



Drishiti IAS Presents...



PT **SPRINT** 2024

SOCIAL ISSUES

(March 2023 – March 2024)



Drishiti IAS, 641, Mukherjee Nagar,
Opp. Signature View Apartment,
New Delhi

Drishiti IAS, 21
Pusa Road, Karol Bagh
New Delhi - 05

Drishiti IAS, Tashkent Marg,
Civil Lines, Prayagraj,
Uttar Pradesh

Drishiti IAS, Tonk Road,
Vasundhra Colony,
Jaipur, Rajasthan

e-mail: englishsupport@groupdrishiti.com, Website: www.drishitias.com
Contact: Inquiry (English): 8010440440, Inquiry (Hindi): 8750187501

Contents

● Human Development Report 2023-24	1
● What are the Key Highlights of the Report?.....	1
● Hepatitis B: A Public Health Concern In India.....	3
● Sickle Cell Disease.....	4
● Health Effects of Covid-19 Related Immunisation Disruptions	6
● Fair Share for Health and Care Report	7
● Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour	8
● India’s Progress in Gender Equality.....	8
● SBI’s Study on Empowering Women Through SHGs.....	9
● Levels and Trends in Child Mortality	10
● Challenges Faced by the Gig Workers	11
● Snakebite Envenoming	13
● Abortion.....	14
● Enhancing Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities	15
● World Poverty Clock	16
● Women, Business and the Law 2024.....	18
● Growing Obesity in India	18
● Rare Disease Day 2024	19
● Marriage Can’t be Grounds to Sack Women from the Military.....	20
● Lymphatic Filariasis.....	21
● Building An Inclusive Society Through SMILE	23
● Global Burden of Cancer: WHO	24
● Amendment to Surrogacy Rules	25
● Kala Azar	27
● Guinea Worm Disease	28
● High-Risk Pregnancies in India.....	29
● Rights of Forest Dwellers and ThanthaiPeriyar Sanctuary	30
● e Drive to Fight Cervical Cancer.....	32
● Global Risks Report 2024: WEF	33
● Rise of Child Marriages in West Bengal	34
● Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	35
● Sickle Cell Disease.....	36
● Prioritizing the Poor, Youth, Women, and Farmers.....	37
● Huntington’s Disease.....	39
● Delhi High Court Reverses Abortion Approval Order	39
● Idate Commission Report	40
● Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality.....	42
● Multiple Sclerosis	42
● Cabo Verde Declared A Malaria-Free Country	44
● Concerns Related to Anganwadi Workers.....	45

● Status of Adivasi Livelihoods (SAL) Report, 2022	46
● Human Trafficking	48
● Mental Health Initiatives in India	50
● Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023: WHO	50
● Bihar Reservation Law and Breaching 50% Limit.....	52
● Universal Declaration of Human Rights.....	53
● NCRB's Crime in India 2022 Report	54
● 2023 World Malaria Report.....	56
● World AIDS Day 2023	57
● ECI Promotes Respectful Dialogue on Disabilities in Politics	58
● MGNREGS Scheme	59
● India Skills Report 2024	60
● Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease.....	61
● Impact of Covid Vaccination on Mental Health.....	62
● e-Cigarettes	63
● Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2023: UNODC	65
● Pompe Disease	66
● Global TB Report 2023.....	67
● Surrogacy Law	69
● Walking Pneumonia.....	70
● Gender-Related Killings of Women and Girls	70
● Key Initiatives for Tribal Groups	72
● Granting Habitat Rights and Implications.....	73
● Global Hunger Index 2023	74
● Scheduled Areas in India	76
● World Mental Health Day.....	78
● Caste-Census in Bihar	78
● Recognising the Heterogeneity of Northeast India	81
● Avian Influenza	83
● Dengue	84
● Palliative Care	85
● Disabled Population and Disaster Preparedness.....	86
● Same Sex Marriage in India	88
● Balancing Reproductive Autonomy and Unborn Child's Rights.....	89
● India Ageing Report 2023	90
● State of Elementary Education in Rural India 2023	92
● Organ Donation in India	93
● POCSO Act	94
● World Breastfeeding Week 2023.....	96
● UWW Suspends of Wrestling Federation of India	96
● SC Allows Termination of Pregnancy for Rape Survivor	97
● Nutrition's Role in Tuberculosis Prevention	98
● Eastern Equine Encephalitis	100
● Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis	101
● Concerns Over Consuming Ultra-Processed Food.....	101

● Dark Patterns	103
● Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban	104
● NHRC and UN Human Rights Council	105
● Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023	106
● World Zoonosis Day.....	107
● Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana	108
● Children and Domestic Labour	109
● World Hepatitis Day	110
● Empowering India’s Senior Citizens	111
● Quick-Fix Water Management	113
● World Fragile X Day	114
● Diabetes Mellitus and Tuberculosis	115
● Adoption in India	116
● Global Gender Gap Report 2023: WEF	117
● One Nation One Anganwadi Program	119
● Tobacco Cultivation and Food Insecurity	119
● National Commission for Scheduled Castes	121
● UNDP’s 2023 Gender Social Norms Index	122
● Manual Scavenging in India	123
● Medicines Patent Pool Agreement for Leukaemia.....	124
● Adoption in India	124
● World Menstrual Hygiene Day	125
● World Food India 2023	126
● Self Help Group Kudumbashree	127
● Hysterectomy	128
● Kurmis’ Push for ST Status.....	129
● PRET & The Big Catch-Up Initiatives	130
● Hakki Pikki Tribal Community.....	132
● State of World Population Report: UNFPA	132
● International Women’s Day: Women in Armed Forces.....	133
● Doha Political Declaration on LDCs.....	135
● Women and Men in India 2022.....	136
● Reservation for Women in Politics	137
● World Athletics Bans Transgender Women	138
● NAMASTE Scheme.....	138
● Trends in Maternal Mortality: UN	139
● Genetic Information and Privacy.....	140
● Impact of Covid-19 on Human Capital.....	140
● Mental Healthcare Act, 2017	141
● UN World Social Report 2023.....	142
● Prison Reforms	143
● World Leprosy Day 2023	144
● Measles and Rubella	146
● Lineman Diwas	147

Human Development Report 2023-24

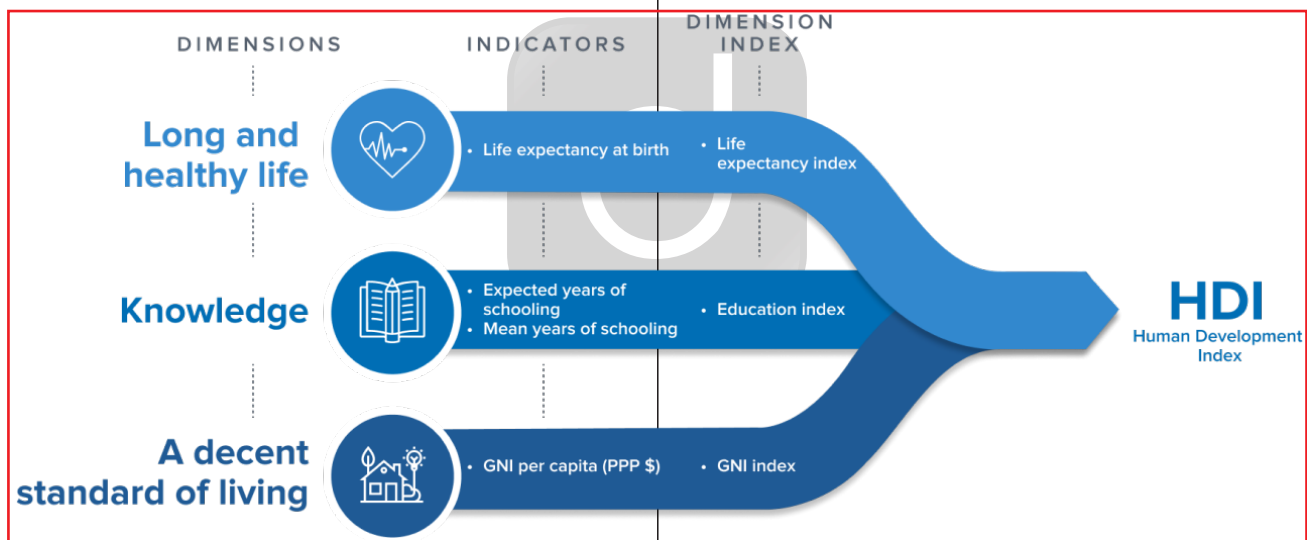
Why in News?

According to the 2023-24 **Human Development Report (HDR)**, titled *'Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarised World,'* India ranks 134 on the global Human Development Index (HDI). Switzerland has been ranked number one.

- The report has been released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.

What is the Human Development Report?

- **About:**



What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Performer:**
 - **Top Three Countries (Scores):** Switzerland (0.967), Norway (0.966) and Iceland (0.959).
 - **Bottom Three Countries:** Somalia (0.380), South Sudan (0.381), Central African Republic (0.387).
 - **Bigger Economies:** USA (0.927), UK (0.889), Japan (0.878), Russia (0.821).
 - **Countries Not Ranked in Index:** The **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** (North Korea) and **Monaco**.

- **Human Development Reports (HDRs)** have been released since 1990 and have explored different themes through the human development approach.
- The reports are produced by the Human Development Report Office for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

➤ Human Development Index:

- HDI is a composite index that measures average achievement in human development taking into account three indicators:
 - **Life expectancy at birth (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3),**
 - **Expected years of schooling (SDG 4.3),**
 - **Mean years of schooling (SDG 4.4),**
 - **Gross national income (GNI) (SDG 8.5).**

➤ Unprecedented Levels of Growth Disparity:

- The rich countries experienced unprecedented development. But half of the world's poorest nations continued to **languish below their pre-Covid-19 crisis levels.**
 - The two-decade trend of **steadily reducing inequalities between wealthy and poor nations** is now in reverse.
- While HDI is projected to reach record highs in 2023 after declines in 2020 and 2021, there is a **stark contrast in development levels between rich and poor nations.**

➤ Democracy Paradox:

Note:

- There is an emerging “democracy paradox”, with most of those surveyed expressing **support for democracy but also endorsing leaders who may undermine democratic principles.**
- This paradox, coupled with a **sense of powerlessness and a lack of control over government decisions**, has fuelled political polarisation and inward-looking policy approaches.

➤ Global Inequalities and Widening Human Development Gap:

- Global inequalities have been **compounded by substantial economic concentration** – almost 40% of global trade in goods is concentrated in **three or fewer countries.**
- In 2021, the market capitalisation of each of the three largest tech companies in the world surpassed the **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** of more than 90% of countries that year, the report said.

➤ Indian Overview:

- **Performance at Various Indicators:** India’s **average life expectancy** reached 67.7 years in 2022, up from 62.7 years the previous year.
 - India’s **Gross National Income (GNI)** per capita has surged to USD 6951, marking a 6.3% increase over the span of 12 months.
 - There is a rise in **expected years of schooling, reaching 12.6 per individual.**
- **HDI Score:** India attained an HDI score of 0.644 in 2022, positioning it at **134 out of 193 countries** in the UN’s 2023-24 report.

- This categorises India under ‘**medium human development.**’

- With India’s HDI in 1990 standing at **0.434**, the **2022 score reflects a positive change of 48.4%.**

- **Notable Achievements:** There is a 9.1-year increase in life expectancy at birth, a rise of 4.6 years in expected years of schooling, and an increase of **3.8 years in mean years of schooling.**

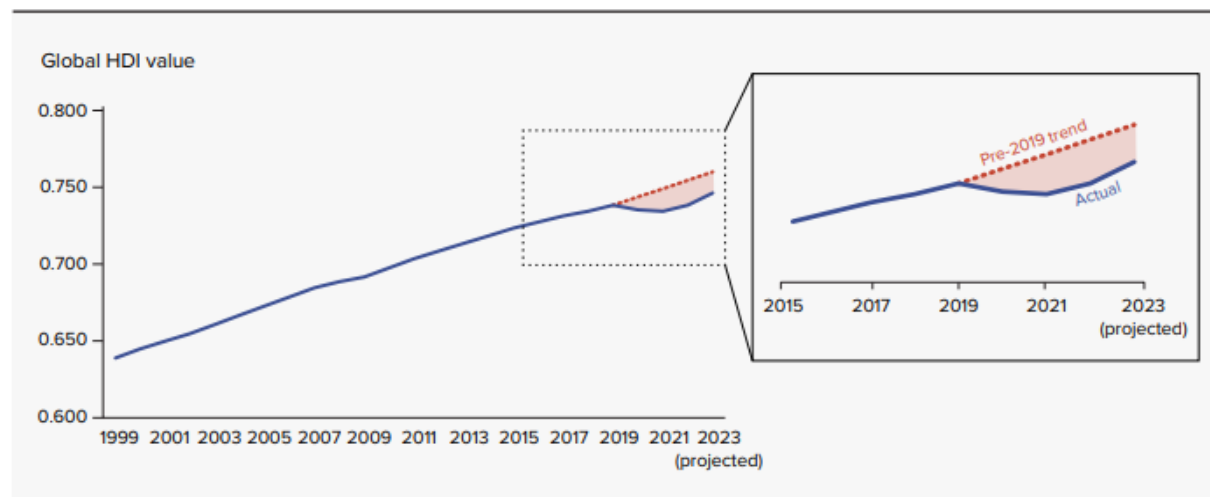
- India’s strides in reducing gender inequality, highlighted a **Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.437**, surpassing the global average.

- On the **GII 2022** list, which evaluates countries based on reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation, **India ranks 108 out of 166 nations in 2022.**

➤ Performance of India’s Neighbour:

- **Sri Lanka** has been ranked much **ahead at 78**, while **China is ranked 75**, both categorised under the **High Human Development category.**
- India also ranks below Bhutan which stands at **125 and Bangladesh**, which is in the 129th position. India, Bhutan and Bangladesh are all in the Medium Human Development category.
- **Nepal (146) and Pakistan (164) have been ranked lower than India.**

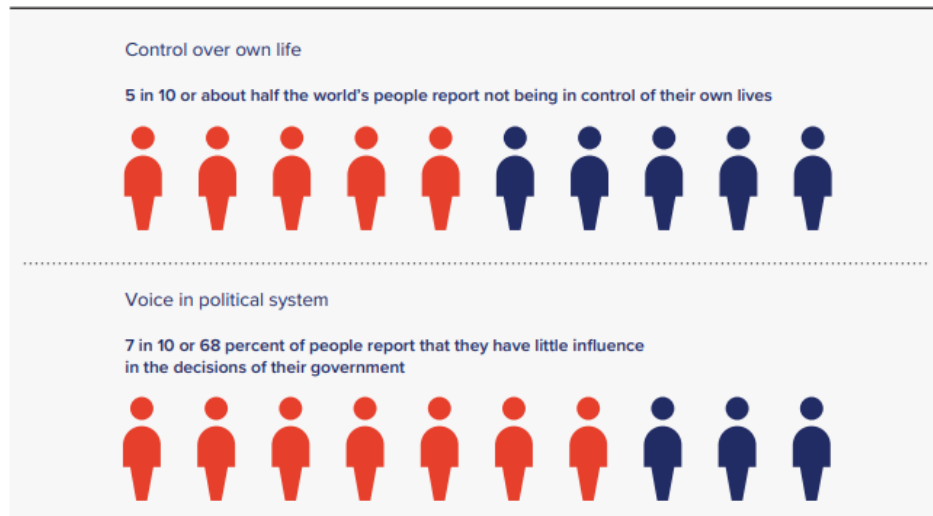
A permanent shift in the Human Development Index (HDI) trajectory?



Note: The global HDI value for 2023 is a projection. The pre-2019 trend is based on the evolution of the global HDI value in the previous 20 years.

Note:

Figure S.7 Agency gaps in collective action are higher than those in control over one's own life



Note: Agency is the ability of people to act as agents who can do effective things based on their commitments (Sen 2013). It is proxied by two indicators: the share of the population that reported feeling in control over their lives (measured on a scale of 1–10, where 1–3 indicates an acute agency gap, 4–7 indicates a moderate agency gap and 8–10 indicates no agency gap) and the share of the population that reported feeling that their voice is heard in the political system (those who responded “A great deal” or “A lot”). Data are computed using microdata and equal weights across countries. **Source:** Human Development Report Office based on data from wave 7 (2017–2022) of the World Values Survey (Inglehart and others 2022).

Hepatitis B: A Public Health Concern In India

Why in News?

A recent study by Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, indicates that public awareness and knowledge regarding Hepatitis B, a potentially fatal disease leading to liver cirrhosis and cancer, is insufficient in India.

What is Hepatitis?

➤ **About:**

- **Hepatitis** is the **inflammation** of the **liver**, characterised by irritation or swelling of the liver cells due to various causes.
- Liver inflammation can manifest as either acute, characterised by symptoms like **jaundice**, fever, and vomiting, or chronic, lasting over six months with no apparent symptoms.

What is hepatitis?

The A, B, C, D and E of hepatitis	What vaccines are available for which types of hepatitis?	Estimated cases world-wide (per year)	How does the virus spread?
<p>There are five main hepatitis viruses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hepatitis A ✓ Hepatitis B ✗ Hepatitis C ✓ Hepatitis D ✓ Hepatitis E 	<p>Hepatitis B and C: 400 million cases</p> <hr/> <p>Gradual death: An estimated 1.4 million people die worldwide from hepatitis every year</p> <hr/> <p>Treatment: 90% of hepatitis C patients can be healed within three to six months</p>	<p>Hepatitis A and E: Lack of food hygiene, contaminated water and sub-standard sanitary facilities</p> <p>Hepatitis B, C and D: Blood, sperm and other bodily fluids</p>

Source: WHO © DW

Note:

➤ Symptoms:

- Some individuals infected with hepatitis **may not exhibit symptoms**, but common ones include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-coloured bowel movements, joint pain, and jaundice.

➤ Causes:

- Hepatitis is typically caused by hepatotropic viruses, including A, B, C, D, and E, although other viruses like the **varicella virus** can also lead to the disease.
 - **SARS-CoV-2**, the virus causing **Covid-19** may injure the liver too.
- Additional causes encompass **drug and alcohol misuse**, liver fat accumulation (**fatty liver hepatitis**), or an autoimmune response where the body produces antibodies targeting the liver (autoimmune hepatitis).

➤ Types of Hepatitis:

- Hepatitis A virus (HAV):
 - Hepatitis A is a liver inflammation that ranges from mild to severe, transmitted through contaminated food or water, direct contact with an infected person, and **can be prevented** with a vaccine, with most people recovering fully and gaining lifelong immunity.
- **Hepatitis B virus (HBV):**
 - Hepatitis B is a **viral infection** that can cause acute or chronic liver disease, often transmitted from mother to child, through early childhood contact, or via sex or unsafe injections, but **can be prevented** by vaccines.
 - Hepatitis B vaccines are **highly efficacious** in preventing HBV infection when administered **before exposure** to HBV.
- **Hepatitis C virus (HCV):**
 - Hepatitis C is a **bloodborne virus** causing both acute and chronic hepatitis, with severity ranging from mild to serious, including liver cirrhosis and cancer, primarily transmitted through unsafe health care, blood transfusions, injection drug use, and sexual practices.
 - The cure rates exceeds 95% using Direct-acting antiviral medicines (DAAs), yet access to diagnosis and treatment is limited, and **no effective vaccine exists**.

○ Hepatitis D virus (HDV):

- Hepatitis D, a virus dependent on hepatitis B virus (HBV) for replication, affects approximately 5% of individuals with chronic HBV infection worldwide, with co-infection or super-infection more prevalent among indigenous populations, dialysis patients, and drug users, posing a severe risk to liver health including the potential for cancer or fatality.
- Its **prevention is possible** through hepatitis B immunization, treatment efficacy remains limited.

○ Hepatitis E virus (HEV):

- Hepatitis E, caused by **HEV infection**, is globally prevalent, particularly in **East and South Asia**, transmitted through contaminated water, with a licensed vaccine in China and some other countries and ongoing research for additional vaccines worldwide.

➤ Government Initiatives to Tackle Hepatitis:

- **National Viral Hepatitis Control Program:** The National Viral Hepatitis Control Program aims to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat in the country **by 2030**.
- **India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP):** India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) offers free vaccination against **eleven vaccine-preventable diseases**, including Hepatitis B, **Tuberculosis**, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Pneumonia, Meningitis due to Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib), Measles, Rubella, Japanese Encephalitis (JE), and Rotavirus diarrhoea.

➤ Global Initiatives:

- WHO's global hepatitis strategy
- Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination (CGHE)
- Global Hepatitis Programme

Sickle Cell Disease

Why in News?

Amidst the unavailability of essential drugs to treat **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)** at district healthcare institutions, there is growing concern about the challenges faced by people from marginalised Indigenous Tribal communities in managing the treatment of SCD.

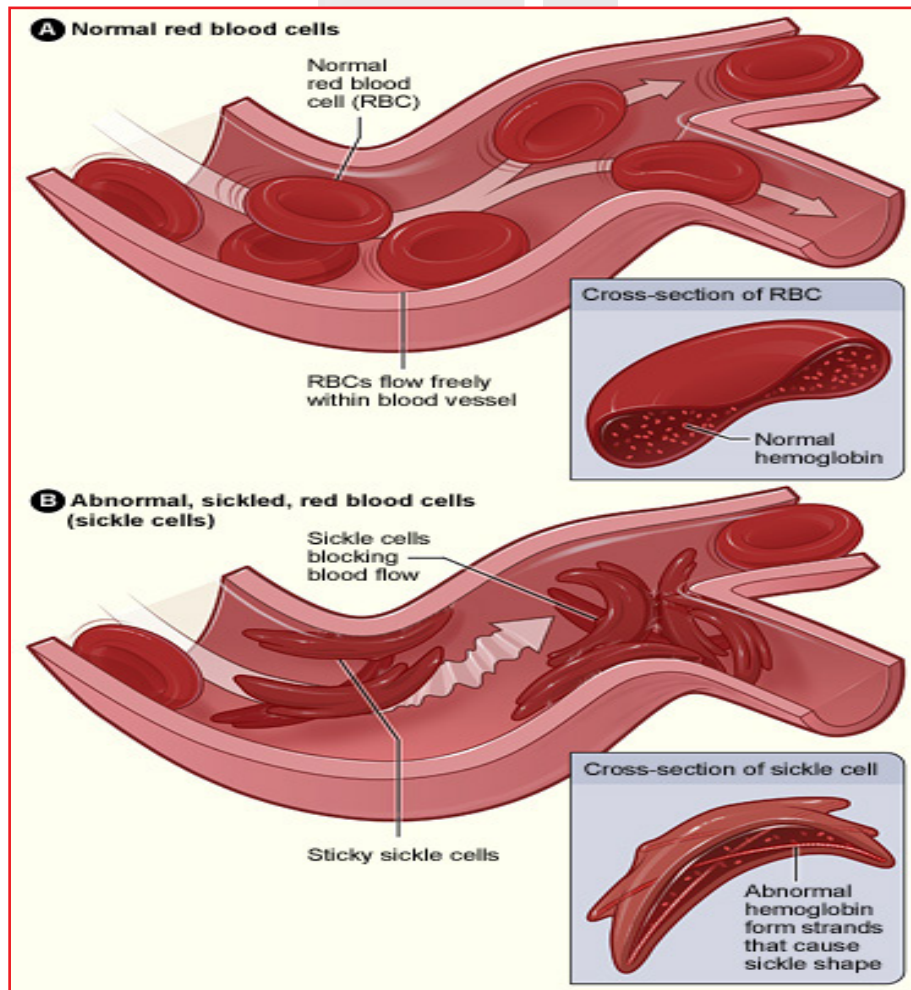
Note:

What is Sickle-Cell Disorder?

➤ About:

- **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)** is an **inherited haemoglobin disorder** characterised by a **genetic mutation that causes red blood cells (RBCs) to assume a sickle or crescent shape** rather than their normal round shape.
- This **abnormality in RBCs results in increased rigidity, impairing their ability to circulate effectively** throughout the body. Consequently, individuals with SCD often experience complications such as **anaemia, organ damage, recurrent and severe pain episodes, and a shortened lifespan**.
- As per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, marginalised tribal populations are most vulnerable to SCD.

- **Symptoms:** Symptoms of sickle cell disease can vary, but some **common symptoms** are-
 - **Chronic anaemia** which leads to fatigue, weakness, and paleness.
 - Painful episodes (also known as **sickle cell crisis**) cause sudden and intense pain in the bones, chest, back, arms, and legs.
 - **Delayed growth and puberty**.
- **Treatment Processes:**
 - **Blood Transfusions:** These can help relieve anaemia and reduce the risk of pain crises.
 - **Hydroxyurea:** This medication can help **reduce the frequency of painful episodes** and prevent some of the disease's long-term complications.
 - **Gene Therapy:** It can also be treated by bone marrow or **stem cell** transplantation by methods like **Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR)**.



Note:

What is India's Current Status of Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)?

- India ranks **third globally** in terms of the **number of SCD births**, following Nigeria and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**.
- Regional studies indicate that an **estimated 15,000 to 25,000 babies** with SCD are born in India annually.
 - Most of **these births occur in tribal communities**, highlighting the geographical and socioeconomic disparities in healthcare access and awareness.

