Bot accounts are especially notorious for spamming, spreading crypto scams and fraudulent boosting on social media accounts.

A miracle superconducting material-reddmatter

The Scientists are claiming that they have made a material from hydrogen, nitrogen, and lutetium (*reddmatter*) that becomes superconductive at a temperature of just 69 degrees Fahrenheit and a pressure of 1 gigapascal. That is nearly 10,000 times the atmospheric pressure on Earth's surface, but still a far lower pressure than any previous superconducting material.

When a material is superconductive, electricity flows through it with zero resistance, which means none of the energy involved is lost as heat. But every superconductor made so far has required extraordinarily high pressures, and most have required very low temperatures.

Asia's largest 4-metre Liquid Mirror Telescope inaugurated in Uttarakhand

Ministry of Science and Technology has inaugurated Asia's largest 4-metre International Liquid Mirror Telescope located at an altitude of 2,450 metre on the Devasthal Observatory campus of Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), an autonomous institute under the Science and Technology (DST) department, in Nainital district.

Liquid Mirror Telescope (LMT) are stationary telescopes that image a strip of sky. It can capture all possible celestial objects – from stars, galaxies, supernovae explosions, and asteroids to space debris.

Enzyme Laccase

Researchers from S.N. Bose National Center for Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS), Kolkata has tested the efficacy of the laccase enzyme in degrading some standard dye molecules. Laccase is generated by a group of fungi that have been found capable of degrading a variety of hazardous organic dye molecules that are regularly drained into waterbodies after dyeing clothes in the textile industry.

An '*enzyme*' is a substance that acts as a catalyst in living organisms and regulates the rate at which chemical reactions proceed without being altered in the process. '*Enzyme promiscuity*' is defined as the capability of an enzyme to catalyze a reaction other than the reaction for which it has been specialized.

India's first indigenous quadruped (four-legged) robot

Hyderabad-based Svaya Robotics has developed India's first indigenous quadruped (four-legged) robot and exoskeleton for the defense sector as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Quadruped robots:

- They are four-legged robots that can walk or run on uneven and rough terrains.
- The robots can carry 25 kg in payload and walk along with the soldier.
- It is made for navigating in unstructured terrains to provide remote reconnaissance and inspection, which otherwise are not safe for humans to operate in.

Exoskeleton:

- It is developed to suit Indian soldiers' anthropometry and augment soldier strength for walking long distances.
- These active exoskeletons, when worn by soldiers, can carry heavy loads without expending much effort.

Scientists reports Piezoelectric effect in liquids

Scientists have reported evidence of the piezoelectric effect in liquids for the first time, in pure ionic liquids at room temperature. In the '*piezoelectric effect*', a body develops an electric current when it is squeezed. The piezoelectric effect was discovered in 1880, in quartz. It was believed to be occurred in solid matters till now.

India's first cloned indigenous Gir female calf produced at NDRI, Karnal

Scientists of the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) in Karnal have achieved a new milestone by producing country's first Indigenous Gir cow clone calf. Scientists used 3 animals for producing this calf: Oocyte was taken from the Sahiwal breed, a somatic cell from the Gir breed, and a surrogate animal was a crossbreed.

'*Reproductive cloning*' is a process by which an exact genetic replica, or clone, of an existing organism, is created through a type of cloning called Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT). This involves removing the nucleus of an egg cell and replacing it with the nucleus of a somatic cell (a non-reproductive cell) from the organism to be cloned.

Plastigeromerate found in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

A team of marine biologists during routine monitoring of marine litter in some of the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands, have stumbled upon a piece of rock made from plastic. The rock which was discovered on a beach on Aves Island is the first such find from India. Known as Plastiglomerates, the rock is composed of sand, rock fragments, shells and other materials held together by plastic, resulting in a plastic-rock hybrid.

Aves Island is an island of the Andaman Islands. According to the 2011 Census, there are just two people on Aves Island. Both are male.

Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) Test Fired

The Indian Navy has carried out a successful test-firing of a Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) and a ship launched version of BrahMos missile.

MRSAM weapon system which is also called the '*Abhra*' Weapon System is a state-of-the-art medium-range air defence weapon system and is a joint venture of DRDO and Israeli Aerospace Industries (IAI) and produced at Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).

IAF inducting in-house system to identify friendly forces in combat – Vayulink

The Indian Air Forces has inducted an in-house system to identify friendly forces in combat by name "Vayulink". Vayulink is effectively a data link system which connects all entities, combat and non-combat, through a single link.

3. Environment

Biodiversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty (United Nations High Seas Treaty)

The 4th meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC-4) was held in New York, USA to conclude a draft of the instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas 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, currently under negotiation at the United Nations. This new instrument is being developed within the framework of the UNCLOS, the main international agreement governing human activities at sea. BBNJ encompasses the high seas, beyond the exclusive economic zones or national waters of countries.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 is an international agreement that establishes the legal framework for marine and maritime activities. It is also known as Law of the Sea.

UN 2023 Water Conference held in New York

The United Nations 2023 Water Conference was held in New York, co-hosted by the Netherlands and Tajikistan. SDG 6: *Clean Water and Sanitation*

UN 2023 Water Conference is the most important United Nations-hosted event on water supply, sanitation and hygiene in some 50 years. This is only the second UN Conference dedicated to water, following the Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 1977.

During the event, “The United Nations World Water Development Report (UNWWDR) 2023: Partnerships and cooperation for water” was released. The Report is published by UNESCO, on behalf of UN-Water. The Report assesses the nature and role of partnerships and cooperation among stakeholders in water resources management and development and their role in accelerating progress towards water goals and targets.

IPCC releases Synthetic Report for 6th Assessment Cycle (AR6)

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released the Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Cycle (AR6). It is a summary of the previous reports, which were released between 2018 and 2022. It integrates the main findings of the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) based on contributions from the 3 Working Groups, and the 3 Special Reports. Its aim is to provide policy-makers up-to-date understanding of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and highlight solutions to address it.

AR6 Report – “Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis”.

IPCC: Created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the objective of the IPCC is to provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies.

WMO launches Global Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Infrastructure

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has launched the Global Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Infrastructure (GGMI).

Global Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Infrastructure aims to provide better ways of measuring planet-warming pollution and help inform policy choices. The new platform will integrate space-based and surface-based observing systems and seek to clarify uncertainties about where greenhouse gas emissions end up.

The World Meteorological Organization (est. 1950; HQ: Geneva) is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for promoting international cooperation on atmospheric science, climatology, hydrology, and geophysics.

NRSC releases Landslide Atlas of India

National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) under the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has released the Landslide Atlas of India, a detailed guide identifying Landslide Hotspots in the country. NRSC has the mandate for remote sensing satellite data acquisition, processing, archiving, and dissemination to various users. For this, scientists did a risk assessment on the basis of 80,000 landslides recorded between 1998 and 2022 in 147 districts in 17 states and two Union Territories to build a “Landslide Atlas” of the country.

IEA releases CO₂ Emissions Report 2022

International Energy Agency (IEA) has released CO₂ Emissions in 2022 report. The Report is first in IEA’s new series – “Global Energy Transitions Stocktake- tracking progress towards Paris Agreement”.

It provides a complete picture of energy-related Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in 2022. It covers CO₂ emissions from all energy combustion and industrial processes. It includes information on methane and nitrous oxide emissions, providing a complete picture of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions in 2022.

Belgrade, Serbia introduces Liquid Tree (LIQUID3)

Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, has introduced liquid tree (dubbed as LIQUID3), an urban photo-bioreactor, to combat air pollution. It was developed by Dr. Ivan Spasojevic. It contains 600 litres of water and uses microalgae to bind carbon dioxide and produce pure oxygen through photosynthesis.