Note:

- Recently, the **US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** approved **two gene therapies** designed for sickle cell disease.
- The approved therapies include **Lyfgenia** and **Casgevy**.
 - Both treatments received clearance for individuals aged 12 years and above.
 - **Casgevy also approved in the U.K.**, is the **first CRISPR-based therapy** to have received regulatory approval.
 - **Lyfgenia** doesn't use CRISPR **but depends on a viral vector to change blood stem cells**.
- **Both treatments entail** collecting a patient's blood stem cells, modifying them, and **administering high-dose chemotherapy to destroy the damaged cells** in the bone marrow.
- The modified cells are then infused into the patient through a hematopoietic stem cell transplant.

Health Effects of Covid-19 Related Immunisation Disruptions

Why in News?

Recently, a new paper has been published in the journal **The Lancet Global Health** titled- **Estimating the Health Effects of Covid-19-Related Immunization Disruptions in 112 Countries During 2020–30: A Modelling Study**, which highlights that **Global immunization declined during the Covid-19 pandemic**, increasing disease burden and outbreak risk.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Global Immunisation Decline:**
 - The Covid-19 pandemic led to a decline in global immunisation coverage, which increased **disease burden and outbreak risks** across various countries.
 - It is estimated that disruptions to **Measles, Rubella, HPV (Human Papillomavirus), Hepatitis B, meningitis A, and yellow fever vaccination** could lead to approximately **49,119 additional deaths during the calendar years 2020–2030**, with measles being the main contributor to this increase in mortality.
 - For the years 2020–2030, disruptions in vaccination coverage across all **14 pathogens could result in a 2.66% reduction** in the long-term effect, translating to a decrease in the number of deaths **averted from 37,378,194 to 36,410,559**.
- **Importance of Catch-Up Vaccines:**
 - The importance of **catch-up vaccines** is emphasised, particularly **for diseases like measles and yellow fever**, which experienced an immediate increase in burden post-pandemic.
 - Catch-up activities were found to be **effective in averting excess deaths**, with the potential to **prevent approximately 79% of excess deaths** related to measles, rubella, HPV, hepatitis B, and yellow fever.
- **Impact on DTP Vaccine Coverage:**
 - The pandemic impacted **coverage for the Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTP) vaccines**, resulting in an additional 6 million children missing out on vaccination in 2021 globally.
- **Resurgence of Measles Cases:**
 - There has been a resurgence of measles cases reported in several countries, including those where measles was previously considered eradicated, such as the **United Kingdom and the United States**.
 - In 2021, nearly 61 million measles vaccine doses were postponed or missed due to Covid-19-related delays in immunisation campaigns in 18 countries.
 - Furthermore, in 2022, there was an increase in **measles cases and deaths globally compared to 2021 levels**, with millions of children missing their vaccine doses, particularly in countries like **Nigeria, Pakistan, and India**.

Note:

What are the Major Initiatives Related to Immunisation?

➤ Global:

- **Immunisation Agenda 2030 (IA2030):** It sets an ambitious, overarching global vision and strategy for vaccines and immunisation for the decade 2021–2030.
 - By the end of the decade, IA2030 aims to:
 - Reduce by 50% the number of children receiving zero vaccine doses
 - Achieve 500 introductions of new or under-utilised vaccines in low- and middle-income countries
 - Achieve 90% coverage for essential childhood vaccines
- **World Immunisation Week:** It is celebrated every year in the last week of April.
- **Big Catch-Up Initiative:** It was launched by the WHO, UNICEF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation along with Immunization Agenda 2030 and many other global and national health partners, a targeted global effort to boost vaccination among children following declines driven by the Covid-19 pandemic.

➤ Indian:

- Universal Immunization Programme (UIP):
 - The program provides free immunization against 12 vaccine-preventable diseases.
 - **Nationally Against 9 Diseases:** Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, severe form of Childhood Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and Meningitis & Pneumonia caused by Haemophilus influenza type B
 - **Sub-nationally Against 3 Diseases:** Rotavirus diarrhoea, Pneumococcal Pneumonia and Japanese Encephalitis
 - Two major milestones of the UIP have been the **eradication of polio** in 2014 and the **elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2015**.
- Mission Indradhanush:
 - **Mission Indradhanush (MI)** was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) in 2014 to **vaccinate all unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children under UIP**.
 - It is being implemented in several phases.

Fair Share for Health and Care Report

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** released a new report titled - **Fair Share for Health and Care report**, addressing the gender gap in global healthcare.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Gender Disparities in Health and Care Workforce:**
 - Women comprise 67% of the paid global health and care workforce. Additionally, they **perform an estimated 76% of all unpaid care activities**.
 - This highlights significant gender **disparities in both paid and unpaid care work**.
 - Women in low- or middle-income countries could be USD 9 trillion **better off if their pay and access to paid work were equal** to that of men.
- **Not Adequately Represented on Decision-Making:**
 - Women are not adequately represented on decision-making tables. Women are **overrepresented in lower-status roles**, comprising the majority of nurses and midwives.
 - They are, however, underrepresented in leadership roles. Medical specialties are still dominated by men. Women made up 25% to 60% of doctors but between **30% and 100% of nursing staff across 35 countries**.
- **Underinvestment in Health Systems:**
 - Chronic underinvestment in health and care work has led to a vicious cycle of unpaid care work, **reducing women's participation** in paid labour markets, hindering economic empowerment, and impeding gender equality.
- **Devaluation of Caregiving:**
 - Caregiving, primarily performed by women, tends to be undervalued, leading to lower wages, poor working conditions, decreased productivity, and a negative economic impact on the sector.
- **Implications of Gender Pay Gaps:**
 - **Pay gaps** limit women's investment in their family and community, which is where they are likely to reinvest.

Note:

- Globally, on average, **90% of women's earnings are directed towards their families' well-being**, compared to only 30-40% of men's.
- **Higher Levels of Violence:**
 - Women in healthcare disproportionately experienced higher levels of gender-based violence.
 - According to some estimates, a quarter of workplace violence across all sectors of the globe occurs in healthcare.
 - At least **half of all employees in the healthcare sector** have reported **experiencing violence at some point in the workplace**.
- **Indian Scenario:**
 - In India, **women spent around 73% of their total daily working time** (that is, the combined average time spent on unpaid and paid work recorded through **national daily time-use surveys**) **on unpaid work**, compared to **men who spent around only 11%** of their daily working time on unpaid work.
 - In the United Kingdom, nearly 4.5 million people took on unpaid work during **Covid-19**, 59% of whom were women, with nearly 3 million working simultaneously.

Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour

Why in News?

Recently, the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** released a report titled '**Profits and poverty: The economics of forced labour**', which has found that **Forced Labour** generates illegal profits worth USD 36 billion per year.

What is Forced Labour?

- According to ILO, forced or compulsory labour is "all work or service that is **exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty** and for which said person has not offered himself voluntarily".
- Forced labour is defined, for **purposes of measurement**, as work that is both **Involuntary** and under penalty or menace of a penalty (coercion).
 - **Involuntary** work refers to **any work undertaken without the free and informed consent** of the worker.
 - **Coercion** refers to the means used to **compel someone to work without their free and informed consent**.

What is the International Labour Organization?

- **About:**
 - The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** is the only tripartite UN agency, since 1919. It brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- **Established:**
 - By the **1919 Treaty of Versailles** as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations.
 - Became the first affiliated specialised agency of the United Nations in 1946.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
- **Founding Mission:** Social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.
 - Promotes internationally recognized human and labour rights.
- **Nobel Peace Prize:**
 - Received in 1969 for
 - improving peace among classes
 - Pursuing decent work and justice for workers
 - Providing technical assistance to other developing nations

India's Progress in Gender Equality

Why in News?

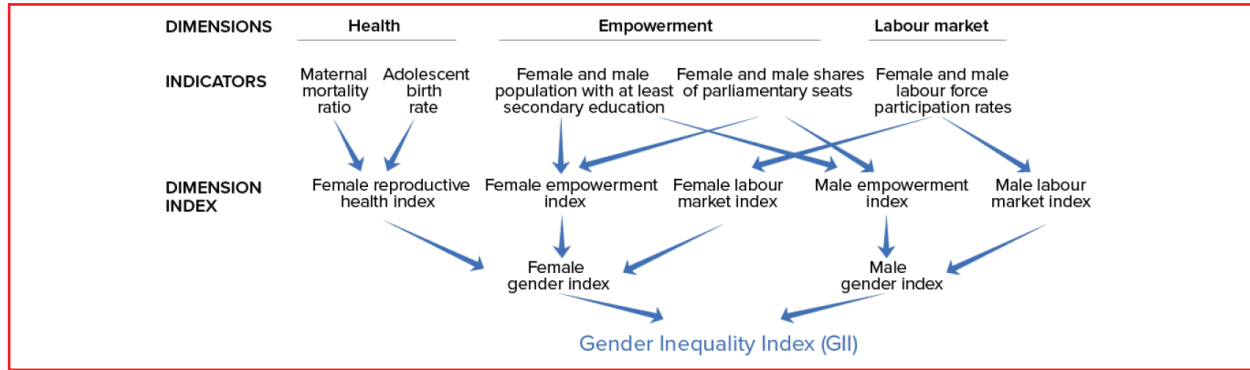
Recently, the **Gender Inequality Index (GII), 2022** has been released by UNDP in their **Human Development Report 2023-24**.

- In GII, India stands at rank **108th** out of 193 countries, with a score of 0.437.

What is the Gender Inequality Index?

- **About:** GII is a composite metric of gender inequality using three dimensions: **reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market**.
 - It reflects the gap in human development potential due to inequality between female and male achievements in these areas.
 - GII values range from **0 (equality) to 1 (extreme inequality)**.
 - A low GII value indicates low inequality between women and men, and vice-versa.
- **Dimensions and Indicators:**

Note:



India's Progress:

- India stood at rank **122 out of 191 countries** with a score of 0.490 in the Gender Inequality Index 2021.
- The current data shows a significant jump of 14 ranks on GII 2022 vis-a-vis GII 2021.
- Over the last 10 years, India's rank in GII has become **consistently better**, indicating progressive improvement in achieving gender equality in the country.

Note:

- Maternal Mortality Ratio:** Number of deaths due to pregnancy-related causes per 100,000 live births.
- Adolescent Birth Rate:** Annual number of births to females aged 10-14 or 15-19 years per 1,000 females in the respective age group.
- Labor Force Participation Rate:** Proportion of the working-age population (ages 15 and older) that engages in the labour market, either by working or actively looking for work, expressed as a percentage of the working-age population.

Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum):

- The Global Gender Gap Index annually benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions (**Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment**).
- It is the longest-standing index, which tracks progress towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in **2006**
- India was ranked at **127 out of 146 countries** in the **Gender Gap Report, 2023**.

SBI's Study on Empowering Women Through SHGs

Why in News?

The **State Bank of India (SBI)** recently unveiled a research study highlighting the evolving dynamics of **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** in India.

- This study delves into the patterns of credit utilisation and digital behaviours among SHGs, their members, and the emerging group known as **'Lakhpati Didis'**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

Rise of SHGs and Lakhpati Didis:

- The SHGs in India, numbering **approximately 8.5 million with approximately 92.1 million members**, are spearheading a transformative revolution.
 - A notable outcome of this movement is the rising proportion of **Lakhpati Didis**.
 - Lakhpati Didi is a government initiative that aims to empower **women in SHGs to earn at least Rs 1,00,000 per year** through sustainable livelihood practices.
 - The program was launched in 2023 with an initial target of 2 crore women, but the target has been increased to 3 crore in 2024-25.
 - This movement underscores the **growing contribution of women to Gross Value Added (GVA) and economic output**.
 - Through formalisation initiatives, the increasing participation of women in the formal sector is evident, as reflected in the **rising female Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR)**.

Note:

- **Bank Linkage and Credit Access:**
 - **SHG Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP)**, stands as a game-changer with approximately **97.5% of SHGs now holding bank accounts**.
 - This robust banking relationship enables timely credit access, critical for economic value addition. With **optimal funds at reduced interest rates**, SHGs overcome roadblocks, unlocking their full marketing potential.
 - The SHG portfolio of **Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs)** is now nearing Rs 2 trillion.
- **Credit Utilisation and Repayment:**
 - Average limit sanctioned to SHGs has increased **2.2 times in FY24 compared to FY19**.
 - Credit repayment has significantly improved, with average repayment increasing by 3.9 times in FY24 compared to FY19, demonstrating judicious and timely repayment.
- **Digital Inclusion:**
 - **Bank Mitras** and **Digital Didis** are enabling financialisation at an unprecedented scale.
 - Initiatives like **SARAS Melas** are commendable but can be further augmented by onboarding them onto digital platforms like **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**.
 - Expenditure through the **Aadhar Enabled Payment system** increased by at least 3 times in FY24 from FY23 in all regions.
- **Income Growth:**
 - Female SHG member incomes have tripled during FY19-FY24, with urban members seeing a 4.6 times increase.
 - Around 65% of rural SHG members have moved upwards in relative income in FY24 vs FY19.
- **State-wise Progress:**
 - While **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana lead in SHGs**, other states like Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Punjab, and Gujarat have also increased female SHG incomes significantly.
 - By FY27, India is expected to have millions of LakhpatiDidis in almost every state.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

- Self-help groups (SHGs) are **informal associations of individuals with similar socio-economic backgrounds**, aiming to collectively address common issues such as **poverty, illiteracy, and lack of skills**.
- These groups promote self-governance and peer support, fostering self-employment and poverty alleviation within marginalised communities.
- The SHG model was introduced in India in 1984, inspired by **Prof. Yunus's Grameen Bank model**.
 - **Kudumbashree in Kerala, Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal in Maharashtra**, and **Looms of Ladakh** are a few examples of **success stories from SHGs**.
 - **Looms of Ladakh**, a Pashmina brand with 427 women SHG members, recorded sales of Rs 34 lakh in FY 2022-23 and Rs 42 lakh in the first 10 months of 2023-24, showcasing exponential growth.

SHG-Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP)

- The SHG-BLP, initiated by the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** in 1989, evolved from an action research to a pilot project by 1992.
 - This collaborative effort between SHGs, banks, and NGOs, with support from the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and NABARD, aimed to provide financial services to underserved poor households.
 - Over time, it has transformed into the **largest microfinance program globally**, covering approximately **16.19 crore households**, predominantly women groups, thus empowering women across the country.
 - NABARD's efforts include policy advocacy, training programs, and capacity building for all stakeholders, contributing to the success of this savings-led microfinance model.

Levels and Trends in Child Mortality

Why in News?

Recently, the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, has released a report titled- **Levels and Trends in Child Mortality**, which highlighted

Note:

that the annual number of global under-five deaths in 2022 declined by more than half from the 2000 estimate — from 9.9 million to 4.9 million.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Historic Low in Child Mortality:**
 - The annual number of under the age of five deaths dropped to **4.9 million in 2022**, representing a significant achievement in the global effort to reduce child mortality.
 - This is coupled with a **decline of more than half in the global under-five mortality rate (U5MR)** since 2000.
 - The decline in under-five mortality has been consistent, driven by sustained commitment from various stakeholders including governments, organisations, local communities, healthcare professionals, and families.
- **Persistent High Death Toll:**
 - Despite the progress, the annual death toll among children, adolescents, and youth remains unacceptably high.
 - In 2022, **2.3 million under-five deaths** occurred during the **first month of life, and an additional 2.6 million children** died between the ages of 1 and 59 months.
 - Furthermore, 2.1 million children, adolescents, and youth aged 5–24 also died that year.
- **Magnitude of Lives Lost:**
 - Between 2000 and 2022, the world lost 221 million children, adolescents, and youth, with nearly the **entire population of Nigeria being a staggering** comparison.
 - Neonatal deaths (death of a baby within 28 days of birth) accounted for 72 million of these under-five deaths, and deaths among children aged 1–59 months numbered 91 million.
 - The trend of under-five deaths has increased in the neonatal period from 41% in 2000 to 47% in 2022.
- **Inequality in Survival Chances:**
 - Children face unequal chances of survival based on factors such as **geographical location, socio-economic status**, and whether they live in fragile or conflict-affected settings.
 - These disparities highlight persistent and entrenched inequities among vulnerable populations of children.

➤ Regional Disparities:

- While global rates of child mortality are declining, there are significant regional disparities.
 - 35 million children under the age of 5 will lose their life before 2030 and **sub-Saharan Africa will bear most of the death toll.**
- Countries will not meet the UN-mandated **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)** targets on time.
 - If, however, every country realised the SDG-5 vision of an end to preventable under-five deaths and met the relevant mortality targets on time, **9 million more children would survive to age five.**
- Under current trends, 59 countries will miss the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) under-five mortality target and 64 countries will miss the neonatal mortality target.

Challenges Faced by the Gig Workers

Why in News?

Recently, a study was conducted by the **People's Association in Grassroots Action and Movements**, and the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers, Which highlights the challenges encountered by the **Gig Workers** such as app-based cab and delivery drivers/persons in India.

Who are Gig Workers?

➤ Gig Workers:

- Gig workers are individuals who work **on a temporary, flexible basis**, often for multiple clients or companies, performing tasks or providing services.
- They are typically **independent contractors rather than traditional employees**, which means they have more control over when, where, and how they work.

➤ Gig Economy:

A free market system in which temporary positions are common and organisations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements.

Note:



WageIndicator

India Gig Economy Overview

Key Highlights

- 7.7 million Indians are currently engaged in gig work
- 9.9 million Indians are expected to be gig workers by 2023.
- India is projected to have 23.5 million gig workers by 2029-30

(Source: NITI Aayog)

Companies in the Space



Dunzo's Business grew by 94% this quarter. (27x previous growth rate)



Uber has started offering electric vehicles to customers in certain parts of the Delhi-NCR region and says it will expand its efforts over the coming months.



Swiggy Instamart expanded to delivering groceries till 3 am in the night.

Sector Wise Gig Hiring



2.7 Million Indian Gig Workers are engaged in **Retail Trade and Sales**



1.3 Million Indian Gig Workers are engaged in the **Transportation sector**



0.6 Million Indian Gig Workers are engaged in **Manufacturing sector**



0.6 Million Indian Gig Workers are engaged in **Finance and Insurance Services**



2.5 Million Indian Gig Workers are engaged in **E-Commerce Websites**

(Source: NITI Aayog)

Copyright - WageIndicator March 2023
(data collected between October 2022 and January 2023)

Note:



drishti

Government's Initiatives Related to Gig Workers

- The **Code on Social Security, 2020**, contains a separate section on 'gig economy' and imposes an **obligation on gig employers to contribute to a Social Security Fund** to be handled by a government-led board.
- The **Code on Wages, 2019**, provides for **universal minimum wage and floor wage** across organised and unorganised sectors, including gig workers.

Snakebite Envenoming

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a **National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAP-SE)**, under the '**One Health**' approach.

What is the National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAP-SE)?

- **About:**
 - The NAP-SE provides a broad framework for **management, prevention and control of Snakebite** envenoming in India.
 - This NAP-SE echoes the global voice of reducing the **deaths due to snakebite envenoming by half** and envisages all strategic components, roles and responsibilities of concerned stakeholders.
 - The NAP-SE is a guidance document for the states/UTs and stakeholders to develop their **own action plan, specific to their needs and aims** at systematic reduction of snakebite envenoming risk through sustained availability of anti-snake venom, capacity building, referral mechanism and public education.
- **Aim:**
 - To prevent and **control snakebite envenoming** in order to **halve the numbers** of deaths and cases of disability that it **causes by 2030**.
 - To progressively **reduce the morbidity, mortality** and its associated complications **in humans due to Snake bite**.
- **Strategic Actions:**
 - **Human Health:** The strategic action for human health component includes **ensuring provision**

of anti snake venom at all health facilities, strengthening surveillance of snakebite cases and deaths in humans.

- Strengthening of emergency care services at District Hospitals/ CHCs including services for ambulances, institutionalisation of Regional Venom Centre's and inter-sectoral coordination.
- **Wildlife Health:** The strategic action for wildlife health component includes education awareness, **antivenom distribution**, strengthening of the key stakeholders, systematic research and monitoring and **snake venom collection and snake relocation**.
- **Animal and Agriculture Component:** The strategic action for animal and agriculture component includes **prevention of snakebites in livestock**, community engagement etc.

What is Snakebites Envenoming (SE)?

- **About:**
 - Snakebite Envenoming (SE) is classified by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** as a **High-Priority Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)**.
 - SE is a potentially life-threatening disease that typically results **from the injection of a mixture of different toxins** (venom) following the bite of a Venomous Snake.
 - It can also be caused by having **venom sprayed into the eyes by certain species of snakes** that have the ability to spit venom as a **defence measure**.
 - Snakebite poses a significant **daily health risk in rural tropical and subtropical regions** of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America, particularly for the hundreds of millions of people in rural and peri-urban communities reliant on agriculture and subsistence activities for survival.
 - In India, around **90% of snake bites** are caused by the '**big four**' among the **crawlers** - common krait, Indian cobra, Russell's viper and saw scaled viper.
- **WHO's Roadmap for SE:**
 - WHO launched its **roadmap in 2019** with an aim to **halve death and disability from snakebite by 2030**.

Note:

- In order to create a **sustainable market for antivenoms** there is a need for a **25% increase** in the number of competent manufacturers by 2030.
- WHO has planned a **pilot project to create a global antivenom stockpile**.
- Integrating snakebite treatment and response into national health plans in affected countries, including **better training of health personnel** and educating communities.

➤ Indian Initiatives:

- Much before the WHO roadmap was launched, researchers from **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** started **community awareness** and health system capacity building **from the year 2013**.
- In alignment with **WHO's Snakebite Envenoming Strategy** and the United Nations' **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**, India ratified a National Action Plan in 2015 to combat this issue.

Abortion

Why in News?

Recently, the French lawmakers have overwhelmingly approved a bill to enshrine abortion rights in **France's constitution**, making it the only country to explicitly guarantee a **woman's right to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy**.

- The approved bill amends **Article 34 of the French Constitution**, explicitly stating that "the law determines the conditions by which the freedom of women to have **recourse to an abortion**, which is guaranteed."

Note:

The bill was brought forth in response to concerns about the erosion of abortion rights globally, particularly **highlighted by the US Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v Wade case* to overturn long standing abortion rights in 2022**.

What is Abortion?

➤ About:

- Abortion is the **deliberate termination of a pregnancy**, typically performed during the

first 28 weeks of gestation. It can be achieved through various medical procedures or medications, depending on the stage of pregnancy and the preferences of the individual seeking abortion.

- Abortion can be a highly contentious and debated topic, often involving ethical, moral, religious, and legal considerations.
- Legal Provisions Related to Abortion in India:
 - Until the 1960s, **abortion was prohibited in India**, and violating this led to imprisonment or fines under **Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code**.
 - The **Shantilal Shah Committee was set up in the mid-1960s** to investigate the need for abortion regulations.
 - Based on its findings, the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971** was enacted, allowing safe and legal abortions, safeguarding women's health, and reducing maternal mortality.
 - The Supreme Court recognized **marital rape as a ground for abortion**, even though **marital rape itself is not recognized**, in a progressive move for women's reproductive rights.
 - The **MTP Act, 1971**, allows abortion **up to 20 weeks of gestation**, with the consent of the woman and **on the advice of one registered medical practitioner (RMP)**. However, the law was **updated in 2002 and 2021**.
 - The **MTP Amendment Act, 2021** permits abortion from **20 to 24 weeks of gestation** for specific cases like rape survivors, with approval from two doctors.
 - It sets up **state level Medical Boards** to decide if a pregnancy may be terminated **after 24 weeks** in cases of substantial fetal abnormalities.
 - It extends the **failure of contraceptive clauses to unmarried women** (initially only married women), allowing them to **seek abortion services** on grounds of their choice, irrespective of their marital status.
 - Consent requirements vary based on age and mental state, ensuring medical practitioner oversight.
- The Constitution of India, which guarantees the **right to life and personal liberty** to all citizens under **Article 21**. This right has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of India to **include the right to reproductive choice** and autonomy for women.

Note:

Time Since Conception	MTP Act, 1971	MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021
Up to 12 weeks	On the advice of one doctor	On advice of one doctor
12 to 20 weeks	On advice of two doctors	On advice of one doctor
20 to 24 weeks	Not allowed	On advice of two doctors for special categories of pregnant women
More than 24 weeks	Not allowed	On advice of medical board in case of substantial fetal abnormality
Any time during the pregnancy	On advice of one doctor, if immediately necessary to save pregnant woman's life	On advice of one doctor, if immediately necessary to save pregnant woman's life

Note:

- In *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. the Union Of India Case, 2017*, the Supreme court recognized the constitutional right of women to make reproductive choices, as a part of personal liberty under **Article 21** of the Indian Constitution.

Enhancing Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

Why in News?

Recently, the **Central Public Works Department (CPWD)** has prioritised improving accessibility for persons with disabilities (PwDs) in public buildings. Despite the enactment of the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2016**, challenges remain, leading the CPWD to implement measures to ensure adherence to accessibility standards.

What is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwDs) Act, 2016?

➤ About:

- The RPwDs Act, 2016, implements the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, ratified by India in 2007.
 - It replaced the **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995**.

- In India, there were around 26.8 million **persons with disabilities or Divyangjan**, constituting **2.21% of India's total population (2011 Census)**.
- The **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** estimates that 2.2% of the Indian population is disabled.
 - NSSO 76th round, 2019 states that additionally, the incidence of disability in the Indian population during a 365-day period per **1,00,000 people was recorded to be 86**.
- **Expanded Definition of Disability:**
 - Disability is defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.
 - In the RPWD Act, 2016, the types of disabilities increased from 7 to 21, with a provision for the Central Government to add more.
- **Rights and Entitlements:**
 - Appropriate governments tasked with **ensuring equal rights for persons with disabilities**.
 - Additional benefits such as **reservation in higher education** (minimum 5%), **government jobs** (minimum 4%), and **allocation of land** (minimum 5%) provided for persons with benchmark disabilities and those with high support needs.
 - **Free education guaranteed for every child** with a benchmark disability between 6 and 18 years.
 - Government-funded and recognized educational institutions mandated to provide inclusive education to children with disabilities.

Note:

- Emphasis on making public infrastructure and facilities accessible to persons with disabilities, enhancing their participation and inclusion.
- **Mandates for Public Buildings:**
 - Rule 15 of the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017** mandates the central government to establish guidelines and **standards for public buildings to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.**
 - These standards encompass the physical environment, transport, and **information and communication technology** for persons with disabilities.
 - Every establishment, including public buildings, must adhere to these standards based on the 2016 harmonised guidelines.
 - **Recent amendments to Rule 15** require establishments to comply **with the 2021 harmonised guidelines**, ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.
 - The comprehensive guidelines cover planning, tendering, and specifications for various accessibility features such as ramps, grab rails, lifts, and toilets with considerations for persons with disabilities.
 - All building plans must align with these guidelines to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities.
 - Existing buildings are mandated to **undergo retrofitting within five years to meet accessibility standards**, promoting better inclusivity for persons with disabilities.

Note:

- The **21 disabilities, in RPWD Act, 2016, include** Blindness, Low-vision, **Leprosy Cured Persons**, Hearing Impairment (deaf and hard of hearing), Locomotor Disability, Dwarfism, **Intellectual Disability**, Mental Illness, Autism Spectrum Disorder, **Cerebral Palsy**, Muscular Dystrophy, Chronic Neurological Conditions, **Specific Learning Disabilities (Dyslexia)**, Multiple Sclerosis, Speech and Language Disability, Thalassemia, Hemophilia, **Sickle Cell Disease**, Multiple Disabilities including deaf-blindness, **Acid Attack victim**, and **Parkinson's disease**.

What are the Other Initiatives Related to the Empowerment of the Disabled?

- **Unique Disability Identification Portal.**
- **DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme.**
- **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances.**
- **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities.**
- **Divya Kala Mela 2023.**
- **Accessible India Campaign**

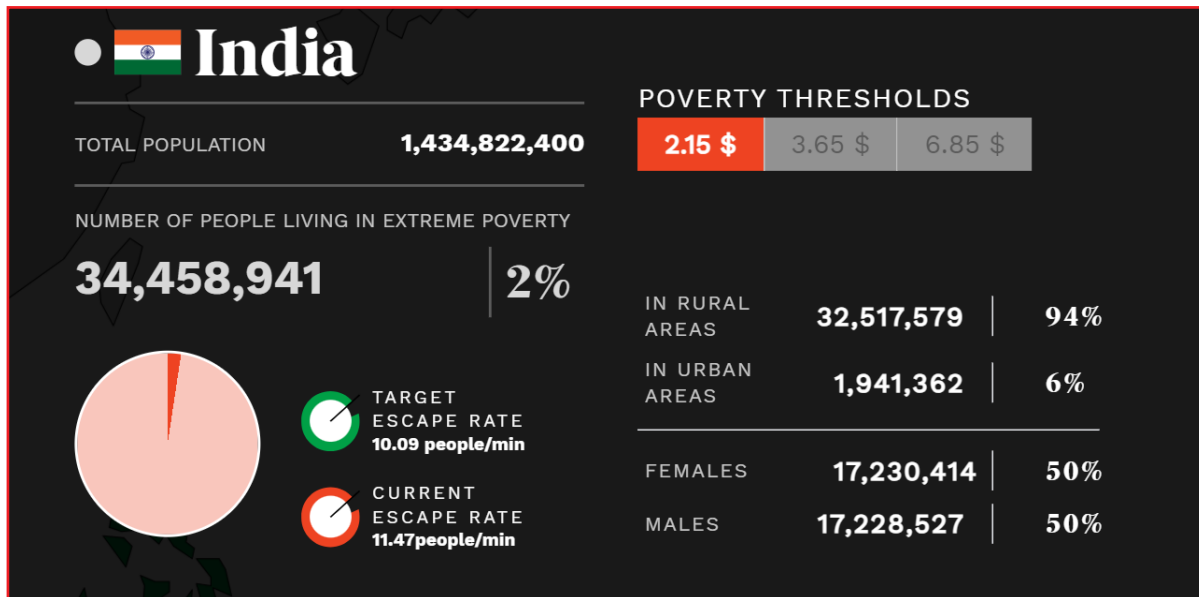
World Poverty Clock**Why in News?**

- According to the latest data from the **World Poverty Clock**, India has successfully reduced the proportion of its population living in '**extreme poverty**' to **below 3%**.
- It signifies a substantial step towards accomplishing the **first of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** set by the **United Nations**, with the target year of 2030.

What are the Key Findings of the World Poverty Clock?

- **About:**
 - The World Poverty Clock tracks **real-time poverty** estimates until 2030 for almost all countries, monitoring progress **toward ending extreme poverty.**
 - The Clock shows the worldwide **number of people** in extreme poverty, sorting them **by age, gender, and rural or urban residency**, capturing both those **escaping poverty** and those falling into it every second.
 - The escape rate calculates the **current rate** of poverty reduction in the world.
 - It is backed by the **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** and **Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.**

Note:



➤ Methodology and Key Findings:

- It computes poverty rates by considering **income levels**, with the poverty threshold established at **USD 2.15 per day**.
 - The USD 2.15-a-day poverty line, reflecting national poverty lines in some of the **poorest countries**, is commonly known as the **extreme poverty line**.
 - It is used to monitor progress towards the **World Bank's** goal of reducing the share of people living in extreme poverty to less than 3% by 2030.
- The **population in India experiencing extreme poverty** declined to approximately 3.44 crore in 2024 from 4.69 crore in 2022, accounting for **2.4% of the total population**.
 - These figures confirm a claim by the CEO of **NITLAayog** that **less than 5% of Indians are projected to be below the poverty line**, with extreme destitution nearly eradicated, based on the **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES), 2022-23**.

➤ Other Global Targets:

- **SDG target 1.1** aims for global **poverty eradication by 2030**, setting the ambitious goal for all countries, regions, and groups to reach **zero poverty** at the same international poverty line.

➤ Niti Aayog Recent Paper On Poverty:

- A recent **NITLAayog** discussion paper revealed a significant reduction in **multidimensional poverty** in India, dropping from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23, leading to 24.82 crore

individuals escaping multidimensional poverty over the 9-year period.

- The paper analysed multidimensional poverty trends in India from 2005-06 to 2022-23, using **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** data and projection methods for years without NFHS data.

Growth in poverty control

	Total population	Number of people living in extreme poverty	%
	(in crore)		
2016	132.37	7.59	5.7
2018	135.29	6.26	4.6
2020	138.21	6.73	4.9
2022	140.85	4.69	3.3
2024	143.48	3.44	2.4

Source: www.worldpoverty.io

Note:

Women, Business and the Law 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Bank (WB) Group** has released a report titled **Women, Business and the Law 2024**, presenting in-depth analysis of the **challenges obstructing women's entry into the global workforce**, hindering their ability to contribute to prosperity for themselves, their families and their communities.

What is Women Business and Law 2024 Report?

- Its indexes align **areas of the law and public policy** instruments with the economic decisions that women make throughout their lives and careers, identifying where and in what areas women continue to face hurdles.
- **Indicators:** It has 10 indicators- Safety, Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Child Care, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension.
 - **Safety from violence and access to childcare services** are very crucial indicators.

How did India Perform in Women, Business and the Law 2024 Report?

- India's rank has marginally **improved to 113, with a score of 74.4%**. While the country's score has remained constant since 2021, its ranking witnessed a **decline from 122 in 2021 to 125 in 2022** and further to 126 in the 2023 index.
- Indian women have **just 60% of the legal rights compared to men**, slightly below the global average of 64.2%.
 - However, India **outperformed its South Asian counterparts**, where women have only 45.9% of the legal protections enjoyed by men.
- When it comes to constraints on freedom of movement and constraints related to marriage, **India got a full score**.
- India receives **one of its lowest scores** in the indicator evaluating **laws impacting women's pay**.
 - To enhance this aspect India could explore **measures such as mandating equal pay for**

equivalent work, permitting women to work at night on par with men and enabling women to engage in industrial jobs on an equal footing with men.

- When it comes to **supportive frameworks, India scored higher** than both the global and South Asian averages.

Growing Obesity in India

Why in News?

A recent study published in *The Lancet* has shed light on the alarming increase in obesity rates among children, adolescents, and adults over the past few decades **worldwide**.

- This comprehensive analysis was conducted by the **NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC)** in collaboration with the **World Health Organization**.
- The study looked at **body mass index (BMI)** to understand **how obesity and underweight** have changed worldwide from 1990 to 2022.

Note:

- NCD-RisC is a network of health scientists around the world that provides rigorous and timely data on major risk factors for **non-communicable diseases** for all of the world's countries.

What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- **India's Statistics:**
 - **Obesity:**
 - The Lancet revealed that in 2022, **12.5 million children** (7.3 million boys and 5.2 million girls) aged **between 5-19 years in India** were classified as **grossly overweight**, marking a significant increase from 0.4 million in 1990.
 - In the prevalence of obesity category for girls and boys, **India ranked 174th in the world in 2022**.
 - Among adults, in women, the obesity rate increased from 1.2% in 1990 to 9.8% in 2022 and men from 0.5% to 5.4% in the same period.
 - **Undernutrition:**
 - The prevalence of undernutrition has also remained high in India, as a result, India has become one of the countries with a **high "double burden,"** of **Malnutrition**.

Note:

- 13.7% of women and 12.5% of men were underweight.
- **Thinness**, a measure of being underweight in children, in Indian girls is the highest in the world, with a prevalence of 20.3%.
 - It was the second highest in Indian boys, with a prevalence of 21.7%.

➤ Global:

- The total number of children, adolescents and adults worldwide living with **obesity has surpassed one billion**.
 - In total, 159 million children and adolescents, and 879 million adults were obese in 2022.
- The **combined burden of underweight and obesity** has increased in most countries, driven by an increase in obesity, while **underweight and thinness remain prevalent in South Asia and parts of Africa**.
- In 2022, the **combined prevalence of underweight and obesity was highest in island nations** in the Caribbean Polynesia and Micronesia, and countries in the Middle East and North Africa.
- The countries with the **highest combined prevalence of thinness and obesity in 2022** were **Polynesia, Micronesia** and the **Caribbean** for both sexes and **Chile and Qatar** for boys.
 - Combined prevalence was also high in some countries in South Asia, such as India and Pakistan, where thinness remained prevalent despite having declined.

What are India's Initiatives Related to Nutrition?

- **Eat Right Mela**
- **Fit India Movement**
- **Eat Right Station Certification**
- **Mission Poshan 2.0**
- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme**
- **Poshan Vatikas**
- **Anganwadi**
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme**
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**

Rare Disease Day 2024

Why in News?

Recently, **Rare Disease Day** was observed on the **last day of February**. This international awareness day is dedicated to raising awareness of rare diseases and their significant impact on patients and their families.

What is Rare Disease Day?

- Rare Disease Day is a globally coordinated movement dedicated to advocating for **equity in social opportunity, healthcare, and access to diagnosis** and therapies for individuals with rare diseases.
- The theme for Rare Disease Day 2024 is "**Share Your Colours**," which emphasizes collaboration and support.
- It was established in 2008 and observed annually on **28th February (or 29 in leap years)**. Rare Disease Day is coordinated by the **European Organisation for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS)** and over 65 national alliance patient organization partners.
- It serves as a focal point for advocacy work on local, national, and international levels, engaging individuals, families, caregivers, healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, industry representatives, and the general public.

What is a Rare Disease?

- **About:**
 - Rare diseases are loosely defined as **occurring infrequently in the population**, with prevalence varying between nations.
 - The **World Health Organization** defines rare diseases as often debilitating lifelong conditions with a prevalence of **1 or less per 1000 population**.
 - Different countries have their own definitions; for instance, the US considers diseases affecting fewer than 200,000 patients rare, while the European Union sets the limit at no more than 5 in 10,000 people.
 - **India currently does not have a standard definition**, but the **Organisation of Rare Diseases India (ORDI)** has suggested that a disease is to be defined as rare if it affects 1 in 5,000 people or less.

Note:



- **Global Rare Diseases Burden:**
 - **300 million people** worldwide are affected by rare diseases.
 - Rare diseases affect approximately **3.5% to 5.9% of the population**.
 - 72% of rare diseases are **genetic**, with over 7000 characterized by diverse disorders and symptoms.
 - **75% of rare diseases affect children**. 70% of rare diseases have their onset during childhood.

What is the Landscape of Rare Diseases in India?

- India represents **one-third of global rare disease cases**, encompassing over 450 identified diseases.
- Despite this significant prevalence, rare diseases remain largely overlooked in India, with limited awareness, diagnosis, and drug development.
- Over **8 to 10 crore Indians are estimated to suffer from rare diseases**, with **over 75% being children**.

National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD), 2021

- The NPRD, 2021 aims to reduce the prevalence and incidence of rare diseases.
- Rare diseases are categorized into three groups: **Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3** based on treatment requirements.
 - **Group 1:** Disorders amenable to one-time curative treatment.
 - **Group 2:** Diseases requiring long-term/lifelong treatment with relatively lower treatment costs.
 - **Group 3:** Diseases with definitive treatment available, but challenges exist in patient selection and **high treatment costs**.
- NPRD, 2021 has the provision for financial support of up to Rs. 50 lakhs for patients suffering from any category of rare diseases and for treatment in any of the CoE mentioned in NPRD-2021, outside the Umbrella Scheme of **Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN)**.
 - RAN offers a maximum financial assistance of Rs 20 lakh for patients suffering from specified rare diseases.

Marriage Can't be Grounds to Sack Women from the Military

Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has directed the Ministry of Defence to pay Rs 60 lakh in compensation to a former permanent commissioned officer in the **Military Nursing Service (MNS)**.

- It is ruled that the officer was “wrongly” released from **service in 1988 on grounds of her marriage**.

Note: As of Aug 2023, over 7,000 women personnel are serving in the Indian Army followed by 809 in the Indian Air Force and 1306 in the Navy.

SC's Observations:

- The SC stated that her release from the service was “**wrong and illegal**”.
- The court also rejected the Centre's argument, based on a **rule in force at the time**.
 - Such **rule was ex facie manifestly arbitrary**, as terminating employment because the **woman has got married** is a coarse case of gender discrimination and inequality.

Policy Framework to Recruit Women Military Officers

- Women officers were initially inducted into the Indian Army under the **Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) in 1992**.
 - Under WSES, they served for **five-year periods in certain streams**, like the Army Education Corps and the Corps of Engineers.
- However, they faced restrictions on certain roles, such as infantry and armored corps.
- In **2006, WSES was replaced by the Short Service Commission scheme**, which allowed women officers the option to switch from WSES to SSC.
 - Men under SSC were commissioned for ten years, extendable up to fourteen years. Men in SSC have an option to **opt for a PC**.

Note:

Lymphatic Filariasis

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare launched the first phase of the **Bi-annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign** for **Lymphatic filariasis (LF) elimination**.

Note:

- The campaign aims to check disease transmission by **providing free preventive medications** to the residents in areas affected by the disease. The campaign will cover 92 districts across 11 states.

What is Lymphatic Filariasis?

➤ About:

- Lymphatic filariasis, commonly known as **elephantiasis**, is a **neglected tropical disease (NTD)** caused by infection with **filarial parasites** transmitted through mosquitoes.

➤ Prevalence:

- In 2021, approximately 882.5 million people in 44 countries lived in areas requiring preventive chemotherapy to halt the spread of infection.
- LF is a serious public health problem in India. Currently, there are **345 lymphatic filariasis endemic districts in 20 states** and union territories of the country.
 - 75% of MDA districts are from 5 states Bihar, Jharkhand, UP, Odisha and Telangana.
- Lymphatic filariasis is more prevalent among the **urban poor and affects all segments of the rural population**.

➤ Impact:

- The infection **starts in childhood and accumulates through adulthood**, resulting in irreversible chronic disease conditions.
 - The disease inflicts stigma, mental suffering, social deprivation and economic loss and is a major cause of poverty in the affected communities.

➤ Cause and Transmission:

- Parasitic Infection:
 - Lymphatic filariasis is caused by infection with parasites classified as nematodes (roundworms) of the family Filariodidea. There are 3 types of these thread-like filarial worms:

- **Wuchereriabancrofti** (responsible for 90% of the cases)
- **Brugiamalayi** (causes most of the remainder of the cases)
- **Brugiatimori** (which also causes the disease)
- Transmission Cycle:
 - Adult worms reside in the **lymphatic vessels**, producing microfilariae that circulate in the blood.
 - Mosquitoes become infected by biting an infected host and transmit the larvae to humans, perpetuating the transmission cycle.

➤ Symptoms and Complications:

- Asymptomatic and Chronic Conditions:
 - The majority of infections are asymptomatic, but chronic conditions can lead to **lymphoedema** (swelling of the limbs), **elephantiasis** (thickening of the skin and tissues), and **hydrocele** (swelling of the scrotum), causing **physical disfigurement and psychological distress**.
- Acute Episodes:
 - Acute **inflammatory episodes** often accompany chronic conditions, leading to debilitating symptoms and loss of productivity among affected individuals.

➤ Treatment and Prevention:

- Preventive Chemotherapy:
 - MDA with annual doses of medicines to the at-risk population is the **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommended strategy for eliminating lymphatic filariasis.
- MDA Regimens:
 - Different drug regimens are recommended based on co-endemicity with other filarial diseases, aiming to **reduce microfilariae density and interrupt transmission**.
 - **Morbidity Management:**
 - **Surgery, hygiene measures, and clinical care** are essential for managing chronic manifestations and preventing disease progression.
- Vector Control:
 - Supplemental strategies such as **mosquito control help reduce transmission** and complement preventive chemotherapy efforts.

Note:


➤ WHO Response and Goals:

- Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GPELF):
 - Launched in 2000, GPELF aims to **eliminate lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem** through preventive chemotherapy and morbidity management.
 - In 2020, GPELF set the following goals for the new NTD Road Map (2021–2030):
 - **Validation:** 80% of endemic countries (58) to validate elimination, maintaining low infection rates post-MDA.


- **Surveillance:** All endemic countries (72) to implement surveillance to prevent disease resurgence.
- **MDA Reduction:** Targeting zero population needing mass drug administration.

➤ India's Initiatives:

- **Mission Mode India Multi-drug administration (MDA) Campaign** twice a year synchronized with **National Deworming Day (10th Feb and 10th August)**
- **India is committed to eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027**, three years before the global target.

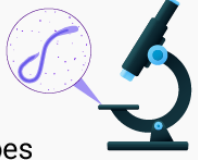


LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS


World Health Organization


DISEASE

Infection
Filarial parasites spread by mosquitoes




Disease
Impairs function of lymphatic vessels


Normal vessels



Dilated vessels




856 Million people AT RISK




ELIMINATION


Large-scale treatment of all at-risk populations can stop spread of infection

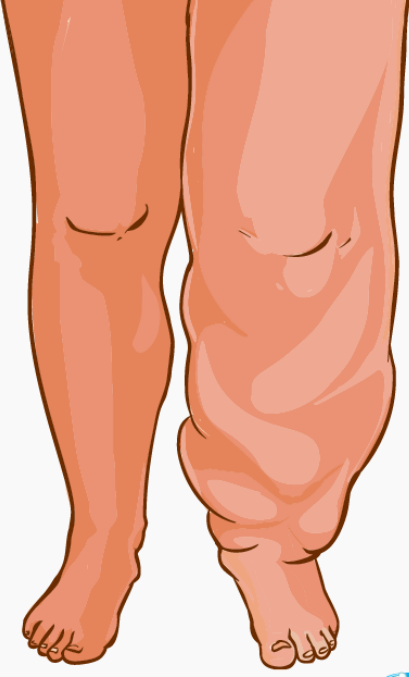


Vector control can supplement impact of large-scale treatment



Morbidity management & disability prevention to alleviate suffering due to disease





- **6.7 billion** treatments delivered (2000-2016)
- **499 million** people no longer require treatment
- Prevented or cured more than **97 million cases**
- **US\$ 100 billion** averted lifetime economic loss

Lymphatic Filariasis eliminated as a public health problem in 10 countries

Note:

Building An Inclusive Society Through SMILE

Why in News?

In 2021, the **Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE) scheme**, aimed at advancing the vision of **Viksit Bharat** was initiated. This included the launch of the **Central Sector Scheme** for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for the Welfare of **Transgender Persons**.

Who is a Transgender?

- According to the **Transgender Persons Act, 2019**, transgender means a person whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth.
- It includes trans-person with intersex variations, gender-queer and person having such socio-cultural identities as kinnar, hijra, aaravani and jogta.
- India's **2011 Census** was the **first census** in its history to incorporate the number of 'trans' population of the country. The report estimated that 4.8 million Indians identified as transgender.

What is a SMILE Scheme?

- **About:**
 - It is a new Scheme after the merger of existing Schemes for Beggars and Transgenders.
 - The **two sub-schemes of SMILE** - 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons' and 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of engaged in the act of Begging' – provide comprehensive welfare and rehabilitation measures to the Transgender community and the people engaged in the act of begging.
 - Scheme provides for the **use of the existing shelter homes available** with the State/UT Governments and Urban local bodies for rehabilitation of the transgender persons.
 - In case of non-availability of existing shelter homes, new dedicated shelter homes are to be set up by the implementing agencies.

Focus:

- The focus of the scheme is extensively on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, basic documentation, education, skill development, economic linkages and so on.
- It is estimated that an approximate **60,000 poorest persons** would be benefited under this scheme for leading a life of dignity.
 - It provides Scholarships for Transgender Students studying in Class 9th and above till post-graduation to enable them to complete their education.
 - It has provisions for Skill Development and Livelihood under the **PM-DAKSH scheme**.
 - Through Composite Medical Health it provides a comprehensive package in convergence with **Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** supporting Gender-Reaffirmation surgeries through selected hospitals.
 - The Housing facility in the form of '**Garima Greh**' ensures food, clothing, recreational facilities, skill development opportunities, recreational activities and medical support etc. to the Transgender community and the people engaged in the act of begging.

Implementation:

- It will be implemented with the support of State/UT Governments/**Local Urban Bodies**, Voluntary Organizations, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), institutions and others.
- The **Provision of Transgender Protection Cell** in each state will monitor cases of offences and to ensure timely registration, investigation and prosecution of offences.
- The **National Portal & Helpline** will provide necessary information and solutions to the Transgender community and the people engaged in the act of begging when needed.

Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Transgenders:

- The scheme has been implemented in the selected cities on pilot basis having large concentrations of the Beggar and Transgender community.
- During the year 2019-20, this Ministry had released an amount of Rs. 1 Crore to **National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)** and Rs. 70 Lakh to **National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC)** for skill development programmes for beggars.

Note:

What are the Different Initiatives for Transgender Persons?

- An MoU has been signed with **National Health Authority** for a specialized Ayushman Bharat TG Plus card for providing more than 50 health benefit services to transgender persons and for first-time gender re-assignment as well as cosmetic treatments have been included under the Ayushman Bharat scheme for transgender persons.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission(Urban)** has included dedicated toilets for transgender persons in their policy guidelines.
- **National Portal for Transgender Persons**
- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020**
- **National Council for Transgender Persons**
- **Certificate of Identity**
- **Equal Opportunity Policy**

Global Burden of Cancer: WHO

Why in News?

Ahead of **World Cancer Day (4th February)**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)**'s cancer agency, the **International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)**, released the latest estimates of the Global Burden of **Cancer** in 2022.

- The IARC estimates highlighted the growing burden of cancer, the disproportionate impact on underserved populations, and the urgent need to address cancer inequities worldwide.

What are the Key Highlights of the Global Burden of Cancer in 2022 by WHO?

- **Global Burden:**
 - In 2022, there were an estimated **20 million new cancer cases and 9.7 million deaths**.
 - The estimated number of people alive within 5 years following a cancer diagnosis was 53.5 million.
 - About 1 in 5 people develop cancer in their lifetime.
- **Common Cancer Types:**
 - 10 types of cancer collectively comprised around **two-thirds of new cases** and deaths globally in 2022.

- **Lung cancer was the most commonly** occurring cancer worldwide with 2.5 million new cases accounting for **12.4% of the total new cases**.
- **Female breast cancer ranked second (2.3 million cases, 11.6%)**, followed by colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, and stomach cancer.

➤ Leading Causes of Death:

- **Lung cancer was the leading** cause of cancer death (1.8 million deaths, 18.7% of the total cancer deaths) followed by **colorectal cancer (900 000 deaths, 9.3%)**, **liver cancer**, breast cancer and stomach cancer.
 - **Lung cancer's re-emergence as the most common cancer** is likely related to persistent tobacco use in Asia.