‘Plastic’ rocks found on remote Brazil Islands

Researchers have found plastic rocks on Trindade island in the State of Espirito Santo, Brazil. Plastic was found in the rocks called plastiglomerates – a mixture of sedimentary granules and other debris held together by plastic. The process involves melted plastic to be interwoven itself with rocks. Note that Trindade island is an important conservation spot for one of the largest sea turtles – Green Turtles (IUCN Status: Endangered).

Finland installs world’s first Sand Battery

Finland has installed world’s first sand battery that can store heat from renewable energy sources for months. The sand battery is developed by Tommi Eronen and Ville Kivioja.

Sand Battery is a high temperature thermal energy storage that uses sand or sand-like materials as its storage medium. It stores energy in sand as heat. Its main purpose is to work as a high-power and high-capacity reservoir for excess wind and solar energy. Energy is stored as heat, which can be used to heat homes, or to provide hot steam and high temperature process heat to industries that are often fossil-fuel dependent.

Think Tank Centre for Policy Research releases Report on Heatwaves

Centre for Policy Research has released a new report titled “How is India Adapting to Heatwaves?” which indicates that the country is ill-prepared to face the heat.

What is Rifting?

Scientists, in 2020, predicted a new ocean would be created as Africa gradually splits into two separate parts. The division of the Continent is connected to the East African Rift, which appeared in the desert of Ethiopia in 2005, triggering the formation of a new sea.

‘*Rifting*’ refers to the geological process in which a single tectonic plate is split into two or more plates separated by divergent plate boundaries. This process leads to the emergence of a lowland region known as a rift valley, which can occur either on land or at the bottom of the ocean. These rift valleys occur due to the movement of Earth’s tectonic plates.

India Ranks 5th in National Contribution to Warming

According to research published in Journal "Scientific Data", India is responsible for 0.08 degrees Celsius of warming from the 1850s through 2021 and ranks fifth among the top 10 contributors to warming. Top 5 Ranking – *USA, China, Russia, Brazil, India.*

3rd session of NPDRR held in New Delhi

The 3rd Session of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) was held in New Delhi. Theme: “*Building Local Resilience in a Changing Climate*”

During the event, Prime Minister felicitated awardees of the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar. The winners of the 2023 Puraskar are Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) and the Lunglei Fire Station, Mizoram.

NPDRR is a multi-stakeholder platform constituted by the Government of India to facilitate dialogue, sharing experiences, views, ideas, action-oriented research & explore opportunities in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction.

UNCTAD releases report – Technology and Innovation Report 2023

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has released a report titled – “Technology and Innovation Report 2023”. The Report is built around the concept of green innovation i.e., creating or introducing new or improved goods and services that leave lighter carbon footprints and open up green windows of opportunity. It mentioned that developed countries are benefiting more from green technologies than developing countries, and this could deepen global economic inequality.

UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body of the United Nations.

Estb.: 1964

HQ: Geneva, Switzerland

India's Initiatives Related to Green Technologies:

- Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA)
- Green Energy Corridor (GEC)
- National Smart Grid Mission (NSGM) and Smart Meter National Programme
- Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME)
- International Solar Alliance (ISA)

IMD plans to introduce Health Index Reading

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is planning to issue heat index readings for weather stations across India. It calculates the ‘real feel’ for issues with temperature readings. It factors the day’s relative humidity, wind speed, maximum temperature, and cloud cover. A colour-based warning will also be issued, based on the expected HI, listing precautions people can take.

What are Westerlies Winds?

A recent study has shown that the Westerlies had a bigger impact on the climate and landscape of the Trans-Himalayan region than the Indian Summer Monsoon.

The *Westerlies* are prevailing winds that blow from the west to the east in the middle latitudes of both the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere. They are part of the global atmospheric circulation pattern known as the Ferrel cell, which lies between the polar cell and the subtropical high-pressure belt. They are caused by the Earth’s rotation and the temperature differences between the Equator and the Poles.

What are Salt Flats?

A salt flat is a natural landscape in which a large area of flat land is covered by salt. A salt flat forms from a natural water body whose recharge rate is lower than the evaporation rate. World’s most well-known salt flat is the *Salar de Uyuni* in Bolivia contains more than half of the planet’s lithium reserves.

Tropical Cyclone Freddy hits Mozambique

The World Meteorological Organization is setting up an Expert Committee to evaluate whether tropical cyclone Freddy has broken the record as the longest-lasting tropical cyclone on record (lasting for 34 days). According to the National Meteorological Hydrological Service (INAM), Freddy made landfall in northern Mozambique in of the province of Zambezia.

Existence of Zealandia Continent confirmed

Scientists have finally confirmed the existence of a “missing” continent known as Zealandia. It was once part of an ancient supercontinent called Gondwana, which also included Western Antarctica and Eastern Australia over 500 million years ago. It is recognized as the world’s 8th Continent. The part of Zealandia which is above water forms the foundation of New Zealand’s north and south islands as well as the island of New Caledonia.

4. Scheme and Programs

MoS launches Vaibhav Fellowships

Ministry of Science and technology has launched ‘VAIBHAV Fellowship’ for Indian Diaspora abroad.

Vaibhav Fellowship aims at improving the research ecosystem of India’s Higher Educational Institutions. It facilitates academic and research collaborations between Indian institutions and best institutions in world through mobility of faculty/researcher from overseas institutions to India.

Samarth Scheme to be operational till March 2024

Ministry of Textiles has informed that Samarth Scheme will be operational till March 2024.

SAMARH: Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector

Samarth is a demand-driven and placement-oriented umbrella skilling programme of the Ministry of Textiles. The scheme was formulated under the broad skilling policy framework adopted by M/o Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. The objectives of the scheme are to provide demand-driven, placement-oriented skilling programme to incentivize the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors to promote skilling and skill up-gradation in the traditional sectors through respective sectoral divisions/organizations of Ministry of Textile; and to provide livelihood to all sections of the society across the country.

RBI launches “Har Payment Digital Mission”

RBI has launched the ‘Har Payment Digital’ Mission during Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) 2023.

Under the mission Payment System Operators (PSOs) will adopt 75 villages across the country and conduct camps in each of these villages with an aim to improve awareness and onboard merchants for digital payments, thus making them Digital payment enabled villages.

Institute of Eminence (IOE) Scheme

The Rajya Sabha Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, has recommended to realign the IoE scheme with the National Education Policy, 2020.

Institute of Eminence Scheme: The UB 2016-17 announced 10 public and 10 private HEIs are to be recognised to emerge as world-class institutions. As a result, UGC launched the IoE scheme in 2017 to:

- Provide high-quality teaching and research → excellence, and innovations.
- Engage in areas of specialization.
- Enable HEIs to emerge as one of the top 100 institutions in the world over time (top 500 by 2027).

Criteria: The institutions should be among the top 50 in the NIRF in their category, and top 500 in internationally recognised rankings. Public institutes eligible to apply are central universities, govt-owned and controlled deemed to be universities, institutions of national importance (IITs, NITs), and state universities.

SMART-PDS in all States and UT's

The Government of India has asked all the states/UTs to make efforts to implement SMART-PDS (Scheme for Modernization and Reforms through Technology in Public Distribution System).

SMART-PDS aims to leverage technology to reduce human intervention and promote automation in the PDS supply chain, thereby ensuring timely and targeted delivery of food grains to beneficiaries. The system involves real-time tracking of food grains from the procurement stage to the distribution stage, enabling authorities to monitor and address any issues or bottlenecks in the supply chain.