➤ Cancer Inequities:

- There have been striking inequities in the cancer burden according to human development. This is particularly true for breast cancer.
- In countries with a very high **HDI (Human Development Index)**, 1 in 12 women will be diagnosed with **breast cancer in their lifetime** and 1 in 71 women die of it.
 - By contrast, in **countries with a low HDI**; while **only one in 27 women is diagnosed** with breast cancer in their lifetime, **one in 48 women will die from it**.
- Women in **lower HDI countries are 50% less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer** than women in high HDI countries, yet they are at a much higher risk of dying of the disease due to late diagnosis and inadequate treatment.

What are the Key Findings Related to India?

- India reported 1,413,316 new cases in 2022 with a **higher proportion of female patients** — 691,178 men and 722,138 women.
- **Breast cancer had the highest proportion in the country**, with 192,020 new cases, accounting for **13.6% of all patients** and **over 26% in women**.
- In India, **breast cancer was followed by lip and oral cavity** (143,759 new cases, 10.2%), cervix and uterine, lung, and oesophageal cancers.

Note:

- A recent study by **WHO** assessing the **cancer burden** in Asia, published in **The Lancet Regional Health**, found that **India alone accounted for 32.9% of global deaths** and 28.1% of new cases of lip and oral cavity cancer in 2019.
- This was on account of the widespread **consumption of smokeless tobacco (SMT)** such as **khaini, gutkha, betel quid** and paan masala in South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Worldwide, **SMT is responsible for 50% of the oral cancer burden.**
- As per the Lancet Global Health 2023, **India accounted for 23% of deaths that occurred due to cervical cancer globally.**
 - In **India, cervical cancer's five-year survival rate was 51.7%**. However, survival rates in India are lower compared to high-income countries such as the United States.

What are the Key Facts Related to World Cancer Day?

- **About:**
 - World Cancer Day is an international awareness day led by the **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)** celebrated on 4th February every year.
 - Cancer is caused by an uncontrolled, abnormal growth of cells in the body that causes lump or tumour in most causes.
 - It was first celebrated on 4th February 2000 at the **World Summit Against Cancer** for the New Millennium in Paris.
 - The **Paris Charter's mission** is to promote research, prevent cancer, improve patient services, raise awareness and mobilise the global community to make progress against cancer, and includes the adoption of **World Cancer Day.**
- **Theme 2024:**
 - Close the Care Gap.
 - The **theme aims to mobilise** the necessary attention and resources to ensure that the rising burden of cancer can be addressed in an equal manner across the globe and that all people in the world have access to **systematic testing, and early diagnosis and treatment.**

Cancer

- It is a complex and broad term used to describe a **group of diseases characterised by the uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells** in the body.
 - These **abnormal cells, known as cancer cells**, have the ability to invade and **destroy healthy tissues and organs.**
- In a healthy body, cells grow, divide, and die in a regulated manner, allowing for the normal functioning of tissues and organs.
 - However, in the **case of cancer, certain genetic mutations or abnormalities disrupt this normal cell cycle**, causing cells to divide and grow uncontrollably.

Cervical Cancer

- **Cervical cancer** develops in a **woman's cervix (the entrance to the uterus from the vagina).**
- Almost all cervical cancer cases (99%) are linked to infection with high-risk **human papillomaviruses (HPV)**, an extremely common virus transmitted through sexual contact.
 - Two HPV types (16 and 18) are responsible for nearly **50% of high grade cervical pre-cancers.**
- **Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women globally.** About 90% of the new cases and deaths worldwide in 2020 occurred in low- and middle-income countries.

What are the Government Initiatives related to Cancer?

- The **interim Budget 2024-25** encouraged the **vaccination of girls aged 9-14 years to prevent cervical cancer.**
- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke**
- **National Cancer Grid**
- **National Cancer Awareness Day**
- **HPV Vaccine**

Amendment to Surrogacy Rules

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian government has amended the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022** and allowed

Note:

married couples to use an **egg or sperm of a donor** in case one of the partners is suffering from a medical condition.

- This overturned a previous amendment made to the rules in **March 2023** that banned the use of donor gametes.

What are the Major Provisions of the Amended Surrogacy Rules?

- **Background:** The **March 2023** amended rules only permitted the **use of the intending couple's own gametes**, barring couples with specific medical conditions from having biological children through surrogacy.
 - These restrictions caused distress and challenged the right to parenthood for affected couples.
 - It faced legal challenges in the **Supreme Court** by a woman with **Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) Syndrome**, a congenital disorder causing infertility.
 - The Supreme Court expressed skepticism regarding the efficacy of these regulations, asserting that such rules undermined the fundamental objectives of surrogacy.
- **Recent Amended Provisions:** It allows surrogacy with donor gametes if either spouse in the intending couple is certified by the **District Medical Board** to require donor gametes due to a medical condition.
 - This implies that **couples still cannot opt for surrogacy if both partners have medical issues.**
 - For divorced or widowed women opting for surrogacy, it mandates the use of the woman's own eggs alongside donor sperm.

What is Surrogacy?

- **About:** Surrogacy is an arrangement where a woman, known as the **surrogate mother**, agrees to carry and deliver a baby for another individual or couple, known as the intended parents.
- **Types:**
 - **Traditional Surrogacy:** Traditional surrogacy involves using the intended father's sperm to fertilise the surrogate's egg.
 - The surrogate carries the pregnancy to term, and the **resulting baby is biologically related to the surrogate mother and the intended father.**

- **Gestational Surrogacy:** In gestational surrogacy, the baby is not biologically related to the surrogate.
 - An embryo, created using the intended father's sperm (or donor sperm) and the biological mother's egg (or donor egg), is implanted into the **surrogate's uterus for her to carry to term.**

Surrogacy Arrangements:

- **Altruistic Surrogacy:** It refers to a surrogacy arrangement where the surrogate does not receive financial compensation beyond reimbursement for medical expenses and other related costs.
 - The primary motivation for the surrogate in altruistic surrogacy is typically to help another individual or couple achieve their dream of having a child.
- **Commercial Surrogacy:** It involves a contractual agreement where the surrogate mother receives **financial compensation beyond just reimbursement for medical expenses** and other costs associated with the pregnancy.
 - This compensation may vary depending on factors such as location, legal regulations, and the specific terms of the surrogacy agreement.

What are the Other Provisions Related to Surrogacy in India?

- **Permissibility:** Under the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021**, Surrogacy is permissible only for **altruistic purposes** or for couples with proven infertility or disease.
 - **Commercial surrogacy**, including for sale or exploitation purposes, is strictly prohibited.
- **Eligibility Requirements for Couples:** Couples must be married for at least 5 years.
 - The wife must be aged between **25-50 years**, and the husband between **26-55 years**.
 - The couple must not have any living child, whether **biological, adopted, or through surrogacy**, except in cases of children with disabilities or life-threatening disorders.
- **Surrogate Mother Criteria:** The surrogate mother must be a close relative of the couple.
 - She must be a married woman with at least one child of her own.
 - Her age must be between **25-35 years**, and she must have only been a surrogate once in her life.

Note:

- **Parental Status upon Birth:** Upon birth, the child is legally recognized as the biological child of the intended couple.
 - Abortion of the fetus requires consent from both the surrogate mother and the relevant authorities, following the provisions of the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act**.

Kala Azar

Why in News?

India achieved significant progress in eliminating **Kala Azar (KA)**, reporting **less than one case per 10,000 population in 2023**, compared to previous years.

- Data from the **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme** revealed a decline in Kala Azar cases, with 595 cases and four deaths reported in 2023 compared to 891 cases and three deaths in 2022.

Note:

- India has not yet eliminated KA but has made substantial progress towards its elimination goal.
 - India's initial target year for Kala Azar elimination was 2010, which was later extended to 2015, 2017, and then 2020.
- The **WHO** defines elimination for KA as having **fewer than one case per 10,000 people at the sub-district (block Primary Health Centres) level** in India. Once achieved, the elimination is to be sustained for 3 years for KA elimination certification.
 - India will need to sustain this momentum over the **next three years to receive WHO certification**, considering that India has missed at least four deadlines for Kala Azar elimination.
- In Oct 2023, **Bangladesh became the first country, globally**, to be officially validated by the WHO for eliminating Kala Azar as a public health problem.

What are the Key Facts About Kala Azar?

- **About:**
 - Kala-azar (**visceral leishmaniasis**), also known as **Black Fever** is a fatal disease caused by a protozoan parasite **Leishmania donovani**.
- **Symptoms:**
 - It is characterised by irregular bouts of fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia.

- **Prevalence:**
 - Most cases occur in Brazil, east Africa and India. An estimated 50,000 to 90 000 new cases of VL occur worldwide annually, with only 25-45% reported to WHO. It has an outbreak and mortality potential.
- **Transmission:**
 - Leishmania parasites spread through bites of infected female sandflies, feeding on blood for egg production. Over 70 animal species, **including humans, can carry these parasites**.
- **Major Risk Factors:**
 - Poverty, poor housing, and sanitation.
 - Diets lacking essential nutrients.
 - Movement into high-transmission areas.
 - Urbanisation, deforestation, climate change.
- **Diagnosis and Treatment:**
 - Suspected visceral leishmaniasis cases require immediate medical attention. Diagnosis involves clinical signs combined with parasitological or serological tests.
 - Left untreated, it can be **fatal in 95% of cases**.
- **Prevention and Control:**
 - **Early diagnosis and prompt treatment** are crucial in reducing disease prevalence, and preventing disabilities, and death.
 - **Vector control, such as insecticide spray** and the use of insecticide-treated nets, helps reduce transmission by decreasing the number of sandflies.
 - **Effective disease surveillance** is important for monitoring and acting during epidemics and high case fatality rates.
 - **Social mobilization and strengthening partnerships**, including community education and collaboration with stakeholders, are critical for effective control.
- **India's Efforts to Control Kala Azar:**
 - The Government of India launched a **centrally sponsored Kala-azar control program in 1990-91**, which was later revised in 2015.
 - The program aimed to eliminate **Kala-azar by 2023**, aligning with the WHO **neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) Roadmap goal of 2030**.

Note:

- The **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), 2003** is an umbrella programme for prevention and **control of vector borne diseases** viz., malaria, lymphatic filariasis, **kala azar**, and chikungunya.
- **Recent Efforts:**
 - Rigorous indoor residual spraying effort aimed at curtailing sandfly breeding sites; application of a **special soil to seal crevices in mud walls**, preventing sandflies from nesting.
 - Pucca houses in KA-affected villages have been constructed under PMAY-G - A total of 25,955 houses in 2017-18 (1371 houses in Bihar & 24584 in Jharkhand).
 - Mobilisation of the **ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) network** to ensure completion of treatment for PKDL patients, who require a 12-week course of Miltefosine (an antileishmanial agent).

Post-kala-azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL)

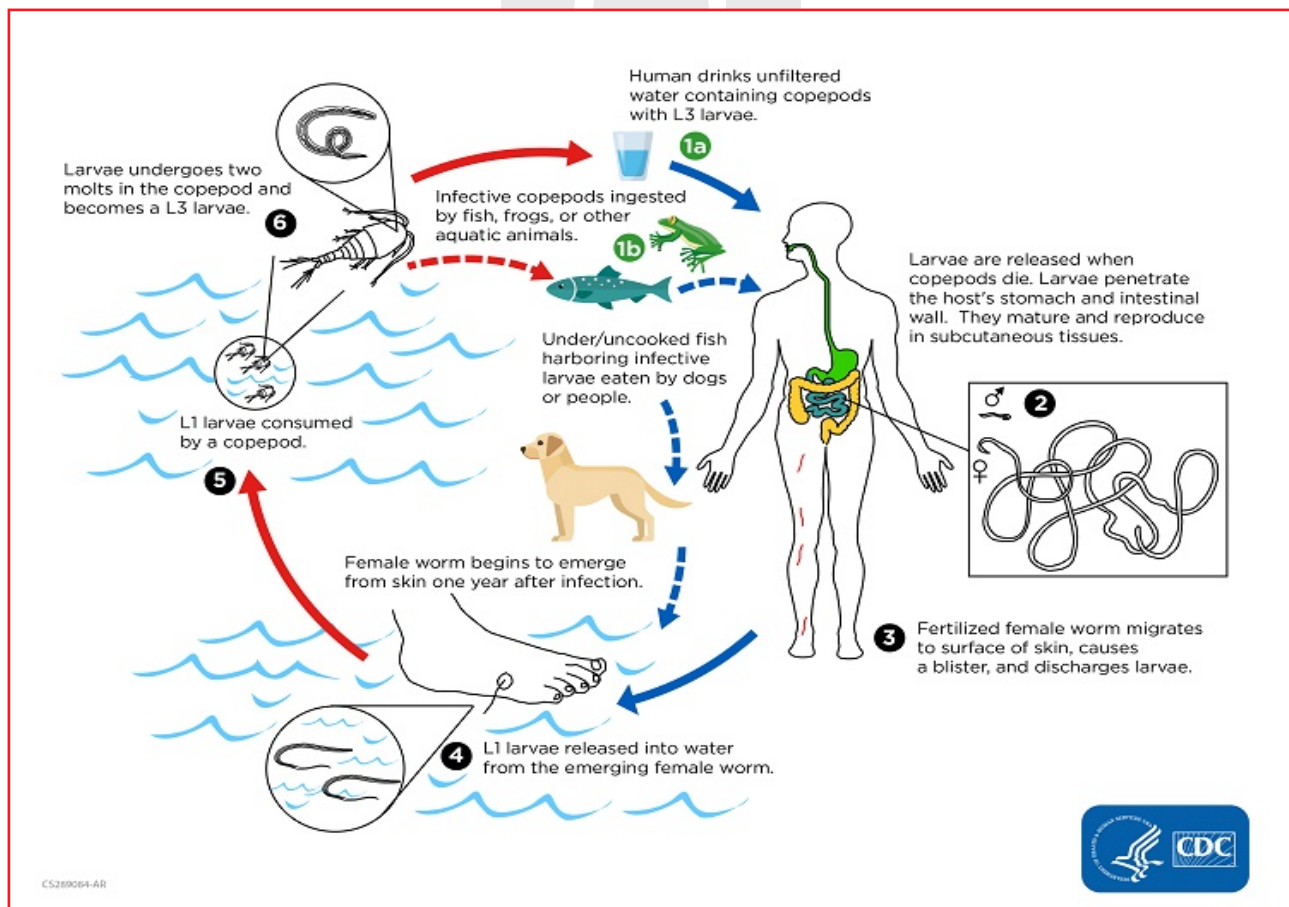
- PKDL is a skin condition that **follows visceral leishmaniasis**, causing rashes on the face, arms, and trunk.
- It affects mainly Sudan and the Indian subcontinent, with 5-10% of kala-azar patients developing it.
- PKDL may occur 6 months to a year after kala-azar treatment, potentially spreading Leishmania.

Guinea Worm Disease

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Health Organization's (WHO)** report has shed light on a remarkable milestone in global public health: **the imminent eradication of Guinea worm disease.**

- This **parasitic infection**, which **plagued millions in the 1980s**, has dwindled to just a **handful of cases in recent years**, signalling a triumph of human resilience and concerted eradication efforts.



Note:

What are the Key Facts About Guinea Worm Disease?

➤ About:

- Guinea worm disease, or Dracunculiasis is caused by the **Guinea worm (*Dracunculus medinensis*)**, a **parasitic nematode** is a debilitating parasitic disease that renders infected **individuals non-functional for weeks or months**.
- It primarily affects **people in rural, deprived, and isolated communities** who rely on stagnant surface water sources for drinking.
- In the mid-1980s, an estimated 3.5 million cases of dracunculiasis occurred in 20 countries worldwide, mainly in Africa and Asia.

➤ Transmission, Symptoms and Impact:

- The parasite is transmitted when people drink **stagnant water contaminated with parasite-infected water fleas**.
- The disease manifests with **painful skin lesions** as the worm emerges, causing **weeks of intense pain, swelling, and secondary infections**.
- More than **90% of infections occur in the legs and feet**, affecting individuals' **mobility and ability to work** or perform daily tasks.

➤ Prevention:

- There is **no vaccine or medication** to treat Guinea worm disease, but **prevention strategies have been successful**.
 - Strategies include heightened surveillance, preventing transmission from each worm through treatment and wound care, filtering water before drinking, larvicide use, and health education.

➤ Road to Eradication:

- Efforts to eradicate Guinea worm disease began in the 1980s, with significant contributions from organisations like **WHO**.
 - Countries are **certified as free of dracunculiasis transmission** after reporting **zero instances for at least three consecutive years**.
- Since 1995, WHO has certified 199 countries, territories, and areas as free of dracunculiasis transmission.

➤ India's Success Story:

- **India achieved Guinea worm disease elimination in the late 1990s** through rigorous public health measures, including water safety interventions and community education.
 - The government of **India received Guinea worm disease-free certification status** from the WHO in 2000.
 - India has eradicated **Smallpox (1980)**, **Polio (2014)**, **Plague, Rinderpest (the Cattle Plague)**, **Yaws** and **Maternal And Neonatal Tetanus (2015)**.

What is NITI Aayog?

- **NITI Aayog** is the apex public policy think tank of the Government of India.
- It replaced the Planning Commission on 1st January 2015 with emphasis on **'Bottom –Up' approach** to envisage the **vision of Maximum Governance, Minimum Government**, echoing the **spirit of 'Cooperative Federalism'**.

High-Risk Pregnancies in India

Why in News?

A recent study published in Journal of Global Health by researchers from the **ICMR's National Institute for Research in Reproductive and Child Health (NIRRCH)** in Mumbai, sheds light on the prevalence of **high-risk pregnancies** across India.

- A high-risk pregnancy indicates that a woman possesses one or more factors that elevate the **likelihood of health complications for either herself or the baby**, as well as an increased risk of preterm delivery.

What are the Key Findings of the Study?

- **High Prevalence:** The study found that **49.4% of pregnant women in India** had high-risk pregnancies.
 - Approximately **33%** of pregnant women had a single high-risk factor, while **16%** had multiple high-risk factors.
- **Regional Disparities:** States like **Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram**, along with **Telangana**, exhibited the highest prevalence of high-risk factors.

Note:



- Conversely, **Sikkim, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh** had the lowest prevalence of high-risk pregnancies.
- **Factors Contributing to High-Risk Pregnancies:**
 - **Birth Spacing:** Short birth spacing, defined as **less than 18 months between previous birth and current conception**, was identified as a primary factor contributing to high-risk pregnancies.
 - **Maternal Risk Factors:** These included factors such as maternal age (adolescent or older than 35 years), short stature, and higher body mass index (BMI).
 - **Lifestyle and Previous Birth Outcome Risks:** Lifestyle risk factors like **tobacco and alcohol use**, as well as previous adverse birth outcomes such as miscarriage, abortion, or stillbirth, were significant contributors to high-risk pregnancies.

What are the Indian Government Initiatives Related to Pregnant Women?

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:** It is being implemented as per provisions under **Section 4 of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** which provides for financial support for pregnant and lactating mothers to improve the health and nutrition for mother and child as well as compensation for wage loss.
- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY):** Provides cash assistance to pregnant women, especially from vulnerable sections, to encourage institutional delivery.
- **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK):** Entitles all pregnant women to free delivery, including **C-sections (Cesarean section)**, in public health institutions along with free transport, diagnostics, medicines, and diet.
- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):** Provides pregnant women a fixed day, free of cost assured and quality antenatal check up by a **Specialist/Medical Officer** on the 9th day of every month.
- **Surakshit Matratva Ashwasan (SUMAN):** Aims to ensure dignified, respectful, and quality healthcare at no cost for every pregnant woman and newborn in public facilities.

- **LaQshya:** Aims to improve the quality of care in **labour rooms**, potentially reducing complications and improving maternal and newborn outcomes.

Rights of Forest Dwellers and Thanthai Periyar Sanctuary

Why in News?

In recent events surrounding the notification of the **Thanthai Periyar Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu**, **forest-dwellers** expressed concerns about the **potential denial of their rights** under the **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 (FRA)**.

What are the Concerns Regarding the Notification of the Thanthai Periyar Sanctuary?

- The notification excludes **six tribal forest villages from the sanctuary**, confining them to a small area of 3.42 sq. km, without recognizing them as revenue villages.
- The notification also imposes **restrictions on cattle-grazing activities**, which may affect the traditional practices of the **Bargur cattle, a traditional breed native to the Bargur forest hills**.
- The notification does not mention the **consent of the forest rights holders or the gram sabha**, as required by the FRA, 2006.

Note:

- In March 2022, the **Madras High Court** revised an older order imposing a total ban on cattle grazing in all the forests of Tamil Nadu and **restricted the ban to National Parks, Sanctuaries, and Tiger Reserves**.
 - Tamil Nadu is the only state in the country where there is such a ban.
- This order is despite the FRA 2006, which acknowledges the **grazing and traditional resource access of nomadic or pastoralist communities**, this order applies to all forests, including National Parks, Sanctuaries, and Tiger Reserves. Grazing rights are community rights of the habitation-level villages and are to be regulated by their **gram sabhas**.

Note:

What is the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006?

➤ About:

- FRA, 2006 acknowledges the **rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities and traditional forest dwellers** to forest resources, essential for their livelihoods, habitation, and socio-cultural needs.
- The Act rectifies the historical injustice faced by these communities by recognizing their symbiotic relationship with forests, which was previously overlooked by forest management policies.
- **Forest Dwellers Rights Under FRA, 2006:**
 - Under the FRA, forest dwellers are granted **individual rights such as self-cultivation and habitation**, as well as **collective or community rights** including grazing, fishing, access to water bodies, and traditional seasonal resource access for nomadic and pastoral communities.
 - The Act also recognizes the rights of **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**, intellectual property rights, customary rights, and the right to protect, regenerate, or manage community forest resources sustainably.
 - Additionally, it provides for the **allocation of forest land for developmental purposes** to meet the basic infrastructural needs of forest-dwelling communities.
 - Importantly, the FRA works in conjunction with other relevant legislation such as the **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Settlement Act of 2013**, to safeguard forest dwellers from eviction without proper rehabilitation and settlement.
 - The Act further enjoins upon the **Gram Sabha (village assembly), to play a central role in the implementation of the Act.**
 - The Gram Sabha is also a highly empowered body under the Act, enabling the **tribal population to have a decisive say** in the determination of local policies and schemes impacting them.
 - FRA requires and authorises the gram sabha to determine and recognise forest rights and

protect and preserve the forests, wildlife, and biodiversity within their customary and traditional boundaries, including inside Protected Areas.

- Violations of the FRA, particularly concerning Scheduled Tribes, are considered crimes under the **2016 amendment to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989.**
- FRA states that **converting forest villages into revenue villages** is one of the forest rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

Note:

- When notifying a Protected Area under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act (WLPA), 1972**, the government must assess rights under the FRA, 2006 and obtain consent from the gram sabhas.
 - FRA 2006, being a later law, supersedes the WLPA, 1972. Any provisions in the WLPA that conflict with the FRA are considered null and void.

What are the Key Facts About ThanthaiPeriyar Sanctuary?

- The ThanthaiPeriyar Wildlife Sanctuary spans 80,114.80 hectares in the Bargur Hills of Erode district, Tamil Nadu.
- It has been declared the 18th wildlife sanctuary in the state, connecting the **Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve with the Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary.**
- Positioned at the junction of the **Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats**, the sanctuary boasts rich biodiversity.
- The sanctuary is part of the tiger corridor connecting **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, Male Mahadeshwara Hills Tiger Reserve, and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.**
 - Recognized by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority**, it supports a viable tiger population and is crucial for their conservation.
- The region is a significant part of the **Nilgiris Elephant Reserve**, housing a healthy population of elephants and **Indian Gaur.**
 - It serves as the catchment area for the **Palar River**, which feeds into the Cauvery River, supporting agricultural activities.

Note:

Comparison of Biosphere Reserve, National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary

Feature	Biosphere Reserve	National Park	Wildlife Sanctuary
Purpose	Promote sustainable development, conserve biodiversity, cultural heritage, and natural resources	Conserve natural environment, protect from human interference	Protect habitats of wild animals, promote breeding
Management	Internationally recognized under the UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) program and owned by the government.	Government has complete power over the national parks.	These can be under the government or owned under private entities.
Zones	Core zone (strictly protected), Buffer zone (limited human activities allowed), Transition zone (sustainable development encouraged)	Typically not divided into zones	Generally not divided into zones
Human Activities	Restricted in core zone, limited in buffer zone, encouraged in transition zone	Restricted, mainly for recreational purposes	Restricted to prevent disturbance to animals, limited educational access
Examples	Nanda Devi (Uttarakhand), Nokrek (Meghalaya)	Jim Corbett (Uttarakhand), Bandhavgarh (Madhya Pradesh)	Gir National Park (Gujarat), Chilka Lake Bird Sanctuary (Odisha)

Drive to Fight Cervical Cancer

Why In News?

The Indian Government intends to initiate a **three-phase vaccination drive** against **human papillomavirus (HPV)** for girls **aged 9-14**, aiming to mitigate the **risk of cervical cancer**.

- The vaccine also offers protection against the **HPV strains** that cause cancer of the **anus, vagina and oropharynx**. Additionally, it also protects against the **HPV strains** that are responsible for **genital warts**.

Note: The Serum Institute of India in 2023 launched an indigenous HPV vaccine known as **CERVAVAC**.

What is Cervical Cancer?

- **About:**

- Cervical cancer develops in a **woman's cervix**. It is the **4th** most common type of cancer among women, globally and **2nd most common** among women in India.
 - India contributes the largest share of the **global cervical cancer** burden; nearly **1 in every 4 deaths** globally due to **cervical cancer** (as per The Lancet study).
- Almost all cervical cancer cases (**99%**) are linked to infection with **high-risk Human Papillomavirus (HPV)**, an extremely common virus transmitted through sexual contact.
 - Effective primary (HPV vaccination) and secondary prevention approaches (screening for and treating precancerous lesions) will prevent most cervical cancer cases.
- When diagnosed, cervical cancer is **one of the most successfully treatable** forms of cancer, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively.

Note:

- India accounts for about a **fifth** of the global burden for **cervical cancer**, recording about **1.25 lakh cases** and about **75,000 deaths** each year.
- Types of Strain:
 - Persistent infections with certain **high-risk HPV strains** lead to nearly **85%** of all cervical cancers.
 - At least **14 HPV types** have been identified as **oncogenic** (potential to cause cancer).
 - Among these, **HPV types 16 and 18**, considered to be the most **oncogenic**, have been found to be responsible for about **70%** of all cervical cancer cases globally.

Global Risks Report 2024: WEF

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** has released the **Global Risk Report 2024**, highlighting some of the **most severe risks** we may face over the next decade, against a backdrop of rapid technological change, economic uncertainty, a warming planet and conflict.

- The report is based on a survey of nearly 1,500 experts, industry leaders and policymakers.



What are the Key Highlights of the Global Risk Report 2024?

- **Deteriorating Global Outlook:**
 - Various global events in 2023, including lethal conflicts, **Extreme Weather Conditions**, and societal discontent, have **contributed to a predominantly negative outlook**.
- **AI Powered Misinformation and Disinformation:**
 - Misinformation and disinformation are listed as the **most severe risks** over the next two years, highlighting **how rapid advances in technology also are creating new problems** or making existing ones worse.

- It is concerning that the boom in **Generative AI** chatbots like **ChatGPT** means that creating sophisticated synthetic content that can be used to manipulate groups of people won't be limited any longer to those with specialized skills.
- AI-powered misinformation and disinformation is emerging as a **risk just as billions of people in a slew of countries**, including large economies like the United States, Britain, Indonesia, India, Mexico, and Pakistan, are set to head to the polls in 2024 and next.
- **Structural Forces Shaping Global Risks:**
 - There are four structural forces shaping global risks over the next decade: **Climate change**, Demographic Bifurcation, Technological Acceleration, and Geostrategic shifts.

Note:

- These forces represent **longer-term shifts in the global landscape**, and their interactions will contribute to uncertainty and volatility.
- **Environmental Risks at the Forefront:**
 - Environmental risks, particularly extreme weather, dominate the risk landscape over all time frames.
 - Concerns about climate change, biodiversity loss, and critical changes to Earth **systems are evident, with potential irreversible consequences.**
- **Economic Strains and Inequality:**
 - The cost-of-living crisis and economic risks such as **Inflation** and economic downturn are **significant concerns for 2024.**
 - Economic uncertainty will **disproportionately affect low- and middle-income countries**, leading to potential digital isolation and worsening societal and environmental impacts.
- **Security Risks and Technological Advances:**
 - Interstate armed conflict is identified as a new entrant into the top risk rankings over the next two years.
 - Technological advances, especially in artificial intelligence, pose security risks as they enable non-state actors to access disruptive tools, potentially leading to increased conflict and crime.
- **Geopolitical Shifts and Governance Challenges:**
 - A deeper divide between global powers, especially between the **Global North and South**, may lead to **challenges in international governance.**
 - The growing **influence of states in the Global South**, combined with geopolitical tensions, could reshape security dynamics and impact global risks.

What is the World Economic Forum?

- **About:**
 - The WEF is a Swiss nonprofit foundation established in 1971, based in Geneva, Switzerland.
 - Recognized by the Swiss authorities as the international institution for public-private cooperation.
- **Mission:**
 - Committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.

- **Founder and Executive Chairman:** Klaus Schwab.
- Some **major reports published by WEF** are:
 - [Energy Transition Index.](#)
 - [Global Competitiveness Report.](#)
 - Global IT Report
 - WEF along with INSEAD, and Cornell University publishes this report.
 - [Global Gender Gap Report.](#)
 - Global Travel and Tourism Report.

Rise of Child Marriages in West Bengal

Why in News?

A recent *Lancet* study on **child marriage in India** highlighted an overall decrease in child marriage across the country. However, it emphasized that certain states, specifically **Bihar (16.7%), West Bengal (15.2%), Uttar Pradesh (12.5%), and Maharashtra (8.2%),** collectively contributed to over half of the total headcount burden of child marriages in girls.

- Despite the implementation of multiple **policy interventions in West Bengal aimed at curbing child marriage**, the region has experienced a **substantial surge of 32.3% in the incidence of child marriages.** This increase corresponds to over 500,000 additional girls getting married as children.

Note:

- **National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21):**
 - The National Family Health Survey-5 indicates that the prevalence of women **aged 20-24 years** married before 18 remains high in **West Bengal at 41.6%, compared to the national figure of 23.3%.**

Has Policy Intervention in West Bengal Effectively Curbed Child Marriage?

- **Policy Interventions to Stop Child Marriage in West Bengal:**
 - **The Kanyashree Prakalpa Scheme:**
 - Launched in 2013, Kanyashree Prakalpa incentivizes the **schooling of teenage girls aged 13 to 18** while simultaneously discouraging child marriage. The scheme has **covered 81 lakh girls**, according to the West Bengal Budget for 2023-24.

Note:

- The scheme received international recognition with the **United Nations Public Service Award in 2017**.
- While the **school enrolment of girls has increased in the State**, questions are being posed based on **National Family Health Survey** data and the Lancet study of whether the scheme has achieved its promise of arresting child marriage.
- **Rupashree Prakalpa:**
 - In addition to Kanyashree, the state government runs the Rupashree Prakalpa, **providing cash incentives for girls' marriages**.
 - Some families utilize benefits from both schemes, organizing marriages shortly after cashing in on the school scheme.
- **Educational Stride and Child Marriage Rates:**
 - Despite **girl's enrolment in schools has "significantly increased"** over the past few years and **yet the incidence of child marriage remains high** in West Bengal".
 - The All-India Survey of Higher Education for 2020-21 puts the number of **estimated enrolment of girls in West Bengal at 9.29 lakh**, which is higher than the boys enrolment which stood at 8.63 lakh.
 - As per NFHS- 5, the Purba Medinipur district with **over 88% literacy rate** has the highest incidence of **child marriage of more than 57.6%**.
 - Experts noted **migration in West Bengal fuels child marriage** as families fear **leaving unmarried daughters behind**, driven by societal norms and economic factors.
 - This perpetuates a cycle where cultural expectations prioritize early marriages for **wives to bear children while men work**.

What are the Initiatives to Tackle Child Marriage?

- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA)**
- **BetiBachaoBetiPadhao (BBBP) scheme.**
- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).**
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012.**
- **CHILDLINE.**

Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956

Why in News?

Recently, the Kerala High Court has widened the **definition of the word 'procure' in Section 5 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956**, to include customers seeking the services of prostitutes.

What is the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956?

➤ **About:**

- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITP), 1956, aims to prevent the **commercialisation of vices and the trafficking of females**.
- It delineates the legal framework surrounding sex work. While the act itself **does not declare sex work illegal, it prohibits running brothels**. Engaging in prostitution is legally recognized, but soliciting people and luring them into sexual activities are considered illegal.

➤ **Definition of Brothel:**

- Section 2 defines a brothel as any **place used for sexual exploitation or abuse for the gain** of another person or for the mutual gain **of two or more prostitutes**.

➤ **Definition of Prostitution:**

- Prostitution, as per the act, is the sexual exploitation or abuse of persons for commercial purposes.

➤ **Offenses Under the Act:**

- The section 5 of the act penalizes those who **procure, induce, or take individuals for prostitution purposes**. The punishment includes rigorous imprisonment for **3–7 years and a fine of Rs 2,000**.
 - For offenses against a **person's will or a child**, the maximum sentence can extend to fourteen years or life.
 - Child means a person who has not completed the age of **sixteen years**.

What did the Kerala High Court Rule?

➤ **The current case:**

- The petitioner was arrested for being a customer in a brothel. Accused of offenses under the ITP Act's Sections 3 (keeping a brothel or allowing

Note:

premises to be used as one), 4 (living on prostitution earnings), 5 (procuring, inducing, or taking persons for prostitution), 7 (punishing prostitution in or around public places),

- The accused filed a plea seeking discharge, arguing that as a **customer, he should not be implicated under the ITP Act.**

➤ Ruling:

- The Kerala High Court, while recognizing that the term **“procure” in section 5 is not explicitly defined in the 1956 Act**, interpreted it in the context of the act’s objective of suppressing immoral trafficking and preventing prostitution.

- The court ruled that the **term includes customers, and therefore, a customer can be charged under Section 5.**

➤ Implications of the Ruling:

- The Kerala High Court ruling expands the meaning of “procure” in Section 5, asserting that **customers, in addition to pimps and brothel-keepers**, can be held liable for procuring persons for prostitution.
- The ruling does not declare the petitioner guilty under Section 5; rather, it **allows charges to be filed, necessitating a trial.**
 - Notably, the petitioner was discharged of offences under Sections 3, 4, and 7 by the High Court.

What is the Legality of Sex Work?

➤ Sex Work as a Profession:

- The Supreme Court has **recognised sex work as a “profession”** and observed that its practitioners are **entitled to equal protection of the law and criminal law** must apply equally in all cases, on the basis of ‘age’ and ‘consent’.
 - The Court held that **Voluntary sex is not a crime.**

➤ Equality in Business:

- Courts have held that individuals, regardless of their chosen profession, have an **equal right to carry on any business.**
- The **Supreme Court of India** in *Budhadev Karmaskar v. State of West Bengal (2011)*, secured the rights of sex workers and emphasized the **protection afforded by Article 21.**

➤ Fundamental and Human Rights:

- In the case of *Gaurav Jain vs Union Of India And Ors (1989)* the Supreme Court recognized

the fundamental and human rights of sex workers, asserting their right to dignity and protection under the law.

- The Court found that the children of the sex workers have the **right to equality of opportunity, dignity, care, protection and rehabilitation** and to be part of the **“mainstream of social life” without any attached “pre-stigma”.**

What Initiatives Have Been Taken to Address Sex Workers?

➤ Ujjawala:

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing “Ujjawala” – a Comprehensive Scheme for the Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation, Re-integration and **Repatriation of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation.**

➤ National Commission for Women:

- The establishment of the **National Commission for Women** reflects the government’s commitment to ensuring the rights of women and girls involved in prostitution are protected.

➤ National Human Rights Commission:

- **NHRC** recognised sex workers as informal workers.

➤ Awareness Campaigns:

- The Supreme Court urged the government in 2018 to take action against the **exploitation of women in the sex industry** and consider legalization in specific locations with rigorous regulation.
 - In response to the court’s directive, the **government initiated widespread awareness campaigns** to educate the public about the risks associated with the commercial sex trade.

Sickle Cell Disease

Why in News?

- More than 1 crore people have been screened for **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)** under the **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission.**
- The National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission launched in **2023**, aims to eliminate sickle cell anemia from India by 2047.

Note:

What is Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)?

➤ About:

- SCD is a group of inherited **red blood cell** (RBC) disorders. RBCs **contain hemoglobin, a protein** that carries oxygen and healthy RBCs are round. In SCD, the hemoglobin is abnormal, which causes the RBCs to become hard and sticky and look like **a C-shaped farm tool called a “sickle.**

➤ Symptoms:

- Symptoms of sickle cell disease can vary, but some common symptoms include:
 - **Chronic Anaemia:** leading to fatigue, weakness, and paleness.
 - Painful episodes (also known as sickle cell crisis): these can cause sudden and intense pain in the bones, chest, back, arms, and legs.
 - Delayed growth and puberty

➤ Treatment:

- **Blood Transfusions:** These can help relieve anemia and reduce the risk of pain crises.
- **Hydroxyurea:** This is a medication that can help reduce the frequency of painful episodes and prevent some of the long-term complications of the disease.
- It can also be treated by bone marrow or **stem cell** transplantation.

➤ Government Initiatives to Tackle SCD:

- The government released technical operational guidelines for the prevention and control of sickle cell anaemia in 2016.
- The **State Haemoglobinopathy Mission** has been established in Madhya Pradesh to address the challenges in screening and management of the disease.
- **Anaemin Mukh Bharat Strategy.**

Prioritizing the Poor, Youth, Women, and Farmers

Why in News?

The Prime Minister of India has underscored the imperative of prioritizing the well-being of four groups: **the poor, youth, women, and farmers.**

- This emphasis reflects a commitment to ensuring dignity and respect for the deprived.

What are the Socioeconomic Dynamics of the Highlighted Groups in India?

➤ Poor:

- Multidimensional Poverty Index:
 - India has more than 230 million poor people.
 - According to the **2023 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index**, published by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, some **415 million Indians escaped poverty between 2005-06 and 2019-21.**
 - Approximately **18.7% of the population falls into the category of being ‘vulnerable’ to multidimensional poverty**, as defined by the UNDP.
 - This refers to individuals who, while not classified as poor, but have experienced deprivations in 20-33.3% of all weighted indicators.
 - **Cooking fuel, housing, and nutrition** are major areas of deprivation. Approximately 13.9%, 13.6%, and 11.8% of the population were classified as deprived in these respective metrics.
- Unemployment:
 - India’s **unemployment** rate rose to the highest level in over two years in October 2023, with **rural areas experiencing an increase in joblessness.**
 - The **National Sample Survey Office’s Periodic Labour Force Survey** for 2022-23 revealed a **decrease in unemployment from 5.3% to 2.4% in rural areas and from 7.7% to 5.4% in urban areas compared to 2017-18.**
 - The proportion of **self-employed** individuals in the total employed population increased from 52% in 2018-19 to 57% in 2022-23.
 - Self-employment covers various activities such as running a tea stall, farming, assisting in household enterprises, practising medicine, and undertaking unpaid work within one’s economic activities.
 - A high level of self-employment levels indicates a **lack of alternatives**, with individuals often adhering to these less rewarding jobs.

Note:

- ◆ Typically, **countries with lower per capita income** tend to have higher proportions of self-employed populations.

➤ Women:

- India ranked **127 out of 146 countries** in the **Global Gender Gap Report 2023** released by the **World Economic Forum** showing an improvement of 1.4% points and eight positions from 135 in 2022.
- According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** reports **Crimes against women rose by 4% in 2022** compared to 2021, with over 4.45 lakh crimes registered.
 - Majority of crimes were related to cruelty by husbands or relatives, kidnapping, assault, and rape.
 - 12 states and Union territories recorded crime rates higher than the national average.
- The **Women's Reservation Act, 2023** also known as the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**, was passed to reserve **one-third of seats** in legislative assemblies and Lok Sabha for women.

➤ Farmers:

- Farmers lost **standing crops to excess and untimely rain**, leading to a significant blow to their incomes.
 - **Southwest monsoon** was below normal and erratic, impacting **Kharif crop** yields in many parts of the country.
 - States like **Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand** are facing drought and drought-like conditions.
- Recurring losses due to the **pink bollworm pest on the BT cotton crop** in north India added to farmers' distress.
- NCRB data revealed an increase in **deaths by suicide** among those involved in farming.
 - At least **one farmer died by suicide every hour in India**, with 11,290 suicide cases reported in 2022.
 - Deaths by the **suicide of agricultural labourers were higher** than farmers/cultivators, with 53% of the suicide cases being agricultural labourers.
- The dependence of an average agricultural household for income has been increasing on wages from farming rather than crop production.

➤ Youth:

- According to the **World Bank** the **youth unemployment rate in India was at 23.2%**, higher than its neighbours Pakistan (11.3%), Bangladesh (12.9%), and Bhutan (14.4%), in 2022.
 - The unemployment rate in China stood at 13.2%, South Korea 6.9% and Singapore 6.1%.
 - Although the youth unemployment rate in India dropped from 23.9% in 2021, it is still marginally higher than the 22.9% recorded in the Pre-Covid year of 2019.
- The youth unemployment rate refers to those in the workforce who are aged 15 to 24 years and without a job, but actively seeking one.
- The **State of Working India 2023 study** found that unemployment among graduates under the age of 25 was at 42.3% in 2021-2022, while the overall joblessness rate was 8.7%.

What are the Related Initiatives Aimed at Addressing these Specific Groups?

➤ Poor:

- **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana**
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005**
- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana**
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana**

➤ Women:

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme**
- **Ujjawala Yojna**
- **Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme**
- **One Stop Centre**
- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013**
- **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), 2012**
- **NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR**
- **Mahila police Volunteers**
- **Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)**

Note:

- **Farmers:**
 - [The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi \(PM-KISAN\)](#)
 - [Agriculture Infrastructure Fund \(AIF\)](#)
 - [Kisan Credit Cards \(KCC\)](#)
 - [Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana \(PKVY\)](#)
 - [Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana](#)
- **Youth:**
 - [YUVA: Prime Minister's Scheme For Mentoring Young Authors](#)
 - [National Youth Policy-2014](#)
 - [National Skill Development Corporation](#)
 - [Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme](#)

Huntington's Disease

Why in News?

Recently, a study by researchers from the University of Szeged in Hungary published in *Scientific Reports* has uncovered new insights into **Huntington's disease using fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*)** as a model organism.

- This innovative approach has provided promising revelations about disease progression and potential therapeutic targets.

What is Huntington's Disease?

- **About:**
 - Huntington's disease is a severe **neurodegenerative disorder** affecting the central nervous system.
 - It is caused by a **mutation in the HTT gene**, producing a faulty **huntingtin (Htt) protein**.
 - Mutant Htt proteins are cleaved into toxic fragments, disrupting various cellular processes.
- **HTT Gene and Polyglutamine Tract:**
 - The HTT gene codes for the huntingtin protein crucial for nerve cell functioning.
 - Mutations in the HTT gene result in an expanded **polyglutamine tract** in the Htt protein, leading to misfolding and dysfunction.
 - The severity of Huntington's disease correlates with the length of the expanded polyglutamine tract.
 - Huntington's disease is **inherited in an autosomal dominant manner**, which means that a **person only needs to inherit one copy of the mutated gene** from either parent to develop the condition.

- Each child of a parent with Huntington's disease has a 50% chance of inheriting the mutation.

- **Symptoms:**
 - Initial symptoms include forgetfulness, loss of balance, and clumsiness in daily tasks.
 - Symptoms worsen over time, affecting mood, and reasoning, and leading to uncontrollable movements. Patients face difficulties in speaking, swallowing, and walking as the disease advances.
 - Symptoms typically emerge **between ages 30-50**.
- **Treatment:**
 - There is **currently no cure for Huntington's disease**, and available treatments only alleviate symptoms.

Delhi High Court Reverses Abortion Approval Order

Why in News?

Recently, the **Delhi High Court** has reversed its order that permitted a **26-year-old woman** to terminate her 29-week-old **pregnancy**.

- The court, now **advocating for the unborn child's right to life**, has directed the woman to undergo delivery at either AIIMS or any central or state hospital.

What is the Status of Medical Termination of Pregnancy in India?

- **Background:** In the 1960s, in the wake of a high number of induced abortions taking place, the Union government ordered the constitution of the **Shantilal Shah Committee** to deliberate on the **legalisation of abortion in the country**
 - Resulting from its recommendations, the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971** was enacted, permitting safe and legal abortions to protect women's health and decrease maternal mortality.
- **MTP Act and Subsequent Amendment:**
 - The **MTP Act, 1971** permits licensed medical professionals to perform **safe and legal abortions** in specific predetermined situations (as provided under the legislation), to protect women's health and decrease maternal mortality.
 - It underwent subsequent amendments through the **MTP Amendment Act, 2021**.
- **Provisions for Terminating Pregnancy:**

Note:

Time Since Conception	MTP Act, 1971	MTP (Amendment) Act, 2021
Up to 12 weeks	On the advice of one doctor	On advice of one doctor
12 to 20 weeks	On advice of two doctors	On advice of one doctor
20 to 24 weeks	Not allowed	On advice of two doctors for special categories of pregnant women
More than 24 weeks	Not allowed	On advice of medical board in case of substantial fetal abnormality
Any time during the pregnancy	On advice of one doctor, if immediately necessary to save pregnant woman's life	On advice of one doctor, if immediately necessary to save pregnant woman's life

Note: Under MTP Amendment Act 2021, special categories of women, includes **survivors of rape, victims of incest** and other vulnerable women like **differently abled and minors**.

- **Other Key Features of MTP Amendment Act 2021:**
 - **Termination Due to Failure of Contraceptive Method or Device:** The MTP Act permitted married women to terminate pregnancies up to 20 weeks in case of contraceptive method or device failure.
 - The MTP Amendment Act **extended the allowance to unmarried women as well**.
 - **Medical Boards:** The board will assess pregnancies beyond 24 weeks for substantial foetal abnormalities.
 - It should comprise specialists like gynaecologists, paediatricians, and radiologists, and will be established by all state and union territory governments.
 - **Privacy Measures:** A registered medical practitioner can only disclose details of a terminated pregnancy to **individuals authorised by law**. Violation carries penalties of **imprisonment up to a year, fines, or both**.
- **Constitutional Stance:**
 - Although the **Constitution does not explicitly mention the right to abortion**, certain fundamental rights have been associated with **reproductive rights and women's healthcare**.
 - **Article 21 - Right to Life and Personal Liberty:** The Supreme Court interprets this broadly to encompass reproductive autonomy and healthcare (**Suchita Srivastava vs. Chandigarh Administration case, 2009**)
 - Also, recently the **Supreme Court** observed that the **rights of an unborn child must be balanced with a woman's reproductive right**.

Note: The fetus's moral status, legal standing, and constitutional rights still remain a grey area in India. However, **section 20 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, protects the fetus's life from conception**.

- **Zygote:** The initial cell formed by the fusion of sperm and egg during fertilisation.
- **Embryo:** Early stage of development, from the moment of fertilisation until about the 8th week of pregnancy.
- **Fetus:** The later stage of prenatal development, starting from the **ninth week until birth**, characterised by the development of organs and systems.

Idate Commission Report

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** emphasized the importance of executing the recommendations of **the Idate Commission report**, to address the concerns of **Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic, and De-Notified Tribes** (NTs, SNTs, and DNTs) in India.

- The NHRC urged the government to repeal the **Habitual Offenders Act, 1952**, or appoint a representative from the De-notified Tribe community along with **nodal officers** as mandated by the Act.
 - Additionally, it recommended excluding DNTs/NTs/SNTs from SC/ST/OBC categories and creating tailored policies for them.

What were the Major Recommendations of the Idate Commission?

- **About:**
 - It was **established in 2014** under the leadership of **Bhiku Ramji Idate**, to compile a statewide catalogue of Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs).

Note:

- Another mandate was to recognize those excluded from **Scheduled Castes (SC)**, **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** and **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** categories and recommend welfare measures for their well-being.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Assign individuals not identified in the SCs/STs/OBCs list to the OBC category.
 - Enhance **legal and constitutional safeguards** by incorporating a third schedule into the **Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** to prevent atrocities and restore the feeling of security amongst the members of the community.
 - Create a **permanent commission** with legal standing for the DNTs, SNTs, and NTs.
 - Form a **distinct department** to address the welfare of these communities **in states with significant populations**.
 - Undertake a **thorough survey of DNT families** to determine their estimated numbers and distribution.

Who are Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes?

- **About:**
 - They are also known as '**Vimukt Jatis**'. These communities are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.
 - De-notified communities, once labelled as '**born criminals**' during British rule under laws like the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871**.
 - They were officially de-notified by the **Indian Government in 1952**.
 - A few of these communities which were listed as de-notified were also nomadic.
 - **Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities** are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living in one place all the time.
 - Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes **never had access to private land** or home ownership.
 - While most DNTs are spread across the **Scheduled Castes (SC)**, **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** and **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST or OBC categories.

- **Major Committees/Commissions for NTs, SNTs, and DNTs Communities:**
 - The **Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee**, 1947 constituted in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh).
 - **Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee**, 1949.
 - **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 was repealed** based on the recommendation of this committee.
 - **Kaka Kalelkar Commission** (also called first **OBC Commission**), 1953.
 - The **B P Mandal Commission**, 1980.
 - The commission also made some recommendations related to the issue of NTs, SNTs, and DNTs Communities.
 - The **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC)**, 2002 held that **DNTs have been wrongly stigmatised as crime prone** and subjected to high handed treatment as well as exploitation by the representatives of law and order and general society.
- **Distribution:**
 - In India, roughly **10% of the population** is composed of NTs, SNTs, and DNTs Communities.
 - While the number of Denotified Tribes is about 150, the population of Nomadic Tribes consists of about 500 different communities.
 - It has been estimated that **South Asia** has the world's **largest nomadic population**.

What Developmental Efforts have been Taken for these Tribes?

- **Dr Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs:**
 - This **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** was launched in 2014-15 for the welfare of those DNT students who are not covered under **SC, ST or OBC**.
 - The scheme of **Pre-matric Scholarships** for DNT students is helpful in spreading education amongst DNT children, especially the girl child.
- **Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostels for DNT Boys and Girls:**
 - This Centrally Sponsored Scheme, launched in 2014-15, is implemented through State Governments/UT Administrations/Central Universities.