5. Polity

SC ruling related to appointment of Election Commissioners

Supreme Court (*in case of Anoop Baranwal vs. Union of India 2023*) has ruled that the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners shall be made by the President on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition of the Lok Sabha and Chief Justice of India (CJI). In case no leader of Opposition is available, the leader of the largest opposition Party in the Lok Sabha in terms of numerical strength will be part of such committee. The SC has also asked the Parliament and the Union government to put in place a permanent secretariat for the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Article 324(2) states that the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament, be made by the President.

Office of the Lokpal

The Parliamentary Panel on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice in its report has found that Lokpal has not prosecuted a single person for graft till date.

Lokpal is a statutory body constituted under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. The Act mandates the creation of Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for states. The Act aims to enhance the current legal and institutional frameworks to facilitate better implementation of the obligations outlined in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

Jurisdiction of the Lokpal:

- Prime Minister, Ministers, members of Parliament, Groups A, B, C and D officers and officials of Central Government.
- Chairpersons, members, officers and directors of any board, corporation, society, trust or autonomous body either established by an Act of Parliament or wholly or partly funded by the Union or State government.
- Any society or trust or body that receives foreign contribution above Rs 10 lakh.

Composition of Lokpal:

Lokpal shall consist of a Chairperson and a maximum of 8 Members, of which 50 % shall be judicial Members. 50 % of members of Lokpal shall be from amongst SC, ST, OBCs, Minorities and Women.

Appointment of Members of Lokpal: The Chairperson and the Members of the Lokpal shall be appointed by the President on recommendations of a Selection Committee. Selection Committee members – Prime Minister (Chairman), Leader of the Opposition, CJI (or SC judge nominated by CJI), 1 eminent jurist, nominated by the President.

Term of Office: The Chairperson and every member hold office for a term of 5 years or until he/she attains the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.

Supreme Court eases norm for Consumer Court

The Supreme Court (SC), under Article 142, has ruled that the lawyers and professionals with 10 years of experience will be eligible for appointment as President and member of the State Consumer Commission and District Forums. The SC upheld the Bombay High Court judgement quashing the provisions of Consumer Protection Rules, 2020, under section 101 of Consumer Protection Act 2019, which prescribe a minimum professional experience of 20 years and 15 years for adjudicating members to the State consumer commissions and District forums respectively.

Article 142 provides discretionary power to the Supreme Court as it states that the SC in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

The *Consumer Protection Act, 2019* promulgates a three-tier quasi-judicial mechanism for the redressal of consumer disputes namely district commissions, state commissions, and national commissions. The Act also stipulates the pecuniary jurisdiction of each tier of consumer commission.

- District Commissions have jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services paid as consideration does not exceed one crore rupees.
- State Commissions have jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services paid as consideration, exceeds 1 crore rupees but does not exceed 10 crore rupees and
- The National Commission has jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of goods or services paid as consideration exceeds 10 crore rupees.

Bar Council of India permits foreign lawyers and law firms to practice in India

Bar Council of India has permitted foreign lawyers and law firms to practice in India by notifying the Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India 2022. The rules also stated that the areas of law practice by a foreign lawyer or foreign law firm shall be laid down by the Bar Council of India and, if need be, it may consult the Union Government and the Ministry of Law and Justice.

The *Bar Council of India* was established by Parliament under the Advocates Act, 1961. H.O.: Delhi

Mandates:

- It performs the regulatory function by prescribing standards of professional conduct and etiquette and by exercising disciplinary jurisdiction over the bar.
- It also sets standards for legal education and grants recognition to universities whose degree in law will serve as qualification for enrolment as an advocate.
- It performs certain representative functions by protecting the rights, privileges and interests of advocates and through the creation of funds for providing financial assistance to organise welfare schemes for them.

What is Doctrine of Guilty of Association?

The Supreme Court (SC) has declared that mere membership of a banned organisation will be a crime under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967.

“*Doctrine of Guilty by Association*” refers to a legal concept where an individual is presumed guilty or held responsible for the actions or beliefs of another person or group with whom they are associated. It suggests that

simply being connected or affiliated with someone who is involved in criminal or objectionable activities automatically makes a person culpable or deserving of punishment.

Genesis of Right to Information

The Supreme Court has directed States and Union Territories to set up and operationalize online Right to Information (RTI) portals within 3 months to ensure transparency in governance.

The Right to Information Act 2005 (RTI) gives Indian citizens the right to access information held by public authorities (all levels of government, judiciary, as well as any non-governmental organizations that receive public funding).

Genesis: In 1986, the Indian Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Mr. Kulwal v/s Jaipur Municipal Corporation* that the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution includes the right to information.

Report on autocrisation in Democracy

V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) Institute at the University of Gothenberg, Sweden has released a report titled “Defiance in the Face of Autocratization”. The report lists 42 countries as “autocratizing” at the end of 2022.

Following are the key indicators used by the report:

- *The deliberative democracy index:* It measures whether political decisions are made through public reasoning or emotional appeals and coercion.
- *The egalitarian democracy index:* It examines equal access to rights and liberties.
- *The electoral democracy index:* It evaluates election cleanliness and lack of fraud.
- *The liberal democracy index:* It measures the protection of individual and minority rights against state tyranny.
- *The participatory democracy index:* It measures active citizen engagement in electoral and non-electoral political processes.

6. Governance

Creation of GST Appellate Tribunal

The Finance Bill, 2023 has provided for the establishment of the Goods and Service Tax (GST) Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT). Earlier in the 49th GST Council Meeting (Feb 2023), a report of the Group of Ministers (GoM) was accepted which recommended the establishment of the GSTAT.

GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) is the second appeal forum under GST, it will hear appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority or the Revisional Authority. It is the duty of the GSTAT to ensure uniformity in the redressal of disputes arising under GST. The Central Goods and Service Tax Act, 2017 (CGST Act) in Section 109 mandates the constitution of a GSTAT and its Benches.

The GST Tribunal will have one Principal bench in New Delhi and as many benches or boards in states as decided by each state, subject to approval of the council.

Principal Bench shall consist of the President, a Judicial Member, a Technical Member (Centre), and a Technical Member (State). It will be located in New Delhi. Only Principal Bench shall hear the cases involving the issue of place of supply. State Bench shall consist of 2 Judicial Members, a Technical Member (Centre) and a Technical Member (State).

Qualification of Members:

- President – A Judge of the Supreme Court or the Chief Justice of a High Court.
- Judicial Member – Judge of the High Court or for a combined period of 10 years has been a District Judge or an Additional District Judge.
- Technical Member (Centre) – Has been a member of the Indian Revenue (Customs and Indirect Taxes) Service, Group A, or of the All India service with 3 years of experience in law administration and has completed 25 years in service.
- Technical Member (State) – Has been an officer of the State Government or an officer of All India Service etc.

Manipur Government withdraws from Suspension of Operations (SoO)

The Manipur Government has withdrawn from the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with 2 insurgent groups Kuki National Army (KNA) and Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA), alleging they were “influencing agitation among forest encroachers”.

Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement: It was a ceasefire agreement signed in 2008, with the primary objective of initiating political dialogue with Kuki insurgent groups and meant ending violence and hostilities from all sides. It was signed by the Government of India, the Manipur Government with 2 umbrella groups, the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and the United People’s Front (UPF), comprising 25 groups – 17 under KNO and 8 under the UPF.

The ‘Kukis’ are an ethnic group including multiple tribes originally inhabiting the North-Eastern States of India such as Manipur, Mizoram and Assam; parts of Burma (now Myanmar), and Sylhet district and Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh.

What is Patent Monopoly?

Indian Patent Office has rejected US’s pharmaceutical Johnson & Johnson’s attempt to extend monopoly on lifesaving TB drug - Bedaquiline.

Patent Monopoly/Evergreening: It is a practice of modifying drugs (without improving efficacy) in order to extend their patent life and profitability. The Indian Patents Act, 1970 prohibits the mischievous practice of evergreening of patents.

‘Bedaquiline’ is a crucial drug in the treatment of multi-drug resistant TB patients for whom the first-line drug treatment (Isoniazid, Rifampicin, Pyrazinamide and Ethambutol) has stopped working.

What is Enemy Property?

The Ministry of Home Affairs has started the process for eviction and sale of enemy properties.

Enemy Property refers to property or assets held or managed on behalf of an enemy subject or an enemy company. It also refers to assets left behind by individuals who migrated to Pakistan or China and are no longer citizens of India. These assets include land, buildings, shares held in companies, jewellery of the citizens of enemy countries. The Central Government took over properties of citizens of China (in 1962) and Pakistan (in 1965 and 1971) under the Defence of India Acts. To administer these properties, the Enemy Property Act was enacted in 1968.

Crime Agencies in India

National Database of Sexual Offenders (NDSO)

It is a searchable registry of over 13 lakh sexual offenders in India. It contains the names, addresses, photographs, and fingerprint details of offenders involved in sexual offences.

Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)

Make the Police functioning citizen- friendly and more transparent by using ICT technology.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

To handle cyber crimes in a coordinated and comprehensive manner; Register cyber-crime.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

Functions as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking the crime to the perpetrators.

What is Safe Harbour clause under IT Act 2000?

The Government of India is debating whether social media platforms should continue to have zero liability for what users post on their platform.

The safe harbour provision has been given under Section 79 of the IT Act 2000. It states that “an intermediary shall not be liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him.” The principle conveys that an online platform such as Facebook or Twitter cannot be held accountable for the content posted on them by users.

7. International Relations

India and Australia agreement for Mutual Recognition of Qualifications

India and Australia have signed a Framework Mechanism for Mutual Recognition of Qualifications that will help ease the mobility of students and professionals between the two countries.

Related News: Geelong’s Deakin University, Australia will be the first overseas university to open its branch campus in India (at GIFT City, Gandhi Nagar).

What is AUKUS Partnership?

AUKUS (US, UK and Australia) have unveiled details of plan to create a new fleet of nuclear-powered submarines.

AUKUS is a 2021 defence deal between Australia, the UK and the US, which was struck to help Australia deploy nuclear-powered submarines in the Pacific region. Officially, the deal was made to emphasize upon the countries’ “shared commitment to a free-and-open Indo-Pacific region”.

Doha Political Declaration

The second part of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) was held in Qatar. The Conference ended with adoption of the ‘Doha Political Declaration’.

Theme: “*From Potential to Prosperity*”

Doha Programme of Action (DPoA): DPoA manifests a new generation of renewed commitments between the LDCs and their development partners, including the private sector, civil society, and governments at all levels.

It is a 10-year plan (2022-2031) to put the world's 46 most vulnerable countries back on track to achieving the UN mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement

Japan has become the latest country to join Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA).

Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration (MPIA) (formed in 2020) is an alternative system for resolving WTO disputes that are appealed by a Member in the absence of a functioning WTO Appellate Body. WTO members can resort to MPIA under Article 25 of WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding. Any member can join MPIA (India not a member yet) by notifying the Dispute Settlement Body (composed of representatives of all WTO Members).

DPoA (2022-2031) consisted of 6 key focus areas:

- (i) eradicating poverty;
- (ii) leveraging the potential of science and technology;
- (iii) addressing climate change;
- (iv) environmental degradation;
- (v) recovering from COVID-19 pandemic;
- (vi) building resilience against future shocks for risk-informed sustainable development.

What is IMF Bailout?

International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cleared \$3 billion bailout for Sri Lanka.

An IMF bailout usually comprises a financing package, a structural reforms package (to be implemented by borrowing country) and specific debt conditions. Bailout is provided under IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF), extended when a country faces serious medium-term Balance of Payments (BoP) problems because of structural weaknesses that require time.

Dilma Vana Rousseff of Brazil elects as New Development Bank President

Board of Governors of New Development Bank (NDB) has unanimously elected former Mrs. Dilma Vana Rousseff (Brazil) as its new President.

New Development Bank is a multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

Founding Members: *Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa*

New Members: *Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt (as of March 2023)*

India Bangladesh jointly inaugurates Friendship Pipeline

India, Bangladesh has inaugurated cross-border energy pipeline. India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFP), running from Siliguri (India) to Parbatipur (Bangladesh), is first cross border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh with a capacity to transport 1 Million Metric Ton Per Annum (MMTPA) of High-Speed Diesel (HSD) to Bangladesh.

Note that, it is the second cross-border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh. Numaligarh Refinery Limited has been supplying petroleum products to Bangladesh since 2015.

India-US held 5th Commercial Dialogue

India-US has held 5th Commercial Dialogue.

Dialogue is a cooperative undertaking encompassing regular government-to-government meetings held in conjunction with private sector meetings. It aims to facilitate trade and maximize investment opportunities across economic sectors. One of the major outcomes was signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on establishing semiconductor supply chain and innovation partnership under the framework of India – US Commercial Dialogue.

8th edition of Raisina Dialogue 2023 held in New Delhi

The 8th edition of the Raisina Dialogue was held in New Delhi.

The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier foreign policy conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community. The first session was held in 2016. It is organized on the lines of the Shangri La Dialogue (which takes place annually in Singapore) & the Munich Security Conference (the 59th edition of which took place in February 2023). It is co-hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

Indian Coast Guard Region (North-East) organizes exercises under Colombo Security Conclave

Indian Coast Guard Region (North-East) has conducted the 4th edition of Table top exercise under the aegis of Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) in Kolkata.

Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) was formed in 2011 as a trilateral maritime security grouping of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Later Mauritius joined as 4th member and Bangladesh & Seychelles participate as observer countries. Conclave underlines regional cooperation and shared security objectives concerning all littoral nations in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It aims to make maritime security, marine pollution response and maritime search & rescue priorities for the region.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

India has ruled out any duty concessions for gold or easing of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regime for European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries.

European Free Trade Association is an intergovernmental organisation of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. It was set up in 1960 (Stockholm Convention) for the promotion of free trade and economic integration between its members.

What is Windsor Framework?

The United Kingdom Government has reached a landmark deal with the European Union on post-Brexit trade rules that will govern Northern Ireland. The deal is termed known as Windsor Framework. It will replace the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Northern Ireland is a British-ruled province and part of the United Kingdom that shares a long porous border with Ireland, a member of the European Union.

What is Operation Interflex?

Operation Interflex is a part of United Kingdom's (UK) commitment of £2.3 billion for military aid and support to Ukraine. Under it, UK and other countries including Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Lithuania, and Netherlands have trained Ukraine's military.

What is McMohan Line?

2 United States Senators have introduced a bipartisan resolution in the upper chamber of Congress reiterating that the US recognizes the McMahon Line as the international boundary between China and India in Arunachal Pradesh.

The McMahon Line serves as the *de facto* boundary between China and India in the Eastern Sector. It specifically represents the boundary between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet, from Bhutan in the west to Myanmar in the east. China has historically disputed the boundary and claims the state of Arunachal Pradesh as part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR).

ITU Area Office & Innovation Center inaugurated in New Delhi

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Area Office and Innovation Centre has been inaugurated in New Delhi. It will serve India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan, and Iran. Earlier, India signed a Host Country Agreement in March 2022 with ITU for the establishment of Area Office. It will enhance coordination among nations and foster mutually beneficial economic cooperation in the region. Also note that, World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly of ITU will be held in October 2024 in New Delhi.