Note:

- The goal of the program is to offer hostel accommodations to DNT students who do not fall under the categories of SC, ST, or OBC.
 - This support is intended to facilitate their pursuit of higher education.
- **Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs:**
 - It aims to provide **free competitive exam coaching**, health insurance, housing assistance, and livelihood initiatives.
 - It ensures expenditure of Rs. 200 crores to be spent over five years beginning 2021-22.
 - The **DWBDNCs** (Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities) has been tasked with the implementation of this scheme.

Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality

Why in News?

India established the “Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality” at the 54th annual **World Economic Forum (WEF)** in Davos, gaining full support from WEF for promoting **women’s empowerment and gender equality**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality?

- The alliance is a response to the **G20 Summit 2023 Leaders’ Declaration** and India’s commitment to women-led development.
 - It seeks to build on the initiatives of the Engagement Group and frameworks like **Business 20, Women 20, and G20 EMPOWER**.
 - The G20 Alliance for the **Empowerment and Progression of Women’s Economic Representation (G20 EMPOWER)** is an initiative that aims to increase **women’s leadership and empowerment in the private sector**.
- The **primary objective of this new Alliance** is to bring together global best practices, knowledge sharing and investments in the **identified areas of women’s health, education, and enterprise**.

- Supported by the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, the alliance will be housed and anchored by the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Centre for Women Leadership**.
 - **CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organisation** that works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India.
- The **WEF** has come on board as a ‘**Network Partner**’ and **Invest India** as an ‘**Institutional Partner**’.
 - **Invest India** is a national Investment Promotion & Facilitation Agency. It was set up in **2009** as a **non-profit venture** under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The alliance aims to champion women-led development, leveraging India’s spectacular inclusive growth story and its philosophy of “**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Prayas**” (**Together with all, Development for all and Effort for all**).

Multiple Sclerosis

Why in News?

- **Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)** obtained from the bones and teeth of ancient Europeans who lived up to **34,000 years** ago provides insight into the origin of the often-disabling neurological disease **Multiple Sclerosis**.
 - The findings stemmed from research involving ancient DNA sequenced from **1,664 people** from various sites across **Western Europe and Asia**.

What are the Key Observations?

- These ancient genomes were then compared with modern DNA from the UK Biobank, comprising about 410,000 self-identified “white-British” people, and more than 24,000 others born outside the United Kingdom.
- One striking discovery related to **Multiple Sclerosis**, a chronic disease of the brain and spinal cord that is considered an autoimmune disorder.

Note:

- The researchers identified a pivotal migration event about 5,000 years ago at the start of the Bronze Age when livestock herders called the Yamnaya people moved into Western Europe from an area that includes modern Ukraine and southern Russia.
- They carried genetic traits that at the time were beneficial, and protective against infections that could arise from their sheep and cattle.
- As sanitary conditions improved over the millennia, these same variants increased Multiple Sclerosis risk.

What is Multiple Sclerosis?

➤ About:

- **Multiple Sclerosis (MS)** is a chronic autoimmune disease, a condition in which the body attacks itself by mistake. It affects the **central nervous system (CNS)**.
 - In **MS**, the immune system attacks and damages the **myelin sheath**, a protective covering that

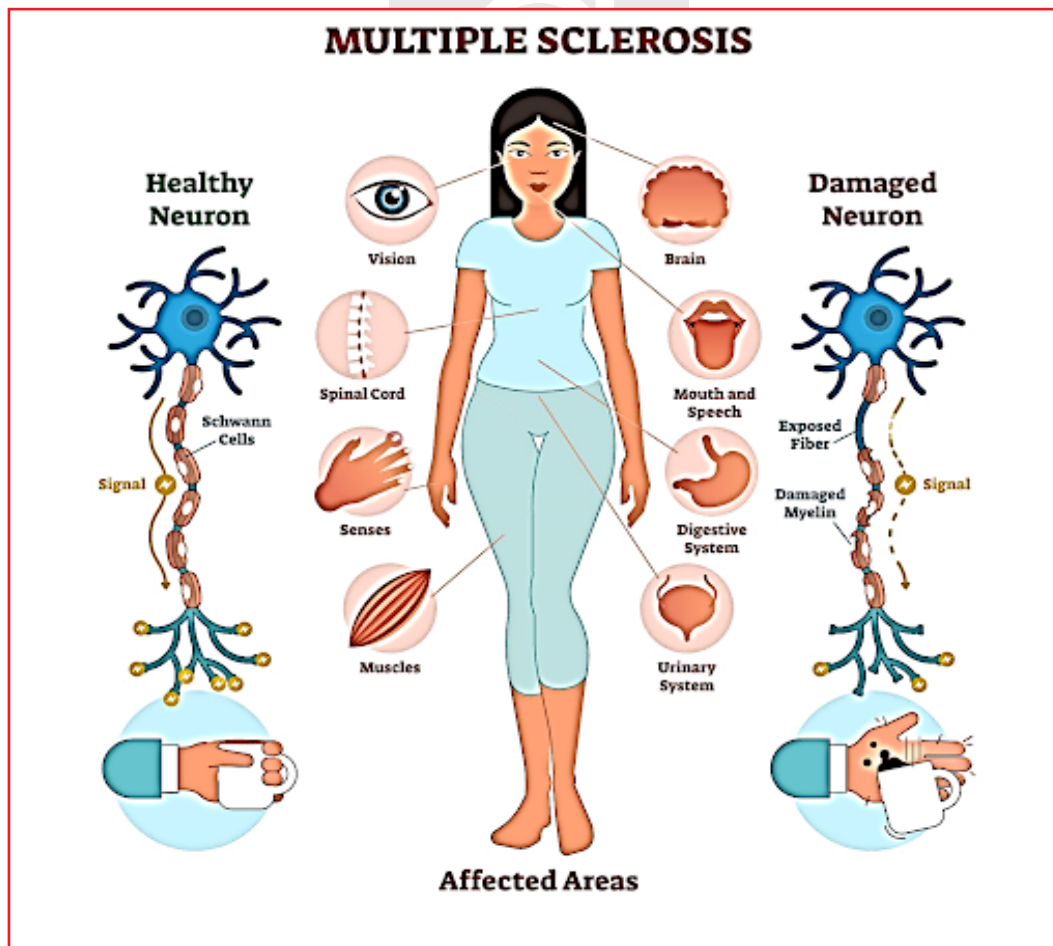
surrounds the **nerve fibres** in the **brain** and **spinal cord**, causing a range of symptoms.

➤ Symptoms:

- Muscle weakness and Numbness
- A person may have difficulty emptying their bladder or need to urinate frequently or suddenly
- Bowel problems, Fatigue, Dizziness, and damaged nerve fibers in the spinal cord.
- Since symptoms are common, people don't often recognise the disease early and often it takes many years for someone to be diagnosed, as it is impossible to determine a specific cause or trigger.

➤ Causes:

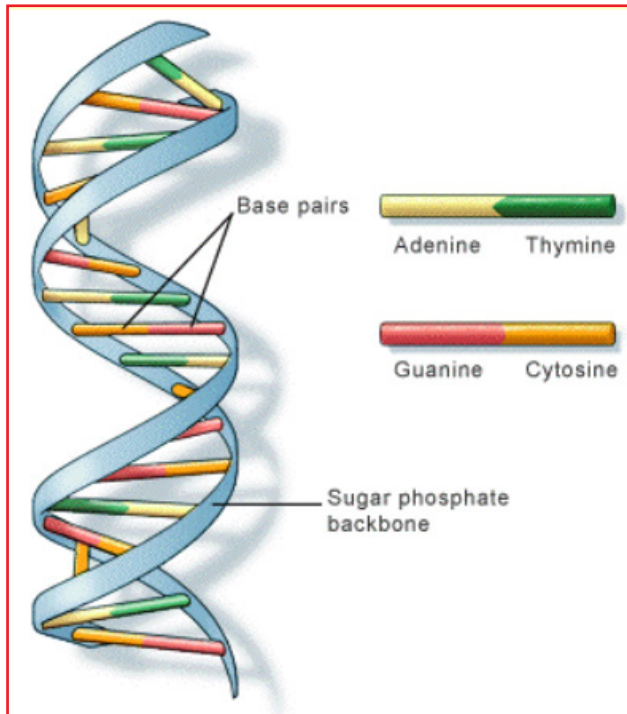
- The exact cause of the disease is unknown, but it could be a combination of:
 - Genetic factors may pass down in the genes
 - Smoking and Stress
 - Vitamin D and B12 deficiency



Note:

What is Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA)?

- **Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)** is an organic molecule with a complex molecular structure.
 - DNA molecule's strands are made up of a **long chain of monomer nucleotides**. It is arranged in a double helix structure.
- **James Watson** and **Francis Crick** discovered that DNA is a **double-helix polymer** in **1953**.
- It is essential for the transfer of the genetic characteristic of the living being from one generation to the other generation.
- The majority of DNA is found in the **cell nucleus** so it is called nuclear DNA.



Cabo Verde Declared A Malaria-Free Country

Why in News?

- Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** has declared Cabo Verde as a **Malaria-free** country.
- Cabo Verde now joins **Mauritius and Algeria** as the third country in the WHO African region to be **certified as malaria-free**.

What is the Malaria Elimination Certification Process?

- **About:**
 - WHO certifies a country as **malaria-free when it demonstrates the interruption** of nationwide malaria transmission for **at least 3 consecutive years and** has a fully functional surveillance and response system preventing re-establishment of indigenous transmission.
- **Global Status:**
 - Till now, WHO has awarded the 'malaria-free' certification to **43 countries and 1 territory**.
 - **South East Asian Region:** Maldives (2015) and Sri Lanka (2016) are certified malaria-free by WHO.
 - India is **not certified** as Malaria free.

What is Malaria?

- Malaria is a **life-threatening mosquito borne blood disease** caused by plasmodium parasites.
 - There are **5 Plasmodium parasite species** that cause malaria in humans and 2 of these species – *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* – pose the greatest threat.
- Malaria is predominantly **found in the tropical and subtropical areas of Africa**, South America as well as Asia.
- Malaria is spread by the bite of an **infected female Anopheles mosquito**.
 - The mosquito becomes infected after biting an infected person. The malaria parasites then enter the bloodstream of the next person the mosquito bites. The parasites travel to the liver, mature, and then **infect red blood cells**.
- Symptoms of malaria include fever and flu-like illness, including shaking chills, **headache, muscle aches, and tiredness**. Notably, malaria is both preventable and curable.

What are the Initiatives Related to Malaria?

- **Global:**
 - [WHO's Global Malaria Program\(GMP\)](#)
 - [E-2025 Initiative](#)
- **India:**
 - [National Framework for Malaria Elimination 2016-2030](#)
 - National Vector-Borne Disease Control Programme
 - National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP)
 - High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) Initiative
 - [Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India \(MERA-India\)](#)

Note:

What are the Key Facts About Cabo Verde?



© Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

- **Geographical Location:**
 - Cabo Verde, also known as Cape Verde, is a **group of islands situated off the west coast of Africa**.
 - It is located near **Senegal** and is the **closest point to the African** continent.
- **Archipelago Structure:**
 - The country is composed of ten islands and five islets.
 - These are **divided into two main groups**: the windward islands (Barlavento) and the leeward islands (Sotavento).
- **Population:**
 - The majority of the population in **Cabo Verde** is of **mixed European and African descent**.
 - **People of this mixed heritage** are often referred to as **“mestiço” or “Crioulo.”**
- **Capital:**
 - The capital city of Cabo Verde is Praia.

➤ Languages:

- Portuguese is the official language.
- Cape Verdean Creole, or simply Creole, is also widely spoken and is considered a significant part of the cultural identity.

Concerns Related to Anganwadi Workers

Why in News?

Anganwadi workers in Andhra Pradesh are on strike demanding better wages and benefits. The State government has invoked the **Essential Services and Maintenance Act (ESMA), 1971**, against protesting Anganwadi workers and helpers.

- The order prohibits strikes by them for **six months in the State**, citing the impact of their ongoing indefinite strike on the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** at Anganwadi Centres.

What are the Anganwadi Services and Role of Anganwadi Workers?

➤ ICDS Scheme and Anganwadi:

- The **ICDS scheme** was launched in India on 2th October 1975. It was renamed as **Anganwadi Services** and the services are now offered as part of the **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0**.
 - It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** implemented by the States/UTs providing early childhood care and development of the beneficiaries i.e **children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers** through a large network of **Anganwadi workers (AWW) and Helpers (AWH)**.

- **Services Provided by Anganwadi:**



Note:

- It has been provided to all eligible beneficiaries, namely, children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers through the platform of Anganwadi Centres across the country.
 - Three of the services viz. **Immunization, Health Check-up and Referral Services** are related to health and are provided through **National Rural Health Mission & Public Health Infrastructure**.
- **Tracking of Anganwadi Services:** ICT platform **Poshan tracker** has been designed to capture real-time data on implementation and monitoring of Anganwadi Services across the country.
 - It provides a 360 - degree view of the activities of the **Anganwadi Centre (AWC), service deliveries of Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)** and complete beneficiary management.
- **Major Roles and Responsibilities of AWWs:**
 - Community Outreach and Mobilization:
 - **Registering Beneficiaries:** Identifying and registering pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under six years old who are eligible for ICDS services.
 - **Mobilizing Communities:** Encouraging community participation in Anganwadi activities, raising awareness about ICDS programs, and promoting healthy behaviors.
 - Childcare and Early Childhood Education:
 - **Managing Anganwadi Centers:** Ensuring the cleanliness and hygiene of the center, maintaining records, and preparing teaching materials.
 - **Providing Pre-school Education:** Conducting **age-appropriate play activities, storytelling sessions, and basic learning activities** to prepare children for formal schooling.
 - **Monitoring Growth and Development:** Regularly measuring **children's height and weight, identifying any developmental delays**, and referring them for further interventions if needed.
- **Counseling Parents:** Providing guidance on childcare practices, child nutrition, and healthy habits.
- Health and Nutrition:
 - **Distributing Supplementary Nutrition:** Providing **hot cooked meals, take-home rations, and nutritional supplements** to address malnutrition, especially among pregnant and lactating mothers and children under six years old.
 - **Conducting Health Check-ups:** Monitoring children's health for common illnesses, conducting basic health checkups, and referring them to health facilities if needed.
 - Also, to guide **Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA)** engaged under **National Rural Health Mission** in the delivery of health care services.
 - **Immunization:** Assisting healthcare personnel in organizing and facilitating immunization drives for children, ensuring timely vaccinations.
 - **Raising Awareness:** Educating mothers and communities about health, hygiene, **sanitation**, and healthy child development practices.

Status of Adivasi Livelihoods (SAL) Report, 2022

Why in News?

Recently, a report **Status of Adivasi Livelihoods (SAL) Report, 2022**, released by the non-profit organization **PRADAN** highlights that **Food subsidy** through **Public Distribution System (PDS)** has reduced the stress that Adivasi households would have faced due to lower income.

Note:

- The aim of this report is to understand the status of livelihoods of **Scheduled Tribes** from India's central belt.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- The **SAL Report, 2022** is based on a household survey covering a sample of 6,019 households.
 - The report revealed that the average annual income for Adivasi households in Madhya Pradesh and in Chhattisgarh is much less than the national average annual income per agricultural household during the agricultural year **2018-19**.
- In Chhattisgarh, the food and other items consumed by an Adivasi household in a year have a market price of almost **Rs 18,000**.
 - Only around **13%** of this amount is spent by households to procure those goods. The remaining **87%** of the amount is the subsidy given by the government.
- An Adivasi household in Madhya Pradesh procures goods from PDS worth **Rs 10,000** market price annually, spending only **22%** of the amount to procure them.
- In Madhya Pradesh, 32% of Adivasi households, 27% of non-Adivasi households, and 61% of **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** households reported being severely food insecure.
- In Chhattisgarh, 27% of Adivasi households, 42% of non-Adivasi households, and 29% of PVTG households reported being severely food insecure.
- The areas of Madhya Pradesh's west, dominated by the **Bhil community** (which overlaps into neighbouring Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra), had the **highest average household income** among both Adivasi and non-Adivasi households.
 - It was **1.5 times higher** than other regions of the state.
- Adivasi women enjoy more autonomy than their non-Adivasi counterparts. But the workload of doing

household chores and livelihood activities is mostly borne by Adivasi women.

- Gender discrimination remains alive in decision-making practices and also customary practices.

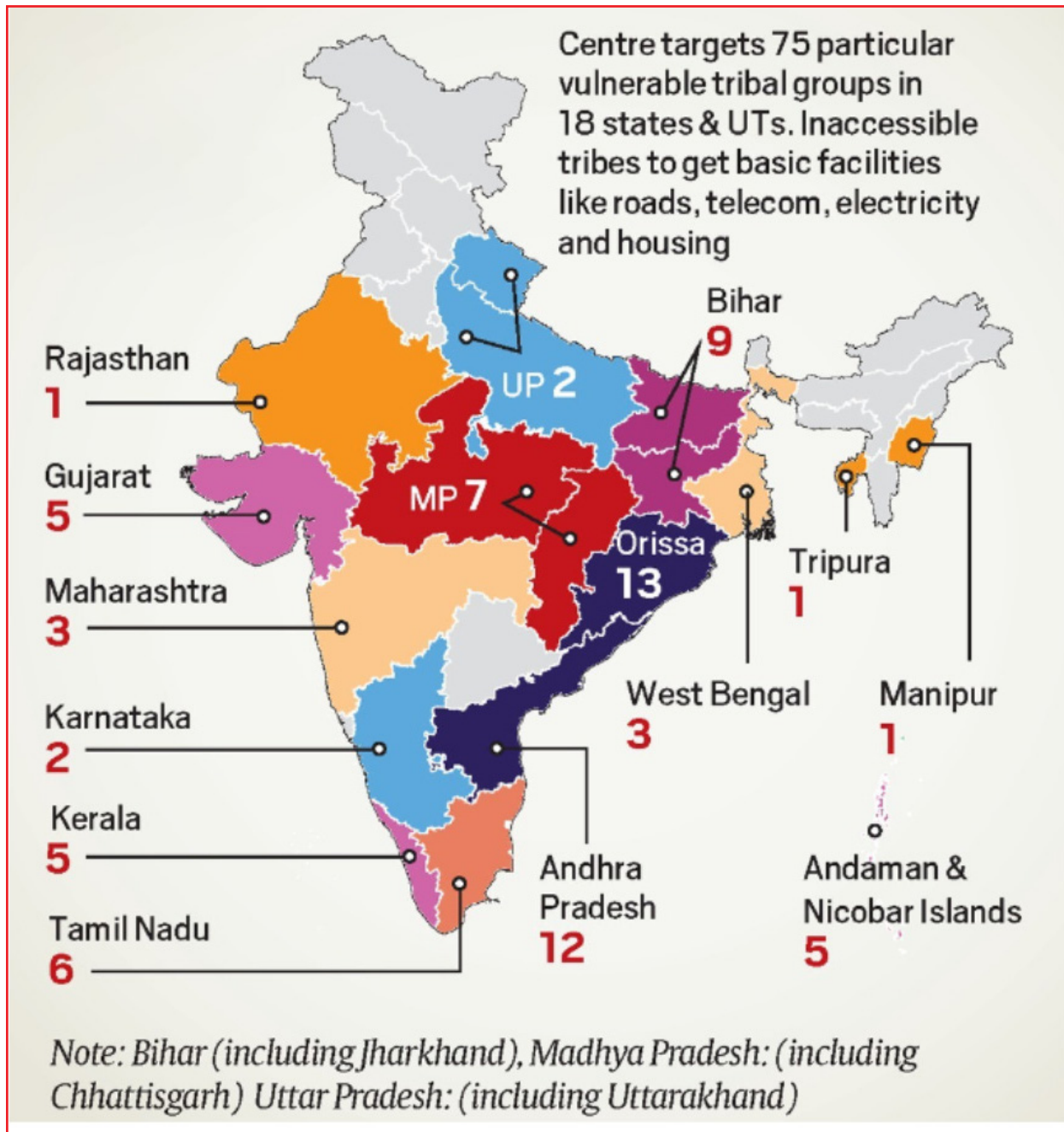
Who are the Bhil Tribes?

- The Bhil are one of the **largest tribal groups**, living in **Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh** and **Rajasthan**.
- The name is derived from the word '**billu**', which means **bow**.
- The Bhil are known to be **excellent archers coupled** with deep knowledge about their local geography.
- Traditionally, experts in **guerrilla warfare**, most of them today are **farmers** and **agricultural labourers**. They are also skilled **sculptors**.

Who are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)?

- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the **tribal groups**. Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- In **1973**, the **Dhebar Commission** created **Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)** as a separate category, which are less developed among the tribal groups. In **2006**, the Government of India renamed the **PTGs** as **PVTGs**.
- In this context, in **1975**, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared **52** such groups, while in **1993** an additional **23 groups** were added to the category, making it a total of **75 PVTGs** out of **705 Scheduled Tribes**.
 - Among the **75 listed PVTG's** the highest number are found in **Odisha**.

Note:



Human Trafficking

Why in News?

Operation Storm Makers II, orchestrated by **Interpol**, has illuminated the **expanding network of fraud schemes associated with human trafficking**.

- It mobilized law enforcement in 27 countries across Asia and other regions to target human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

What are the Major Highlights of Operation Storm Makers II?

- **Arrests and Charges:** The operation resulted in the apprehension of 281 individuals across various countries on charges spanning **human trafficking, passport forgery, corruption, telecommunications fraud, and sexual exploitation**.
- **Rescues and Investigations:** 149 human trafficking victims were rescued, initiating over 360 investigations,

Note:

a substantial number of which are currently under active pursuit by law enforcement agencies.

- **Telangana Case:** According to Interpol, the Telangana police registered one of the **first cases in India of human trafficking committed for the purpose of forcing victims to commit cyber fraud.**
 - An accountant was lured to a Southeast Asian country and forced into participating in online fraudulent schemes **under inhumane conditions.**
 - His release was secured after a ransom payment.

Note: Interpol or the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO) is the world's largest international police organization. Interpol's mission is to help police around the world work together to make the world safer.

- It has 196 member countries. India is one of the oldest members of Interpol and joined the organization in 1949.
- It uses a secure network that allows countries to contact each other and the General Secretariat. It also allows them to access Interpol's databases and services in real-time.

What is the Status of Human Trafficking in India?

- **About Human Trafficking:**
 - Human trafficking refers to the **illegal trade and exploitation of people**, typically for the purposes of forced labour, sexual exploitation, or involuntary servitude.
 - It involves the **recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of individuals** through **threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, or deception** for the purpose of exploiting them.
- **Status in India:**
 - According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, India identified over 6,500 human trafficking victims in 2022, with **60% of them being women and girls.**
- Constitutional & Legislative Provisions related to Trafficking in India:
 - **Constitutional Prohibition: Article 23** prohibits **human trafficking and begar (forced labour without payment).**

- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA):** This legislation serves as the primary law aimed at preventing trafficking specifically for commercial sexual exploitation.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:** Enacted on 14th November 2012, this act is dedicated to shielding children from sexual abuse and exploitation.
 - It provides clear definitions for various forms of sexual abuse, encompassing penetrative and non-penetrative assaults, as well as sexual harassment.
- **Other Specific Legislations:** Various other laws target trafficking in women and children, including the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**, the **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**, the **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986**, the **Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994**, and pertinent sections in the Indian Penal Code, such as Sections 372 and 373 that address the selling and buying of girls for prostitution.
- **State-Specific Legislation:** States have also enacted specific laws to tackle trafficking. For instance, The **Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012**, is one such state-level legislation aimed at addressing this issue.
- **Related International Convention:**
 - **UN Convention (UNTOC):** India ratified the **UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)** which includes a Protocol specifically addressing the Prevention, Suppression, and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children.
 - **Legislative Action:** The **Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013**, was enacted to align with the Protocol's provisions, offering a precise definition of human trafficking.
 - **SAARC Convention on Trafficking:** India ratified the **SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.**
 - **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** Also known as the International Bill of Rights for Women. It was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
 - India ratified CEDAW in 1993.

Note:

Mental Health Initiatives in India

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has shed light on the initiatives aimed at addressing **mental health** concerns in the country.

What are the Highlighted Mental Health Initiatives?

- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP):**
 - The **NMHP**, initiated in 1982 and restructured in 2003, aims to **modernize mental health facilities and upgrade psychiatric wings** in medical institutions.
 - Additionally, the **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)** since 1996 has focused on community mental health services at the primary healthcare level, spanning 716 districts.
 - DMHP provides outpatient services, counselling, psycho-social interventions, and support for severe mental disorders at community health and primary health centres.
 - Together, they constitute a comprehensive strategy for mental health care in India.
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme:**
 - NTMHP was launched in October 2022, to further improve access to quality mental health counselling and care services in the country.
 - **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru** is the National Apex Centre, coordinated activities of **Tele MANAS** across India.
 - 25 States/UTs have established 36 **Tele Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation Systems (MANAS)** Cells for extending mental health services.
 - Handling a total of 63,806 calls on the helpline number.
- **NIMHANS and iGOT-Diksha Collaboration:**
 - NIMHANS provides psychosocial support and training through the **(iGOT)-Diksha platform**.
 - Online training for health workers conducted by NIMHANS on the (iGOT)-Diksha platform.
- **Ayushman Bharat – HWC Scheme:**
 - The **Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs)** are part of the **Ayushman Bharat Programme**.