ITU Secretary-General: *Doreen Bogdan-Martin (USA)*

ITU HQ: *Geneva, Switzerland*

India hosts the first meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC)

India has hosted the first meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) at Bengaluru.

India, Japan to improve bilateral cooperation towards clean energy transition

Japan now looks forward to supporting India's clean energy transition by including the country in the AETI.

Japan's Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI), launched in 2021, initially supported the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries towards achieving net zero emissions, including financial assistance of \$10 billion for renewable energy.

Defence Exercises in News

Shinyuu Maitri: It is the exercise conducted between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Japan Air Self Defence Force (JASDF).

DUSTLIK-2023: It is the exercise conducted between the Indian Army and Uzbekistan Army under a UN mandate.

Frinjex-2023: It is the maiden Joint Military Exercise between Indian Army and French Army.

Bold Kurukshetra: It is joint military exercise between India and Singapore.

Sea Dragon 23: It is a coordinated multi-lateral Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercise with participation of Navy from India, US, Japan, Canada and Republic of Korea.

Cobra Warrior: Multilateral Air exercise held twice a year in the United Kingdom in which Air Forces from India, Finland, Sweden, South Africa, USA, UK and Singapore participated.

Konkan 2023: It is an annual bilateral maritime exercise between Indian Navy and Royal Navy (UK).

La Perouse: It is a multilateral exercise conducted by the French Navy and is aimed at enhancing coordination amongst the participating navies in the Indo-Pacific Region. Participating countries include India, USA, Japan, Australia, UK etc.

8. Awards and Recognition

First edition of Women Icons Leading Swachhata (WINS) Awards 2023 announced

The first edition of Women Icons Leading Swachhata (WINS) Awards 2023 was announced by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs. The awards aim to recognize inspiring and exemplary initiatives in urban sanitation and waste management by women led organizations and individual women.

Swachhotsav 2023 launches by MoHUA

Swachhotsav 2023 was launched by Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) on International Zero Waste Day (IZWD) 2023. The International Day of Zero Waste, observed for the first time on 30th March 2023 and is jointly facilitated by UNEP and UN-Habitat.

First Tamil author to be nominated for International Booker Prize 2023

Tamil author Perumal Murugan's novel 'Pyre' is among 13 books from across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America to make it to the longlist of the International Booker Prize 2023, announced by the Booker Prize Foundation. This is the first Tamil novel to be nominated for the award.

'The Elephant Whisperers' wins the Oscar for Best Documentary Short Film

Indian documentary, featured in Netflix, *The Elephant Whisperers*, has won the Oscar for Best Documentary Short category at the 95th Academy Awards.

The documentary is produced by Achin Jain and Guneet Monga and directed by Kartiki Gonsalves (directional debut). The documentary follows the family from Tamil Nadu's Mudumalai Tiger Reserve who end up adopting two orphan baby elephants.

Kalanidhi Award 2023

Renowned Carnatic vocalist and Padma Shri awardee Bombay Jayashri has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award for 2023 by the Music Academy. Kalanidhi award is the title awarded yearly to a Carnatic musician by the Madras Music Academy.

Porter Prize 2023

The Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry has received the Porter Prize 2023. It recognized the Government's strategy for managing COVID-19.

The Porter Prize is named after award-winning economist Michael E. Porter. He has brought economic theory and strategy concepts to bear on many of the most challenging problems faced by corporations, economies, and societies, including market competition and company strategy, economic development, the environment and healthcare.

The *equinoxes* are the only time when both the Northern and Southern Hemisphere experience roughly equal amounts of daytime and night-time.

President's Colour to INS Dronacharya

The President of India has presented the President's Colour to INS Dronacharya in Kochi. INS Dronacharya is the gunnery school of the Indian Navy located in Kochi, Kerala. It is responsible for training 820 officers and 2100 ratings per year in small-arms, naval missiles, artillery, radar and defensive countermeasures.

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.

PEN America lifetime achievement award

Hindi short story writer, novelist and poet Vinod Kumar Shukla has received the 2023 PEN/Nabokov Award for Achievement in International Literature. The award was founded in 2016 by Pen America in collaboration with the Vladimir Nabokov Literary Foundation to honour a living author whose work, written in or translated into English, represents the highest level of achievement in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and/or drama, and is of enduring originality and consummate craftsmanship.

BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year award

Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu has won the 2022 'BBC Indian Sportswoman of The Year' award after a public vote. She became the first athlete to win the award twice in a row after bagging it in 2021 as well. Also, Table tennis player Bhavina Patel won the 'BBC Para Sportswoman of the Year' award, a category introduced this year.

Saraswati Samman Award 2022

Tamil writer Sivasankari has been selected for Saraswati Samman for the year 2022 for her book 'Survya Vamsam'. It is a book of memoirs in Tamil language and was published in 2019. Saraswati Samman instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation in 1991 is recognized as the most prestigious and the highest literary award in the country. It carries award money of 15 lakh rupees, a Citation and a Plaque.

9. Social Development

UN-SDSN releases World Happiness Report

UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network has released World Happiness Report (WHR) 2023. The Report evaluates levels of happiness by taking into account 6 key variables. The goal of the report is to identify key determinants of well-being. Since 2012, the World Happiness Report has been released annually around March 20th as part of the International Day of Happiness celebration. The ranking uses 6 key factors to measure happiness — social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption.

Key Highlights:

- Top 3 countries are Finland, Denmark and Iceland respectively.
- Afghanistan, Lebanon, Sierra Leone were in the bottom of the chart.
- India has been ranked at the 126th place among 137 countries (as compared to 136th out of 146 countries in 2022).
- India ranked below neighbours China, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- Bhutan is not listed in the WHR 2023.

IEP releases Global Terrorism Index 2023

Sydney-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has released its 10th edition of Global Terrorism Index 2023. It covers global trends and patterns in terrorism. According to it, India was at 13th position.

World Bank Report on Air Pollution

The World Bank has released 'Striving for Clean Air: Air Pollution and Public Health in South Asia' report. The report uses Greenhouse Gas and Air Pollution Interactions and Synergies (GAINS) model to quantify particulate

matter (PM) emissions and how they disperse in the atmosphere. The report details how persisting with policies currently being implemented (largely since 2018) will yield results but not to the desired level.

ILO-UNICEF Joint Report on protection for children

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF have jointly released the “More than a billion reasons: The urgent need to build universal social protection for children” report. It is the second joint report on social protection for children.

Rajasthan become first State to have Right to Health

Rajasthan has become the first Indian State to enact a Right to Health Act. The Act is consistent with the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution, which has been interpreted by the Supreme Court as the right to live with dignity. So far, India already guarantees its citizens the right to food, education, employment, and information, but no right to health.

Government of India’s New India Literacy Programme (NILP)

The (FLNAT) under ‘Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram’ (New India Literacy Programme) was held in the country to assess the basic Reading, Writing and Numeracy skills of the neo-literates.

New India Literacy Programme: It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme approved for implementation during FYs 2022-27. The scheme is in alignment with the recommendations of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The scheme targets all non-literates of age 15 years and above in the country, with more focus on females and educationally backward states. It has 5 components: (i) FLN; (ii) Critical Life Skills; (iii) Basic Education; (iv) Vocational Skills and (v) Continuing Education

UNICEF Report on Nutrition in Adolescent Girls and Women

UNICEF has released a report titled – “Undernourished and Overlooked: A Global Nutrition Crisis in Adolescent Girls and Women”. The Report examines nutritional status of adolescent girls and women of reproductive age (15-49 years), and barriers they face in accessing nutritious diets, utilizing essential nutrition services etc.