- The program aims to provide a wider range of services, including preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care (a specialized medical approach that **aims to improve the quality of life for people with serious illnesses**).

- Operational guidelines on **Mental, Neurological, and substance use disorders (MNS)** at **Health and Wellness Centres (HWC)** have been released under the ambit of Ayushman Bharat.
- **Addressing Pandemic-Induced Mental Health Challenges:**
 - The Government has established a **24/7 helpline offering psychosocial support to various population segments**.
 - Issuance of guidelines and advisories catering to **different societal groups**.
 - Advocacy through diverse media platforms to manage stress and anxiety, fostering a supportive environment.
- **Financial Support for Mental Health Institutions:**
 - The District Mental Health Programme receives a fund allocation of Rs. 159.75 Crore for States/UTs under the **National Health Mission for 2022-23**.

Other Initiatives Related to Mental Health

- [World Mental Health Day.](#)
- [Kiran Helpline.](#)
- [Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram.](#)

Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023: WHO

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** has released a report titled **The Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023**, revealing critical findings and insights regarding road traffic fatalities and safety across the globe.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Road Traffic Fatalities:**
 - Road traffic deaths worldwide **decreased by 5% between 2010 and 2021**, totaling 1.19 million fatalities annually.
 - 108 UN member nations reported a drop in road traffic deaths during this period.

Note:

- India **witnessed a 15% increase in fatalities**, rising from **1.34 lakh in 2010 to 1.54 lakh in 2021**.
- **Countries with Significant Reductions:**
 - Ten countries **succeeded in reducing road traffic deaths by over 50%**: Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Denmark, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.
 - Thirty-five more countries made notable progress, reducing deaths by 30% to 50%.
- **Regional Distribution of Deaths:**
 - 28% of global road traffic deaths occurred in the **WHO South-East Asia Region**, 19% in the **Western Pacific Region**, 19% in the African Region, 12% in the Region of the Americas, 11% in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and 5% in the European Region.
 - Low- and middle-income **countries bear a disproportionate burden**, with 90% of deaths occurring in these nations despite having only 1% of the world's motor vehicles.
- **Vulnerable Road Users:**
 - 53% of all road traffic **fatalities are vulnerable road users**, including pedestrians (23%), riders of powered two- and three-wheelers (21%), cyclists (6%), and users of micro-mobility devices (3%).
 - Pedestrian **deaths rose by 3% to 274,000**, while cyclist deaths increased by nearly 20% to 71,000 between 2010 and 2021.
 - However, deaths among car and other 4-wheeled light vehicle occupants slightly decreased, **making 30% of global fatalities**.
- **Progress on Safety Standards and Policies:**
 - Just six countries have laws that meet WHO best practice for all risk factors (speeding, drink-driving, and use of motorcycle helmets, seatbelts and child restraints) while 140 countries (two-thirds of UN Member States) have such **laws for at least one of these risk factors**.
 - A limited number of countries have legislation covering key vehicle safety features and require safety inspections for road users.
- **Call for Action:**
 - Global Motor-Vehicle Fleet Growth is expected to double by 2030, urging the need for robust safety regulations and infrastructure improvements.
 - The report sets a baseline for efforts to meet the United Nations Decade of Action 2021–2030 target to halve road traffic deaths by 2030.

What are the Initiatives Related to Road Safety?

- **Global:**
 - Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):
 - The declaration was signed at the second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety held in Brazil. India is a signatory to the Declaration.
 - The countries plan to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 3.6** i.e., to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.
 - **Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030:**
 - The **UN General Assembly** adopted resolution “Improving global road safety “ with the ambitious target of preventing at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030.
 - The Global Plan aligns with the **Stockholm Declaration**, by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to road safety.
 - The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) :
 - It is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer roads.
- **India:**
 - **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019:**
 - The Act hikes the penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, juvenile driving, etc.
 - It provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
 - It also provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the Central Government.
 - **The Carriage by Road Act, 2007:**
 - The Act provides for the regulation of common carriers, limiting their liability and declaration of the value of goods delivered to them to determine their liability for loss of, or damage to, such goods occasioned by the negligence or criminal acts of themselves, their servants or agents and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Note:

- The Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2000:
 - The Act provides for the control of land within the National Highways, right of way and traffic moving on the National Highways and also for removal of unauthorized occupation thereon.
- National Highways Authority of India Act, 1998:
 - The Act provides for the constitution of an authority for the development, maintenance and management of NHs and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Bihar Reservation Law and Breaching 50% Limit

Why in News?

Recently, Bihar Reservation Laws were passed in Bihar Assembly, **increasing the quantum of reservations in jobs and education in the State to 75%**, breaching the 50% Rule upheld by the **Supreme Court (SC)**.

- This has sparked debate around the **permissible limits of reservations in India**, particularly in view of the “50%” limit prescribed by the Supreme Court of India in the Mandal Commission case (Indra Sawhney, 1992).

What are the Key Highlights of the Bihar Reservation Laws?

- These laws are the **Bihar Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes) Amendment Act-2023** and the **Bihar (in admission in educational institutions) Reservation Amendment Act, 2023**.
- Under the amended Act, there will be a total of 65% reservation in both the cases, including 20% for **Scheduled Castes**, 2% for **Scheduled Tribes**, 18% for Backward Classes and 25% for Extremely Backward Classes.
- Apart from this, EWS (people from economically weaker general category) already approved under the Central Act will continue to get 10% reservation.

What is the 50% Rule?

➤ About:

- The 50% rule, historically upheld by the Supreme Court, dictates that reservations for jobs or education in India **should not exceed 50% of the total seats or positions**.
- Initially established by a seven-judge bench in the 1963 M.R. In The Balaji case, reservations were considered an “**exception**” or “**special provision**” under the constitutional framework, thereby restricted to a maximum of 50% of available seats.
- However, the understanding of reservations evolved in 1976 when it was acknowledged that reservations are not an exception but a component of equality. Despite this shift in perspective, **the 50% limit remained unchanged**.
- A nine-judge bench in the **Mandal commission case in 1990** reaffirmed the **50% limit and held that it is a binding rule**, and not merely a matter of prudence. However, it is not a rule without exceptions
- States **may surpass the limit in specific circumstances**, notably to provide reservations to communities marginalized and excluded from the social mainstream, **irrespective of geographical location**.
- Moreover, the Supreme Court’s recent affirmation of the 103rd Constitutional Amendment validates an additional 10% reservation for **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)**.
 - This means that the **50% limit applies only to non-EWS reservations**, and States are permitted to reserve a total of 60% of the seats/posts including EWS reservations.
- **Other States Crossing the Limit:**
 - Other States that have already surpassed the 50% limit, even excluding the EWS quota, are **Chhattisgarh (72%), Tamil Nadu (69%**, under a 1994 Act protected under the ninth Schedule of the Constitution), and several north-eastern States including Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland (80% each).
 - Lakshadweep has a **whopping 100% reservations for Scheduled Tribes**.
 - Previous attempts by **Maharashtra and Rajasthan** have been struck down by the courts.

Note:

Constitution and Reservation

- **77th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1995:** The Indra Sawhney verdict had held there would be reservation only in initial appointments and not promotions.
 - However, addition of the article 16(4A) to the Constitution, empowered the state to make provisions for reservation in matters of promotion to SC/ST employees, if the state feels they are not adequately represented.
- **81st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2000:** It introduced Article 16(4B), which says unfilled SC/ST quota of a particular year, when carried forward to the next year, will be treated separately and not clubbed with the regular vacancies of that year.
- **85th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001:** It provided for the reservation in promotion that can be applied with 'consequential seniority' for the government servants belonging to the SCs and STs with retrospective effect from June 1995.
- **103rd amendment to the Constitution (2019):** **10% reservation for EWS (Economically Weaker Section).**
- **Article 335:** It says that the claims of SCs and STs shall be taken into consideration constitutively with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Why in News?

Human Rights Day is observed annually on **10th December** to commemorate the approval of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** by the **UN General Assembly** in 1948.

- This year 2023 marks the **75th anniversary** of the UDHR.
- 2023 Theme: **Freedom, Equality and Justice for All.**

What is Human Rights?

- These are rights **inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.**

- These include the **right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture**, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many More.
- Nelson Mandela had stated **"To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity"**.
- **Article 1 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."
 - **And Article 2 says that** everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms the declaration sets out, "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- **Articles 12 to 35 of the Indian Constitution** provide for the Right to Equality, Right to Freedom, Right Against Exploitation, Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural & Educational Rights, Saving of Certain Laws and Right to Constitutional Remedies.

What is Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)?

- **About:**
 - The 30 rights and freedoms include civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy and economic, social and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health and education, etc.
 - India took an active part in the drafting of the UDHR.
 - The UDHR is not a treaty, so it does not directly create legal obligations for countries.
 - The UDHR, together with the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** and its two Optional Protocols (on the complaints procedure and on the death penalty) and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** and its Optional Protocol, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights.
 - This declaration, established as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, played a foundational role in shaping the international order that emerged after the devastation of **World War II.**

Note:

➤ Achievements:

- The Non-Binding Nature of the Declaration:
 - The UDHR, established in 1948, **is not a legally binding treaty in itself**. However, its principles have been widely adopted and integrated into the legal frameworks of numerous countries.
- **Influence and Global Impact:**
 - The UDHR's significance transcends its non-binding status, having served as a catalyst for over 70 human rights treaties globally. Its influence is evident in movements such as **decolonization, anti-apartheid, and various freedom struggles worldwide**.
 - Without the UDHR, **a fragmented landscape with differing standards could have emerged**, creating a potentially more challenging situation.

➤ The Universal Standard and Ongoing Relevance:

- Despite some criticisms asserting its inapplicability to specific religions, cultures, or regions, UNDR's arising from agreements building on the 1948 declaration, underscores its enduring relevance.
- The **Vienna Declaration and Program of Action in 1993**, for instance, further solidified the principles set forth in the UDHR.

NCRB's Crime in India 2022 Report

Why in News?

The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** has recently unveiled its annual report titled "**Crime in India for 2022**," providing a comprehensive overview of **crime trends across the nation**.

What are the Key Highlights of NCRB's Crime in India 2022 Report?

➤ Overall Crime Statistics:

- A total of over 58,00,000 **cognizable crimes** were registered, comprising both the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** and **Special & Local Laws (SLL)** crimes.
 - The registration of cases witnessed a **4.5% decline** compared to 2021.

➤ Crime Rate Decline:

- The crime rate per lakh population dropped from **445.9 in 2021 to 422.2 in 2022**.

- This decline is considered a more reliable indicator, considering the **impact of population growth on absolute crime numbers**.

➤ Safest City:

- Kolkata emerged as the **safest city in India for the third consecutive year**, recording the **least number of cognisable offences** per lakh population among metropolises.
 - **Pune (Maharashtra)** and **Hyderabad (Telangana)** secured the second and third positions, respectively.

➤ Rise in Cyber Crimes:

- Cybercrime reporting **surged by 24.4%**, totalling 65,893 cases, a significant surge from 52,974 cases in 2021.
- Cyber fraud constituted the majority of cases (64.8%) of registered cases, followed by **extortion** (5.5%), and **sexual exploitation** (5.2%).
 - The crime rate under this category rose from 3.9 in 2021 to 4.8 in 2022.

➤ Suicides and Causes:

- In 2022, India witnessed a **significant surge in suicides**, totalling over 1.7 Lakh cases, reflecting a concerning **increase of 4.2% compared to 2021**.
- The **suicide rate also rose by 3.3%**, calculated as the number of suicides per lakh of the population.
 - Major causes included **'Family Problems,' 'Marriage Related Problems,' Bankruptcy and indebtedness, 'Unemployment and professional issues' and Illness'**.
- **Maharashtra reported the highest number of suicides**, followed closely by Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Telangana.
- **Daily wage earners constituted a significant portion**, accounting for 26.4% of the total suicides.
- **Agricultural workers and farmers** were also disproportionately affected, forming a substantial part of the suicide statistics.
 - This was followed by unemployed persons, who comprise 9.2% of all suicides reported in India in 2022. Among all suicides reported in the year, **over 12,000 were of students**.

➤ Escalating Crimes Against SCs and STs:

- The Crime in India report highlighted an overall increase in crimes and atrocities against **Scheduled Castes (SC)** and **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** persons.

Note:



- States like **Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana** experienced a surge in such cases in 2022.
- **Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan** persist as key contributors, consistently ranking among the top five states with the highest occurrences of crimes and atrocities against SC and ST communities.
- Other states witnessing elevated levels of such offences include **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Punjab**.
- **Crimes Against Women:**
 - A total of 4,45,256 cases of crime against women were reported in 2022, marking a 4% increase from 2021.
 - Dominant categories included '**Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives**,' '**Kidnapping & Abduction of Women**,' and '**Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage Her Modesty**.'
- **Crimes Against Children:**
 - Cases of crimes against children showed an increase of 8.7% compared to 2021.
 - A majority of these cases related to **kidnapping and abduction** (45.7%) and 39.7% were filed under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act**.
- **Crime against Senior Citizens:**
 - Cases of crimes against senior citizens rose by 9.3% to 28,545 cases compared to 26,110 cases in 2021.
 - A bulk of these cases (27.3%) related to hurt followed by **theft** (13.8%) and **forgery, cheating, and fraud** (11.2%).
- **Animal Attacks on the Rise:**
 - The NCRB report reveals a concerning trend in the number of **people dying or getting injured due to animal attacks**.
 - A significant **19% increase** in such incidents was recorded in 2022 compared to 2021.
 - **Maharashtra reported the highest number of cases**, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh followed with varying numbers of reported cases.
 - In addition, the number of **animal/reptile and insect bites cases** also increased by **16.7%**.
 - The highest number of bite cases were reported from Rajasthan followed by Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, respectively.
- **Environment-Related Crime:**
 - The total number of **environmental crimes in India** decreased by around **18% in 2022**, compared to 2021.
 - **Environment-related offenses include violations under seven acts :**
 - **The Forest Act, 1927, Forest Conservation Act, 1980, The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, The Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, The Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000, National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.**
 - The cases registered for violating the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981** and the **Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974** have increased by around **42%**.
 - Violations registered under the **Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986** also have increased by around **31%**.
 - **Forest offences** increased in four states **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Haryana**.
 - **Wildlife offences** increased in five states including **Bihar, Punjab, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand**.
 - **Rajasthan**, with the maximum number (30%) of wildlife crime cases in the country, recorded a **50% increase** in such offenses in 2022 compared to 2021.
- **Offences Against the State:**
 - Offences against the State exhibited a slight increase in 2022 compared to the previous year.
 - There was approximately a 25% rise in cases registered under the **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)** during this period.
 - Conversely, cases under the **sedition Section** of the IPC experienced a significant decline.
 - The decrease in sedition cases may be attributed to the **Supreme Court's** decision in May 2022 to keep sedition cases in abeyance (hold).
- **Rise in Economic Offences:**
 - Economic offences are categorized into **criminal breach of trust, forgery, cheating, fraud (FCF), and counterfeiting**.

Note:

- FCF accounted for the majority of cases (1,70,901 cases), followed by criminal breach of trust (21,814 cases) and counterfeiting (670 cases).
- The Crime in India report disclosed that government authorities confiscated **fake Indian currency notes (FICN)** totaling over Rs.342 crore in 2022.
- **Crimes Against Foreigners:**
 - 192 cases registered against foreigners, a **28% increase from 150 cases in 2021**.
 - 56.8% of victims were from the Asian continent, while 18% were from African countries.
- **High Chargesheeting Rates:**
 - States with the **highest charge sheeting rates under IPC crimes are Kerala, Puducherry, and West Bengal**.
 - Chargesheeting rate reflects cases where police reached the stage of framing charges against the accused, out of the total true cases (where a charge sheet was not laid but a final report submitted as true, plus the total cases charge-sheeted).

What is the National Crime Records Bureau?

- NCRB was set up in 1986 to function as a **repository of information on crime and criminals** to assist the investigators in linking the crime to the perpetrators based on the recommendations of the **Tandon Committee, National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Taskforce (1985)**.
 - It is part of the **MHA and is headquartered in New Delhi**.
- It also acts as a **“national warehouse” for the fingerprint records** of Indian and foreign criminals, and assists in locating interstate criminals through fingerprint search.
- The NCRB has four divisions: Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), Crime Statistics, Finger Prints, and Training.
- **NCRB Publications:**
 - **Crimes in India, Accidental Deaths and Suicides, Prison Statistics, and Reports on Missing Women and children in India.**
 - These publications serve as principal reference points on crime statistics not only for police officers but also for criminologists, researchers, media and policymakers not only in India but abroad as well.

2023 World Malaria Report

Why in News?

The **2023 World Malaria Report**, recently released by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, sheds light on the alarming **malaria** situation in India and globally.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Global Malaria Overview:**
 - The 2023 World Malaria Report reveals a global surge with an estimated **249 million cases in 2022, surpassing pre-pandemic levels**.
 - **Covid-19** disruptions, **drug resistance**, humanitarian crises, and **climate change** pose threats to the global malaria response.
 - Twenty-nine countries accounted for 95% of malaria cases globally.
 - Four countries, **Nigeria (27%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (12%), Uganda (5%), and Mozambique (4%)**, accounted for almost half of all malaria cases globally.
- **India's Malaria Scenario:**
 - In 2022, **India** accounted for a staggering **66% of malaria cases** in the WHO South-East Asia Region.
 - **Plasmodium vivax**, a protozoal parasite, contributed to almost 46% of cases in the region.
 - Despite a **55% reduction in cases since 2015**, India remains a significant contributor to the global malaria burden.
 - India faces challenges, including a surge in cases in 2023 linked to unseasonal rainfall.
 - **India and Indonesia accounted for about 94% of all malaria deaths** in the WHO South-East Asia Region.
- **Regional Impact:**
 - **Africa bears the highest malaria burden**, accounting for 94% of cases and 95% of global malaria deaths in 2022.
 - The WHO South-East Asia Region, including India, managed to contain malaria over the last two decades, with a **77% reduction in cases and deaths since 2000**.
- **Climate Change and Malaria:**
 - Climate change emerges as a major driver, affecting malaria transmission and overall burden.

Note:

- Changing climate conditions enhance the sensitivity of the malaria pathogen and vector, facilitating its spread.
- WHO emphasizes the substantial risk climate change poses to malaria progress, necessitating sustainable and resilient responses.
- **Global Eradication Goals:**
 - WHO aimed to reduce malaria incidence and **mortality rates by 75% in 2025 and 90% in 2030.**
 - The world is off-track, with a **55% gap for 2025 incidence reduction and 53% for fatality rate reduction.**
- **Challenges in Malaria Eradication:**
 - Funding gaps for malaria control increased from USD 2.3 billion in 2018 to USD 3.7 billion in 2022.
 - Research and development funding hit a 15-year low at USD 603 million, raising concerns about innovation and progress.
- **Malaria Vaccine Advancements and Achievements:**
 - The report emphasizes notable progress in malaria prevention through the phased introduction of the **WHO-recommended malaria vaccine, RTS,S/AS01,** in African nations.
 - Rigorous evaluations in Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi reveal a significant **decrease in severe malaria and a 13% reduction in early childhood deaths,** affirming the vaccine's effectiveness.
 - This achievement, combined with existing interventions like bed nets and indoor spraying, forms a comprehensive strategy, leading to improved overall outcomes in these regions.
 - In October 2023, WHO recommended a second safe and effective malaria vaccine, **R21/Matrix-M.**
 - The availability of two malaria vaccines is expected to increase supply and make broad-scale deployment across Africa possible.
- **Call for Action:**
 - WHO emphasizes the need for a substantial pivot in the fight against malaria, calling for increased resources, strengthened political commitment, data-driven strategies, and innovative tools.
 - Sustainable and resilient malaria responses aligning with climate change mitigation efforts are deemed essential for progress.

World AIDS Day 2023

Why in News?

Every year on 1st December, **World AIDS Day** is commemorated globally to raise awareness about Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and honor those who have succumbed to it.

- World Aids Day was first observed in 1988 when the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** recognised the day.
- The theme for World AIDS Day 2023 is '**Let communities lead.**'

What is HIV/AIDS Disease?

➤ About:

- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an infection that attacks the body's immune system.
 - AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection that occurs when the body's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus.
- HIV attacks **CD4, a type of White Blood Cell (T cells)** in the body's immune system.
 - T cells are those cells that move around the body detecting anomalies and infections in cells.
- After entering the body, **HIV multiplies itself and destroys CD4 cells,** thus severely damaging the human immune system. Once this virus enters the body, it can never be removed.
- The CD4 count of a person infected with HIV reduces significantly. In a healthy body, CD4 count is between 500- 1600, but in an infected body, it can go as low as 200.

➤ Transmission:

- HIV can spread through multiple sources, by coming in direct contact with certain body fluids from a person infected with HIV, who has a detectable viral load. It can be blood, semen, rectal fluid, vaginal fluid or breast milk.

➤ Symptoms:

- Once HIV converts into AIDS then it may present in initial symptoms like **unexplained fatigue, fever, sores around genitals or neck, pneumonia etc.**

Note:



- **Prevalence of HIV AIDS:**
 - It is estimated that **globally 39 million persons are living with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)**.
 - In India the figure is 2.4 million.
 - There were 1.3 million new HIV infections in 2022 globally and 63,000 in India.
 - In 2022, 650,000 persons died due to these conditions globally. In India, AIDS caused 42,000 deaths. Many of these **opportunistic infections are preventable and treatable**.

What are the India's Efforts to Prevent HIV?

- **HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017:** According to this act, the central and state governments shall take measures to prevent the spread of HIV or AIDS.
- **Access to ART:**
 - India has made **Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)** affordable and accessible to over 90 per cent of people living with HIV in the world.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):**
 - The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare signed a MoU with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2019 for enhanced HIV/AIDS outreach and to reduce the incidence of social stigma and discrimination against victims of drug abuse and Children and People Living with HIV/AIDS.
- **Project Sunrise:**
 - **Project Sunrise** was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2016, to tackle the rising HIV prevalence in north-eastern states in India, especially among people injecting drugs.
- **Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP):**
 - Offering PrEP medications to individuals at high risk of contracting HIV can significantly reduce the chances of infection when taken consistently.

ECI Promotes Respectful Dialogue on Disabilities in Politics

Why in News?

The **Election Commission (EC)** has issued guidelines to **political parties** to use disability and gender sensitive

language, and refrain from using derogatory references to **persons with disabilities (PwD)** in public speeches, campaigns and writings.

What are the Key Guidelines of the EC?

- **Prohibition of Derogatory Language:** Political parties and their representatives are urged to refrain from using **derogatory, insulting, or offensive references** related to disability or PwDs in any **public statements, speeches, writings, articles, or campaigns**. And make sure that all campaigns remain accessible to all citizens.
- **Avoidance of Ableist Language:** Specific terms considered ableist or offensive towards PwDs such as "dumb," "retarded," "blind," "deaf," "lame," etc., are highlighted as language to be avoided.
- **Internal Review and Rectification:** All campaign materials, including speeches, social media posts, advertisements, and press releases, should **undergo internal review within the political party** to identify and rectify instances of offensive language.
- **Declaration of Use of Sensitive Language:** Political parties should **declare on their websites their commitment to using disability and gender-sensitive language**, respecting human equality, equity, dignity, and autonomy.
- **Adoption of Rights-Based Terminology:** Parties are encouraged to use rights-based terminologies as outlined in the **Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**.
- **Legal Consequences:** Any violation of the guidelines may fall under the provisions of **Section 92 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016**.

What is the Status of Persons with Disabilities in India?

- **Status:** As per the 76th round of **National Sample Survey (NSS)**, **2.21%** of the Indian population identifies as having a disability.
 - The incidence of disability is **highest in the age group 10-19 years**, highlighting the need for early intervention and support.
- **Constitutional and Legislative Framework for PwD in India:**
 - Constitution:
 - The Constitution of India ensures **equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all**

Note:

individuals through **Fundamental Rights** and implicitly mandates an inclusive society for all including the persons with disabilities.

- **Article 41 of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy)** states that the State shall make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to **public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement**, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
- Legislation:
 - The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act)** which replaced the **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995**, is the most comprehensive legislation for PwDs in India.
 - Government job reservation for PwD is **4%**, while in government or aided higher educational institutions, seats reserved for students with disabilities is **5%**.
- Other Related Initiatives:
 - [Accessible India Campaign](#)
 - [DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme](#)
 - [National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities](#)

MGNREGS Scheme

Why in News?

The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** has witnessed a **significant surge in women's participation**, marking a historic high in the **current financial year of 2023-24**.

What are the Women Participation Trends in MGNREGA?

- **Women Participation Trends:**
 - There has been a **gradual increase in women's participation over the last decade**, with percentages rising from 53.19% during the **Covid-19** outbreak in 2020-21 to the current 59.25%.
 - Southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and Goa showcase **notably high rates of women's**

involvement, surpassing 70%, while northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh lag **behind at around 40% or below**.

- Despite historical disparities, some states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Lakshadweep show **recent improvements in women's participation rates** in the ongoing financial year, attributed to incremental percentages.
- **Rural Labor Force Trends:**
 - Beyond MGNREGS, the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation demonstrates a **substantial surge in female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in rural areas**.
 - Notable figures show an **increase from 18.2% in 2017-18 to 30.5% in 2022-23 in rural female LFPR**, along with a decline in female unemployment rates from 3.8% to 1.8% during the same period.

What is MGNREGA Scheme?