World Bank releases Women, Business and the Law 2023 Report

World Bank has released a report titled – Women, Business and the Law 2023. It is the 9th in a series of annual reports that analyze laws and regulations affecting women’s economic opportunity in 190 economies. It has 8 indicators – Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension.

India scored above the regional average in the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2023 report. For India, report used data on laws and regulations in Mumbai, India's main business city. India received a perfect score for laws related to freedom of movement, women's work decisions, and marriage constraints.

MoSPI releases Women and Men in India 2022

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released the 24th issue of publication titled “Women and Men in India 2022”. It is a comprehensive document that provides data on a wide range of topics such as education, health, employment, and political participation, among others. It presents data disaggregated by gender, urban-rural divide, and geographical region.

International Women’s Day – 8th March

One World Tuberculosis Summit held in Varanasi, UP

The Prime Minister of India has addressed the One World TB Summit held in Varanasi on the occasion of World TB Day (*March 24*). It was organized by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW) and the Stop TB Partnership, under India's vision of 'One Earth, One Health'.

"Leading the Way India TB Report 2023" by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was also released during the event. India contributes the highest number of TB cases in the world and is infamously referred as the "TB Capital of World".

The theme of World TB Day was *'Yes! We can end TB!'*

Global Conference on Millets

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Ministry of Commerce and Industry has organized the Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference.

Based on India's proposal, the year 2023 has been declared the International Year of Millets (IYM) by the United Nations General Assembly. In order to make the IYM 2023 a 'people's movement' and position India as the 'global hub for millets', all stakeholders are being engaged to spread awareness about the benefits of millets (Shree Anna) for the 3Cs: (i) Cultivator, (ii) Consumer and (iii) Climate.

United Nations' Least Developed Countries

Bhutan will become the 7th nation to graduate from the United Nations (UN) list of Least Developed Countries (LDC).

A '*Least Developed Country*' is defined as "a country that exhibits the lowest indicators of socioeconomic development, with low levels of income, human capital and economic diversification, high levels of economic vulnerability, and a population that is disproportionately reliant on agriculture, natural resources, and primary commodities."

Same Paternal leave for Male and Female – Spain

An article has noted that on 1st January 2021, Spain became the first country in the world to give mothers and fathers the same parental leave: 16 weeks, non-transferable and fully paid. 2 years after the implementation of a measure that many female experts consider key to advancing equality, official data and studies show that most men are taking their paternity leave, which could boost shared responsibility for childcare.

Nagaland gets its first women MLAs

For the first time ever, people of Nagaland have elected 2 women candidates in the Assembly Elections. They are – Hekani Jakhalu and Sahoutuonuo Kruse.

World's first 200-meter-long Bamboo Crash Barrier "Bahu Balli"

The world's first 200-meter-long Bamboo Crash Barrier, named "Bahu Balli", has been installed on the Vani-Warora Highway in Maharashtra, India. The bamboo species used is *Bambusa Balcoa*, which has been treated with creosote oil and coated with recycled High-Density Poly Ethylene (HDPE).

"Captive Employment" under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

The Ministry of Rural Development has launched a new initiative called "Captive Employment" under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY) program. Captive employers will train Rural Poor Youth and provide employment to trained youth in their company or subsidiary.

A captive employer is any employer or Industry that provides employment to candidates in their own organization or one of its subsidiaries and has suitable in-house training facilities.

10. Economy

RBI releases Monetary Policy Committee Schedule for FY 2024

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that its rate-setting panel, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), will meet 6 times in the next Financial Year (FY24). The first meeting of the MPC is scheduled to take place from April, followed by meetings in June, August, October, December, and February 2024.

What are TOP Crops?

The kharif onion crop prices have seen sharp decline due to surplus production. Tomatoes, Onions and Potatoes, popularly known as the TOP vegetables, are the 3 largest cultivated, produced and consumed vegetables in India. India is the second-largest producer of all the 3 vegetables in the world after China.

RBI grants IFC status to IREDA

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted Infrastructure Finance Company (IFC) status to Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA).

Infrastructure Finance Company (IFC) is a non-deposit accepting loan company that has a minimum of 75% of total assets of company deployed as infrastructure loans. Exposure to sub-sectors like Transport, Energy, Water and Sanitation, Communication, Social and commercial etc is considered as Infrastructure loan. Also, IFC should have a minimum net worth of Rs 300 crores and the minimum credit rating of the company should be at 'A' or equivalent of CRISIL, FITCH, CARE etc.

Medical Tourism in India

With an aim to improve medical tourism in the country, the Ministry of Tourism has formulated a National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism in 2022. The strategy has identified following key pillars for the development of medical value travel in the country:

- Develop a brand for India as a wellness destination.
- Strengthen the ecosystem for medical and wellness tourism.
- Enable digitalization by setting up Online Medical Value Travel (MVT) Portal.
- Enhancement of accessibility for Medical Value Travel.
- Promoting Wellness Tourism.
- Governance and Institutional Framework.

Also, India has been ranked 10th in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-2021 out of 46 destinations in the world by the Medical Tourism Association.

What is Green Shoe Option?

The Ministry of Finance has decided to exercise the Green Shoe Option as offer-for-sale of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd has received a good response.

Also called an over-allotment option, 'green shoe option' is an option that is available to underwriters to sell additional shares during an Initial Public Offering (IPO). Underwriters are allowed to sell 15% more shares than the number of shares they originally agreed to sell, but the option must be exercised within 30 days of offering. An IPO is selling of securities to the public in the primary market.

MoHUA's first of its kind initiative – City Finance Rankings 2022

The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has invited Urban Local Bodies to participate in its first of its kind initiative – City Finance Rankings 2022. The Ranking aims to provide critical insights to policy makers into the state of finances of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). ULBs will be evaluated across three key municipal finance assessment parameters: Resource Mobilization, Expenditure Performance and Fiscal Governance.

Smart Power Transmission System

Ministry of Power has accepted the task force recommendations of modernizing the Indian Power transmission systems. The taskforce was setup in 2021 by the Ministry of Power under the chairmanship of CMD, PowerGrid, to identify and suggest ways to address the challenges in the transmission sector and propose modernization measures. This will pave the way for real-time monitoring, automated grid operation, and increased renewables integration into the power mix.

Govt. releases 'Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2022'

Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying has unveiled the Department's annual publication, the 'Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2022'. The publication gives an overview of Animal Husbandry sector briefly in terms of important livestock statistics on livestock population, livestock production and other information like animal diseases, infrastructure etc. It is the primary source of data on production estimates of four Major Livestock Products (MLPs) like Milk, Egg, Meat and Wool for the year 2021-22 and other technical aspects of Integrated Sample Survey (ISS).

India's Sugar Industry

It was reported that India has gone from being a marginal sugar exporter 5 years ago to No. 2 in the world, behind only Brazil. Also, India is the world's largest producer and consumer of sugar.

The sugar industry is the second largest agro-based industry in India after cotton. Sugar industry is broadly distributed over two major areas of production- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and Punjab in the north and Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the south. South India has a tropical climate which is suitable for higher sucrose content giving a higher yield per unit area as compared to North India.

Geographical Conditions for the Growth of Sugar:

- Temperature: *Between 21-27°C with hot and humid climate.*
- Rainfall: *Around 75-100 cm.*
- Soil Type: *Deep rich loamy soil.*

Importers of Indian Raw Sugar: *Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Saudi Arabia.*

Raw Brown Sugar: Raw sugar is what mills produce after the first crystallization of juice is obtained from the crushing of cane. This sugar is rough and brownish in colour. Most of the world's sugar trade is in 'raws' and they can be transported in bulk vessels and require no bagging or containerization.

Refined White Sugar: Raw sugar after being processed in refineries for the removal of impurities and de-colorization.

IEA's Methane Global Tracker Report

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has released the annual Methane Global Tracker report in 2023. It stated that fossil fuel companies released 120 million metric tonnes of methane into the atmosphere in 2022.

SIPRI publishes a new report on global arms transfer

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has published a new report on new data on global arms transfers. According to it, USA, was world's topmost military exporter in past 5 years, followed by Russia and France. Also, India's share of global arms imports was highest in past 5 years, followed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Australia.

SIPRI is a Sweden-based independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

Right to Repair

The Central Government has scaled up its right-to-repair initiative to cover four sectors - consumer durables, electronic devices, automobiles and farm equipment. The right to repair refers to government measures that forbid manufacturers to impose barriers that deny consumers the ability to repair consumer products. The framework aims to ease access to overhauling services not just by original manufacturers but also by reliable third-party technicians to lower costs and lengthen the shelf life of devices, equipment and home appliances. Earlier the Central Government set up a Committee headed by Nidhi Khare to create the framework for the same in the country.

World Consumer Rights Day: 15th March

SWAMIH Investment Fund

The Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) Investment Fund I is a social impact fund specifically formed for completing stressed and stalled residential projects.

The Fund is sponsored by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and is managed by SBICAP Ventures Ltd., a State Bank Group company. The fund considers first-time developers, established developers with troubled projects, developers with a poor track record of stalled projects, customer complaints and NPA accounts, and even projects where there are litigation issues. It is considered the lender of last resort for distressed projects.

Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID) number

Bureau of India Standards (BIS) has prohibited the sale of hallmarked gold jewellery or gold artefacts without a 6-digit alphanumeric Hallmark Unique Identification Number (HUID) after 31st March 2023.

The hallmarking scheme was started by BIS in the year 2000.

Before implementation of 6-digit Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID) number, hallmarking of Gold jewelry was consisted of 4 logos viz, BIS logo, purity of the article as well as logo of jeweller and Assaying and Hallmarking Centre. 6-digit HUID was introduced from 01 July 2021 and all articles hallmarked post 01 July 2021 have to be hallmarked with HUID only. After introduction of HUID, hallmark consisted of 3 marks viz, BIS logo, purity of the article and six-digit alphanumeric HUID. Each hallmarked article has unique HUID number which is traceable.

SEBI can now appoint 3 Public Interest Directors on boards of Stock Exchanges

As per the latest amendment to the related governance, SEBI will exercise more power in board-related appointments of stock exchanges and Clearing Corporations (CCs). It can now appoint 3 Public Interest Directors (PIDs) on the board of stock and commodity exchanges and CCs. Also, shareholder approval is not needed for PIDs.

Public Interest Directors are responsible for safeguarding the public interest and have a tenure of 3 years. PIDs will have regular oversight over issues such as governance standards and technology.

Clearing houses (or CCs): A clearinghouse is a financial institution formed to facilitate the exchange of payments, securities, or derivatives transactions.

Finance Ministry bars ministries & departments from issuing ‘Letters of Comfort’

The Ministry of Finance has said ministries and departments can no longer issue a 'Letter of Comfort' to any entity, a measure that is aimed at bringing further transparency in fiscal matters and budgeting.

A ‘*Letter of Comfort*’ is a support document issued to a borrower that adds some strength to the transaction when giving loans. Letter of comforts are usually issued by a third party or a stakeholder in the transaction. For instance, a holding company can give a letter of comfort on behalf of its subsidiary, or a government can issue a letter of comfort for public sector enterprises. The letter of comfort can also be issued by banks, NBFCs and auditors.

Government launches MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme

The Government of India has launched the MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme. The Scheme is an extensive drive to create awareness amongst MSMEs about LEAN Manufacturing practices and motivate and incentivize them to attain LEAN levels while also encouraging them to become MSME Champions.

Under the scheme, MSMEs will implement LEAN manufacturing tools like 5S, Kaizen, KANBAN, Visual workplace, Poka Yoka etc under the trained and competent LEAN Consultants to attain LEAN levels like Basic, Intermediate and Advanced.

11. Important Days

Universal Acceptance Day, March 28

Universal Acceptance Day is celebrated every year on 28th March. India was the flag bearer this year to promote and promulgate Universal Acceptance (UA) for digital inclusion. Being celebrated globally, this inaugural UA Day was aimed at driving efforts for inclusive and multilingual internet.

World Wildlife Day, March 3

The World Wildlife Day was celebrated around the world on 3rd March. The day aims to celebrate the beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora and raises awareness for conservation of wildlife.

Theme 2023: “*Partnerships for wildlife conservation*”

National Safety Day, March 4

National Safety Day was observed on 4th March. The Day is celebrated throughout the country to reiterate the importance of safety and create awareness throughout the country.

Theme 2023: “*Our Aim – Zero Harm*”

The National Safety Council (NSC) was set up by the Ministry of Labour in 1966 to generate, develop and sustain a voluntary movement on Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) at the national level. It is an apex non-profit making, autonomous body, registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Jan Aushadhi Diwas, March 7

Jan Aushadhi Diwas is being celebrated on 7th March 2023 across India to enhance awareness about the scheme and promote generic medicines.

Theme 2023: *“Jan Aushadhi – Sasti bhi Acchi bhi”*

International Women's Day, March 8

International Women's Day is celebrated every year on March 8 to raise awareness about gender equality and create a better society free of gender bias. The day celebrates women and addresses issues such as women's equal rights, violence and abuse against women, and reproductive rights.

Theme 2023: *“Innovation and technology for gender equality”*

World Consumers Day, March 15

15 March is observed as World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD). It is an annual occasion for celebration and solidarity within the international consumer movement. It marks the date in 1962, on which, the then President of USA, John F Kennedy, first outlined the definition of ‘Consumer Rights’.

Theme 2023: *“Empowering Consumers Through Clean Energy Transitions.”*

Also, Consumer Rights Day in India is observed on December 24th. On this day, the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, had received the assent of the President.

National Vaccination Day, March 16

National Vaccination Day is observed every year on 16th March. The Day is celebrated throughout India to create awareness regarding importance of getting timely vaccinations. This day was first observed in 1995 and the first dose of Oral Polio Vaccine was given in India.

International Day of Happiness, March 20

The “International Day of Happiness” was celebrated worldwide on 20th March. The day creates awareness of the importance of happiness in everyone’s life around the world.

Theme 2023: *“Be Mindful. Be Grateful. Be Kind”*

International Day of Happiness was established by the United Nations General Assembly in June 2012, recognizing the relevance of happiness and well-being, as universal goals and aspirations in the lives of human beings around the world and the importance of their recognition in public policy objectives. The resolution was initiated by Bhutan, a country which recognized the value of National Happiness over National Income since the early 1970s and famously adopted the goal of Gross National Happiness over Gross National Product.

World Water Day, March 22

World Water Day was observed globally on 22nd March. The Day is observed to highlight the importance of freshwater.

Theme 2023: *“Accelerating the change to solve the water and sanitation crisis.”*

World Meteorological Day, March 23

World Meteorological Day was observed globally on 23rd March. The focus is on managing climate and water in a more coordinated and sustainable manner because they are inextricably linked.

Theme 2023: *“The future of weather, climate, and water across generations.”*

Shaheed Diwas, March 23

India celebrates “Shaheed Diwas” annually on 23 March to pay tribute to martyrs Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru.

Bhagat Singh (1907-1923) was a young Indian freedom fighter, who played a major role in revolutionizing India’s Independence movement. He was executed at the young age of 23 by the British for 2 of his dramatic violence acts. He was convicted for taking revenge for the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, who went ahead to assassinate John Saunders, a British Police Officer. While in prison, Bhagat Singh gained mass national support, when he initiated a 116-day hunger strike, which is till date, the longest strike in the history of the world. He went on a strike with other inmates to demand equal rights that were given to the European political prisoners. On March 23, 1931, Bhagat Singh, along with Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar, was hanged in Lahore jail and he was just 23 years old at the time of his death. India observes March 23 as Shaheed Diwas or Martyr's Day on these three young martyrs.

12. Culture

Indian New Year Festivals

| Festival Name | Region Celebrated | Significance |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Chaitra Shukladi | Northern regions of India-on the First day during the waxing phase | Marks the beginning of the new year in Vikram Samvat calendar based on the luni-solar system |
| Gudi Pawda and Ugadi | Deccan region including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra on first day of Chaitra month | Festive food prepared with a mix of sweet and bitter; mango leaf decorations called toranalu in Karnataka |
| Cheti Chand | Celebrated by Sindhis in First day of Chaitra month | Commemorates the birth anniversary of Uderolal/Jhulelal |
| Navreh | Celebrated in Kashmir on First day of the Chaitra Navratri | Lashmiri pandita look at a bowl of rice which is considered as a symbol of riches and fertility |
| Sajibu Cheiraoba | Celebrated by Meiteis in Manipur on First day of Manipur lunar month Sgajibu, which falls in the month of April | Joint family feast with traditional cuisines offered to local deities at the entrance gates of the houses |

1,300-year-old stupa found in Odisha’s Jajpur district

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has discovered upon a 1,300-year-old stupa in the middle of a mining site in Odisha’s Jajpur district from where Khondalite stones were supplied for the beautification project around the 12th Century Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri.

Khondalite (named after the Khond tribe of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh) is a foliated metamorphic rock. It is also called Bezwada Gneiss and Kailasa Gneiss. These stones were widely used in ancient temple complexes.

Government will attempt to open corridor to Sharda Peeth in PoK for devotees

Government of India is planning to move forward to open Sharda Peeth on the lines of the Kartarpur corridor. Sharada Peeth is a ruined Hindu temple and ancient centre of learning located in the Neelum Valley of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. It is situated in the valley of Mount Harmukh, believed by Kashmiri Pandits to be the abode of Shiva.

Vaikom Satyagraha

As the year 2024 marks the centenary of the Vaikom Satyagraha, Kerala and Tamil Nadu Government have jointly inaugurated the centenary celebrations.

On March 30, 1924, in the temple town of Vaikom in the princely state of Travancore, a non-violent agitation started, marking the beginning of “temple entry movements” across the country. At the time, caste discrimination and untouchability were rife across India, with some of the most rigid and dehumanising norms documented in Travancore. Lower castes like the Ezhavas and Pulayas were considered polluting and various rules were in place to distance them from upper castes.

‘Periyar’ E.V. Ramaswamy was born in 1879, he was a rationalist Dravidian social reformer of the 20th century. He was at the forefront of Vaikom Satyagraha and later founded the Self-Respect Movement in 1925. He founded Dravidar Kazhagam (earlier known as the Justice Party).

Bumchu Festival

Bumcha Festival is held annually at Tashiding Monastery in West Sikkim on the 15th day of the first month of the Lunar calendar. The festival is centered around the opening of a vessel containing holy water, which is believed to be an indicator of the fortunes of the coming year. Bumchu means “pot of sacred water” in Tibetan.

Women Role in Freedom Struggle

On the occasion of the 133rd Foundation Day of the National Archives of India, an exhibition has highlighted the contributions of women in nation-building and freedom struggle from 1857 to 1950.

Some examples of the contributions made by women in nation-building and the freedom struggle from 1857 to 1950:

1. *Rani Laxmibai*: Rani Lakshmi Bai is famously known for her valiant stand against the British in the Siege of Jhansi.
2. *Begum Hazrat Mahal*: Begum Hazrat Mahal was a key figure in the Lucknow uprising and led a force of rebels against the British in the battle of Chinhat.
3. *Sarojini Naidu*: Sarojini Naidu was a prominent Indian nationalist and was the first Indian woman to be president of the Indian National Congress. Participated in the Indian National Movement and was a key figure in the Non-Cooperation Movement. Her work as a poet earned her the title of ‘Nightingale of India’ from Mahatma Gandhi.
4. *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay*: She was a social reformer. She played an important role in promoting Indian handicrafts and empowering women.
5. *Annie Besant*: Annie Besant was an Irish-born British writer, activist, and Theosophist who supported Indian self-rule. Advocated for Indian self-rule (Home Rule Movement) and supported the Indian National Congress. Her contributions include being one of the founders of the Banaras Hindu University.

6. *Begum Rokeya*: She was a writer, educator, and social activist who worked for women's education and advocated for women's rights. She was the founder of the first school for Muslim girls in British India. Worked for women's education and was a pioneer of women's rights in India.

7. *Madam Bhikaji Cama*: She was involved in the home-rule movement. She was instrumental in demanding equal rights for all Indians, regardless of religion or gender. She unfurled the Indian Tricolor Flag (this was the first time an Indian flag was flown outside of India) at Stuttgart (Germany) in 1907. She is also known as the 'Mother of Indian Revolution'.

8. *Aruna Asif Ali*: She was a political leader who participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942. She hoisted the Indian National flag at the Gowalia Tank maidan, Bombay during the Quit India Movement in 1942. She is known as the 'Grand Old Lady of Indian Independence' for her role in the freedom struggle.

13. Books and Authors

Book released: 'India's Vaccine Growth Story- From Cowpox to Vaccine Maitri'

'India's Vaccine Growth Story- From Cowpox to Vaccine Maitri' is written by Additional Secretary of Finance Ministry Sajjan Singh Yadav. The book elaborates on India's impressive achievement in developing, producing and distributing COVID-19 vaccines.

Book released: India's Struggle for Independence – Gandhian Era

India's Struggle for Independence – Gandhian Era is written by a former Judge of Madras High Court, P. Jyothimani, and G. Balan, former professor of history. The book covers aspects such as the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi as of the date.

Book released: As Good as My Word

As Good as My Word is written by KM Chandrasekhar. He served as the Cabinet Secretary from 2007 to 2011. The book provides knowledge of Indian politics and bureaucracy during the UPA era. In his book, Chandrasekhar gives a thorough overview of the UPA administration during one of its most difficult periods and talks about his own role in navigating India through many crises.

Book released: Mundaka Upanishad – The Gateway to Eternity

Mundaka Upanishad: The Gateway to Eternity is written by a former Member of Parliament, Dr. Karan Singh. These documents, which include the primary text as well as the Bhasya, Bhasya-tippnam, and Dipika-comments by Adi Shankaracharya and Pandita Naraina, show that this important Upanisad was written down for centuries in both the old and new Kashmiri types of Devanagari script.

Book released: Snakes In the Ganga: Breaking India 2.0

Snakes In the Ganga: Breaking India 2.0 is written by Rajiv Malhotra and Vijaya Viswanathan. This book sheds light on the various threats to India's national security from the United States, which is not typically perceived as a major risk by the average Indian.

Book released: A Matter of the Heart: Education in India

A Matter of the Heart: Education in India is written by Anurag Behar. He is the CEO of Azim Premji Foundation and the founding Vice-Chancellor of Azim Premji University.