- **About:**
 - MGNREGA is one of the largest work guarantee programmes in the world launched in 2005 by the **Ministry of Rural development**.
 - It provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.
 - Active workers: 14.32 Crore (2023-24)
- **Major Features:**
 - The cornerstone of **MGNREGA's design is its legal guarantee**, ensuring that any rural adult can request work and must receive it within 15 days.
 - If this commitment is not met, an "unemployment allowance" must be provided.
 - It requires that priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work.
 - Section 17 of the MGNREGA has mandated Social audit of all Works executed under the MGNREGA.
- **Implementation Agency:**
 - The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Govt of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.

Note:

Objective:

- This act was introduced with an aim of improving the **Purchasing Power** of the rural people, primarily semi or unskilled work to people living below poverty line in rural India.
- It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and poor in the country.
- **Achievements of 2022-23:**
 - 11.37 crore households availed employment.
 - 289.24 crore person-days employment has been generated out of which:
 - 56.19% were for women
 - 19.75% were for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)**
 - **17.47% were for Scheduled Tribes (STs).**

What are the Initiatives under MGNREGS?

- **Amrit Sarovar:** Construction/renovation of at least 75 Amrit Sarovars (ponds) in each district of the country; they will help in increasing the availability of water, both on surface and under-ground.
- **Jaldoot App:** It was launched in Sept 2022 for measuring the water level in a Gram Panchayat through 2-3 selected open wells twice a year.
- **Ombudsperson for MGNREGS:** Ombudsperson App was launched in Feb 2022 for smooth reporting and categorization of grievances received from various sources related to the implementation of the MGNREGS.

India Skills Report 2024**Why in News?**

Recently, Wheebox in association with various agencies including **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**, Confederation of Indian Industry and Association of Indian Universities has published India Skills Report 2024, highlighting India's skill landscape and the impact of **AI (Artificial Intelligence)** on the workforce

- **Theme:** Impact of AI on the Future of Work, Skilling & Mobility.
- The findings in this report are a **result of the evaluation of 3.88 Lakhs candidates** who took the **Wheebox National Employability Test (WNET)** across academic institutions in India.

Note: Wheebox is **one of the leading firms** in remote proctored assessments and consulting services, Headquartered in India and spread across GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Countries, Wheebox delivers millions of assessments for corporations, institutions and governments across the globe.

What are the Key Highlights of the India Skills Report 2024?➤ **AI Leadership and Talent Concentration:**

- India holds a **prominent global position in AI skill penetration** and talent concentration, showcasing a strong base of AI professionals.
- As of August 2023, there were 4.16 lakh AI professionals, poised to meet the increasing demand expected to **reach 1 million by 2026.**
- India has a **60%-73% demand-supply gap** in key roles such as ML engineer, data scientist, DevOps engineer, and data architect.

➤ **Employability Trends:**

- The overall young employability in India has shown improvement, reaching **51.25%.** **States like Haryana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh,**
- Kerala, and Telangana demonstrate a **high concentration of highly employable youth.**
- Haryana has the highest employable youth concentration with 76.47% of test takers in this region scoring 60% and above on the WNET.

➤ **Age-Specific Employability:**

- Different age groups display varying levels of employability. For instance, in the **22 to 25 years age range**, states like Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra stand out with high talent concentrations.
- Telangana has the **highest concentration of employable** talent in the age group of 18-21 with 85.45% found employable followed by Kerala 74.93% employable resources in this age group.
- Gujarat has the highest availability of employable resources in the age group of 26-29 with 78.24% in this age group found employable.

➤ **Cities with Employable Talent:**

- Among top cities with employable **talent in the age group of 18-21**, Pune came first with **80.82% of candidates found highly employable**, followed by Bengaluru, and then Trivandrum.

Note:

- For employability in the age group of 22-25 among top cities, Lucknow comes first at 88.89%, followed by Mumbai and then Bengaluru.

➤ Most Preferred State to Work:

- **Kerala** is the most preferred state to work for both male and female employable talent, with Cochin being the most preferred area to work for female test takers.

➤ AI Integration in Learning:

- The integration of AI into learning science is seen as a key differentiator, enabling personalized, analytics-driven, and actionable insights. This integration is deemed essential for effective professional development.

➤ Industry Readiness:

- Companies are **anticipated to invest more in upskilling initiatives**, with a focus on early careers programs. The report foresees a significant portion of hiring being directed toward early career segments.

➤ Collaborative Efforts:

- The report emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts among government bodies, businesses, and educational institutions to address challenges and focus on inclusive upskilling initiatives to navigate the transformative journey catalyzed by AI.

What are India's Initiatives Related to Artificial Intelligence?

- [INDIAai.](#)
- [Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence \(GPAI\).](#)
- [US India Artificial Intelligence Initiative.](#)
- [Responsible Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) for Youth.](#)
- [Artificial Intelligence Research, Analytics and Knowledge Assimilation Platform.](#)

What are the Government Initiatives Related to Skill Development?

- [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#)
- [SANKALP Scheme](#)
- [TEJAS Skilling Project](#)
- [Skill India Digital](#)

Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease

Why in News?

Recently, [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) added **noma** to its list of **neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)** underscoring the urgent need to address this health challenge and allocate resources for prevention and treatment.

- Noma, also known as **cancrumoris** or **gangrenous stomatitis**, is a severe gangrenous disease affecting children aged 3-10 in poor communities.
 - Gangrene is a **dangerous and potentially fatal condition** that happens when the **blood flow to a large area of tissue is cut off**.

What is Noma?

➤ About:

- Noma, derived from the **Greek "nomē"** meaning "to devour," manifests as **severe gangrene of the mouth and face**.
- Evidence indicates that noma is **caused by bacteria found in the mouth**.
- This **non contagious disease**, exploits weakened defense with a **mortality rate of around 90%** and poses a significant threat to marginalized children in extreme poverty and malnutrition.
- **Risk factors** include poor oral hygiene, malnutrition, weakened immune systems, poverty.

➤ Geographic Distribution and Historical Context:

- Noma is prevalent in developing countries, especially **sub-Saharan Africa**, affecting **poor children aged 3-10**.
- Historical records show **noma was** reported in concentration camps during World War II and **disappeared in the Western world with economic progress, emphasizing its link to poverty**.

➤ Consequences and Treatment Challenges:

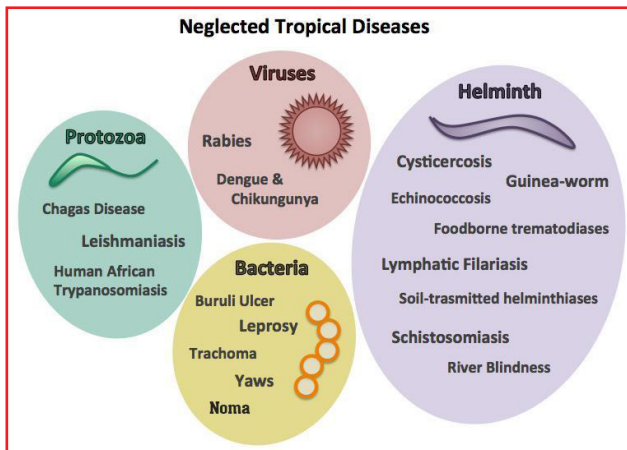
- Survivors face severe consequences like **facial disfigurement, jaw muscle spasms, oral incontinence, and speech problems**.
- **Early detection** is crucial, with therapy most effective in the disease's initial stages.

Note:



What are Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)?

- NTDs are **communicable diseases** in **tropical regions**, thriving in **conditions of poverty and poor healthcare access**.
- They are caused by a variety of **pathogens** such as **viruses, bacteria, protozoa and parasitic worms**.
- The term “neglected” reflects the **lack of attention and resources** despite significant impact on vulnerable communities.
- These diseases generally receive less funding for research and treatment than **malaises** like **tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS and malaria**.
 - Examples of NTDs are: **snakebite envenomation**, scabies, yaws, trachoma, **Leishmaniasis** and Chagas disease etc.



What is the Impact of NTDs?

- **Global Scenario:**
 - NTDs **affect more than a billion people** globally. They are **preventable and treatable**.
 - There are 20 NTDs that impact over 1.7 billion people worldwide.
- **Indian Scenario:**
 - India carries the largest burden of at least 11 of these diseases, with parasitic illnesses like **kala-azar** and **lymphatic filariasis** affecting millions of people throughout the country – often the poorest and most vulnerable.
 - India is **at the cusp of eliminating Kala-Azar**, with 99% Kala-Azar endemic blocks having achieved the elimination target.

What are the Initiatives for NTDs?

- **Global Initiatives:**
 - WHO’s New Roadmap for 2021–2030:
 - It is WHO’s blueprint to drive global efforts in the fight against NTDs in the context of the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals**.
 - The Blueprint recommends measuring impact and to promote disease-specific planning and programming
 - **London Declaration on NTDs:** It was adopted on 30th January, 2012 to recognise the global burden of NTDs.
- **Indian Initiatives:**
 - **The Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF)** was launched in 2018, as part of intensifying efforts towards the elimination of NTDs.
 - A WHO-supported **regional alliance** established by the governments of **India, Bangladesh, and Nepal** in 2005 to expedite early diagnosis and treatment of the most vulnerable populations and improve disease surveillance and control of sandfly populations (Kala-azar).
 - India has already **eliminated several other NTDs**, including guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws.
 - **Preventive methods like Mass Drug Administration (MDA)** rounds are periodically deployed in endemic areas during which anti-filarial medicines are provided free-of-cost to at-risk communities.
 - **Vector-control measures** like Indoor Residual Spraying rounds are undertaken in endemic areas to prevent sandfly breeding.
 - State and central governments have also introduced **wage compensation schemes for those suffering from Kala-Azar** and its sequela (a condition which is the consequence of a previous disease or injury) known as Post-Kala Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis.

Impact of Covid Vaccination on Mental Health

Why in News?

Some studies have suggested a **lower incidence of Mental Health** issues among vaccinated individuals compared to the unvaccinated post-**Covid-19** infection.

Note:

- The additional risk of depression at 6 months following Covid-19 was 449 per 100,000 among vaccinated individuals, while it was 1009 per 100,000 among the unvaccinated.

How Severe was the Issue of Mental Health after Covid-19?

- **Anxiety and Depression:**
 - Individuals who survived Covid-19 hospitalization faced **persistent mental health challenges**, including anxiety and depression, lasting at least a year post-recovery.
 - Long Covid, affecting about 5% of individuals regardless of its severity, overlaps with these **mental health conditions, adding to the burden.**
- **Increased Burden on Healthcare Systems:**
 - The burden of mental health issues post-Covid-19 added **strain to healthcare systems**, requiring additional resources for diagnosis, treatment, and support for individuals facing these challenges.
- **Children and Vulnerable Groups Affected:**
 - School closures, disrupted routines, and limited social interaction affected children's mental health, leading to **increased anxiety and other psychological** challenges.
 - Marginalized populations faced compounded challenges due to socioeconomic disparities, leading to increased mental health vulnerabilities.
- **Isolation and Grief Amplifying Mental Health Issues:**
 - Social isolation, limited access to communication devices, domestic stress, and grief from the loss of friends and relatives to Covid-19 amplified mental health challenges, especially among vulnerable groups like the elderly.

What is the link Between Mental Health and Vaccination?

- **Reduction in Mental Health Challenges:**
 - The reduction in mental health issues among vaccinated individuals was observed irrespective of whether they had a prior history of mental illness.
 - This suggests that vaccination's impact on mental health outcomes was independent of pre-existing conditions.

- **Reduced Anxiety:**
 - Vaccination **created a sense of safety and decreased anxiety** among individuals.
 - Feeling protected against severe illness or **death from Covid-19 contributed** to lower levels of anxiety and stress associated with the pandemic.

What is the Status of Mental Health Illness in India?

- **About:**
 - Mental health **refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being**, encompassing their overall mental and emotional state.
 - It involves a person's ability to cope with stress, manage their emotions, maintain healthy relationships, work productively, and make rational decisions.
 - Mental health is an integral part of overall health and well-being, just as important as physical health.
- **Status in India:**
 - In India, according to **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences** data, more than 80% of people do not access care services for a multitude of reasons, ranging from lack of knowledge, stigma and high cost of care.
 - The economic loss due to mental health conditions, between 2012-2030, is estimated at USD 1.03 trillion (WHO).
- **Government Initiatives Related to Mental Health:**
 - [National Mental Health Programme \(NMHP\)](#)
 - [Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centres \(AB-HWC\)](#)
 - [National Tele Mental Health Programme](#)
 - [Kiran Helpline](#)
 - [Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram](#)
 - [Yuva Spandana Yojana \(Karnataka\)](#)

e-Cigarettes

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** has urged governments to treat **e-cigarettes similarly to tobacco and ban all flavors**, threatening cigarette companies' bets on smoking alternatives.

Note:

- Some researchers, campaigners and governments see e-cigarettes, or vapes, as a key tool in reducing the **death and disease caused by smoking**. But the WHO said “urgent measures” are needed to control them.

What are e-Cigarettes ?

- **e-Cigarettes** are **battery powered devices** that work by heating a liquid into an aerosol that the user inhales and exhales.
- The e-cigarette liquid **typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin**, flavorings, and other chemicals.
- There are many different types of e-cigarettes in use, also known as electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and sometimes electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENNDS).

What are the Concerns Raised by WHO Regarding e-Cigarettes?

- **Ineffectiveness for Smoking Cessation:**
 - E-cigarettes as consumer products **are not shown to be effective for quitting tobacco** use at the population level. Instead, alarming evidence has emerged on adverse population health effects.
 - E-cigarettes have been **allowed on the open market** and aggressively marketed to young people.
 - Thirty-four countries ban the sale of e-cigarettes, 88 countries have no minimum age at which e-cigarettes can be bought and 74 countries have no regulations in place for these harmful products.
- **Impact on Youth:**
 - The recruitment and **potential trapping of children and young people** at an early age into using e-cigarettes, potentially leading to **nicotine addiction**.
 - The aggressive marketing of e-cigarettes, **along with insufficient regulations in many countries**, contributes to this issue.
- **Rising Usage among Youth:**
 - Children **13–15-years old are using e-cigarettes** at rates higher than adults in all WHO regions.
 - In Canada, the rate of e-cigarette use among 16–19-year-olds has doubled between 2017–2022, and in England (the United Kingdom) the number of young users has tripled in the past three years.

Health Risks:

- Although the long-term health effects of e-cigarettes are not fully understood, these devices generate toxic substances, some of which are **known to cause cancer** and increase the risk of heart and lung disorders.
- E-cigarette use can also **affect brain development, cause learning disorders** in young people, and adversely affect fetal development in pregnant women.

Nicotine Addiction and Addictive Nature:

- E-cigarettes containing nicotine are noted to be highly addictive, posing health risks to both users and bystanders. The addictive nature of nicotine in e-cigarettes raises concerns about countering nicotine addiction, especially among young users.

Note:

In India, the possession of e-cigarettes and similar devices is a violation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarette Act (PECA) 2019.

What is Nicotine?

- **Nicotine** is a plant alkaloid that contains nitrogen, which is found in several types of plants, including the tobacco plant and can also be produced synthetically.
- Nicotine is both a sedative and a stimulant.
- Nicotine is used as a direct substance in e-cigarettes and the content ranges up to 36 mg/mL. Although regular cigarettes too have nicotine, but it ranges between 1.2 to 1.4 mg/mL.
- Karnataka has notified nicotine as Class A poison.

What are the Government Initiatives Related to Tobacco Consumption?

- **National Tobacco Control Programme**
- Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Amendment Rules, 2023.
- **National Tobacco Quitline Services (NTQLS)**
- The Union Finance Minister of India announced a 16% increase in National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD) on cigarettes in the **Budget 2023-24**.
- The Union Health Ministry of India has announced new regulations requiring **Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms** to display tobacco-related health warnings during streamed content.

Note:

Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2023: UNODC

Why in News?

Recently, the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** has released a report titled *Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2023 - Cultivation, Production, and Implications*, highlighting that there is a significant increase in Opium Cultivation in the Golden Triangle, Southeast Asia.

Note:

The **Golden Triangle** typically refers to a region in **Southeast Asia** known for the production of illicit drugs, particularly Opium. It's an area where the **borders of three countries meet**: Myanmar (formerly Burma), Laos, and Thailand.

- Originally, the term "Golden Triangle" referred to the opium-producing region covering parts of these three countries. However, it has evolved to denote a broader area associated with drug production, **trafficking, and organized crime**.
- One more infamous region for illicit drugs is Golden Crescent or "Death crescent", this crescent region **includes Afghanistan and Iran** – making it a natural transit point for drugs being smuggled out of Pakistan.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Opium Cultivation Increase in Myanmar:**
 - Opium cultivation in the Golden Triangle continued to expand over the past year 2022, with a significant increase in Myanmar.
 - There's been a **18% increase in Opium cultivation** in Myanmar, reaching 47,100 hectares.
 - This surge has made **Myanmar the world's largest source of opium**, particularly due to disruptions **following the Military Takeover in 2021**.
- **Increased Yield and Investment:**
 - The average estimated opium yield per hectare expanded by 16% to 22.9 kilograms/hectare.

- This reflects advancements in farming practices and increased investments in irrigation systems and fertilizers, signaling a more sophisticated approach by farmers and buyers.

➤ Rising Opium Prices:

- Despite an expanding supply, the **price paid to farmers increased by 27%** to approximately USD 355 per kilogram.
- This price surge underscores the attractiveness of opium as a crop and commodity, indicating strong demand that fuels **the opium trade in the Golden Triangle**.

➤ Impact of the Afghanistan Opium Ban:

- The report anticipates that a protracted ban on opium in Afghanistan will likely lead to sustained high prices and further increases in cultivation in Southeast Asia.
- The Taliban's ban has led to a **95% drop in the cultivation of opium poppies** in Afghanistan

➤ Contribution to Illicit Economy:

- The expansion of opium cultivation contributes to a **broader illicit economy in the Mekong region** (Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam).
- It fuels synthetic drug production and a convergence of drug trafficking, money laundering, and online criminal activities, generating significant profits for organized crime groups.

➤ Recommendations:

- The crisis in Myanmar exacerbates crime and governance challenges in the region. Addressing these issues necessitates **comprehensive solutions considering the complex realities faced** by people in opium-cultivation areas. Providing viable alternatives to opium cultivation and improving socio-economic conditions are crucial to mitigate this trend.

Note:

- Given the insecurities and economic hardships faced by farming communities, the UNODC's direct engagement with these communities in Myanmar and Laos becomes more critical than ever.
- Building resilience and offering sustainable income generation alternatives are **vital to combat the allure of opium cultivation**.

What are the Key Facts about Opium Poppy Plants?

- **Scientific Name:** *Papaver somniferum*
- **Uses:** Opium derived from the **sap of the opium poppy** has been used for centuries as a pain reliever, sedative, and in the production of various opioids, including morphine, codeine, and heroin. Medicinally, it has been employed to alleviate severe pain, suppress coughs, and induce sleep.
- **Global Production:** India is the **sole country authorized by the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)** to produce gum opium. Additionally, other countries like Australia, Austria, France, China, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and the Czech Republic cultivate opium poppies. However, these countries do not extract gum but instead use the Concentrate of Poppy Straw process (CPS).
 - This process involves cutting the bulb with 8 inches of the stalk for processing in its entirety.

What is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime?

- It was established in 1997 and was named as a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2002.
- It acts as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

What are the Related Initiatives to Tackle Drug Abuse?

- **Indian:**
 - [Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan/Drugs-Free India Campaign](#)
 - [National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction](#)
 - [Narco-Coordination Centre](#)
 - [National Fund to Control Drug Abuse](#)

➤ Global Initiatives:

- Single [Convention on Narcotic Drugs](#), 1961.
- The [Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971](#).
- The UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in [Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988](#).
 - India is a signatory to all three and has enacted the [Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances \(NDPS\) Act, 1985](#).
- Every year, the UN publishes a [World Drug Report](#), [Global Drug Policy Index](#).

Pompe Disease

Why in News?

India's **first Pompe disease patient**, passed away at the age of 24 years after battling the disease in a **semi-comatose state**.

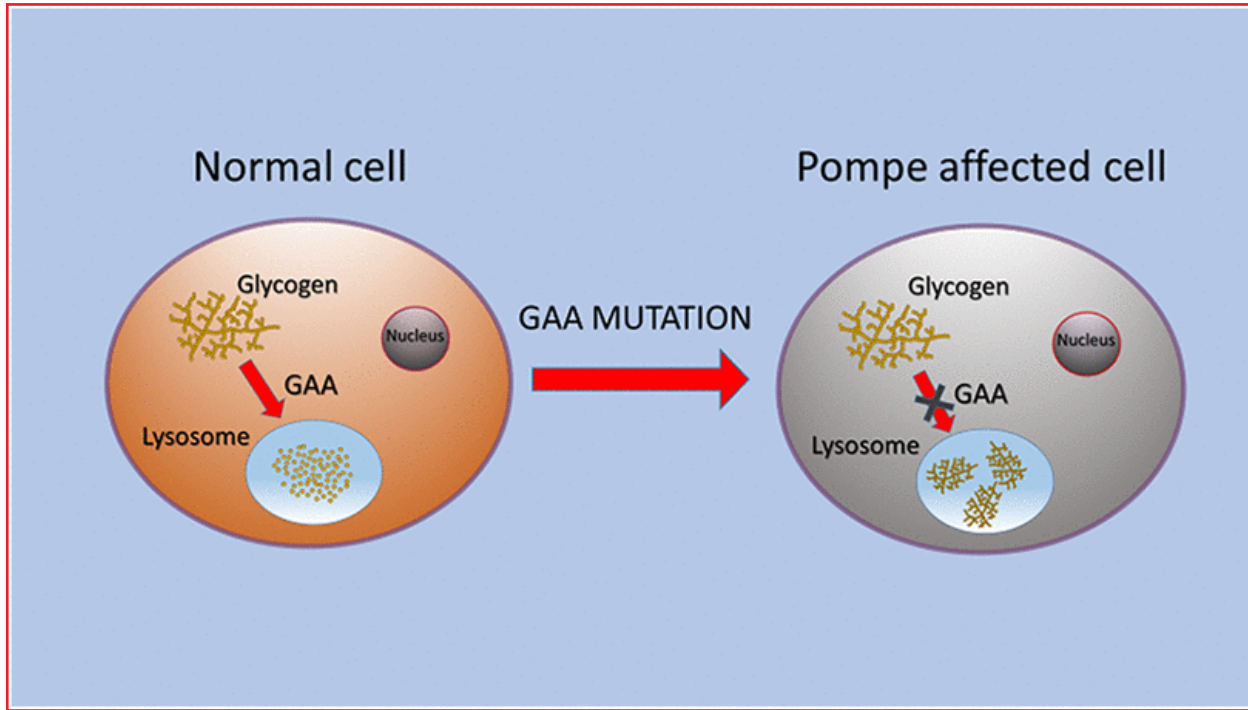
- A **semi-comatose state** is characterized by **partial coma**, manifesting as **disorientation** and **stupor** without reaching a complete coma. Individuals in a **semi-comatose state** may exhibit responsiveness to stimuli, such as groaning and mumbling.

What is Pompe Disease?

➤ About:

- Pompe Disease (also known as Glycogen Storage Disease Type II) is characterized by the **buildup of glycogen in the lysosomes of the body's cells**.
- This disease is a rare **genetic disorder** caused by a deficiency of the **enzyme acid alpha-glucosidase (GAA)**. This enzyme is crucial for **breaking down glycogen into glucose** within the lysosomes of cells.
 - Lysosomes are membrane-enclosed organelles that contain an array of enzymes capable of breaking down all types of biological polymers—proteins, nucleic acids, carbohydrates, and lipids.
- Its prevalence estimates range from **1 in 40,000** to **1 in 300,000 births**.

Note:



➤ Symptoms:

- Muscle weakness, Motor skill delay, Degenerative impact on bones, Respiratory complications, Cardiac involvement, Implications for daily living.

➤ Diagnosis:

- **Enzyme assays** are conducted to measure the activity of GAA, the deficient enzyme.
- Genetic testing identifies mutations in the responsible **GAA gene**. Genetic analysis confirms the presence of specific mutations associated with Pompe Disease.

➤ Treatment:

- Although there is presently no cure for **Pompe disease**, there are treatment alternatives accessible to address symptoms and enhance the patient's quality of life.
- **Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT)** is a common treatment method that entails infusing the deficient enzyme to mitigate glycogen accumulation.

Global TB Report 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** has released the Global **Tuberculosis (TB)** report

2023, highlighting the high burden of TB worldwide in 2022.

- India accounted for the highest number of TB cases in the world in 2022, with 2.8 million TB cases, representing 27% of the global burden.

What are the Key Findings of the Global TB Report 2023?

➤ Burden of TB:

- It was the world's second leading cause of death from a single infectious agent in 2022, following **Covid-19**.
- TB caused almost twice as many deaths as **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome stage (AIDS)**. More than 10 million people continue to fall ill with TB every year.
- 30 high burden TB countries collectively accounted for 87% of the world's TB cases in 2022.
 - Among the top eight high burden countries, in addition to India, are Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

➤ Increase in TB Diagnosis:

- In 2022, 7.5 million people were diagnosed with TB, marking the highest figure recorded since WHO began global TB monitoring in 1995.

Note:

- **High Mortality Without Treatment:**
 - Without treatment, the death rate from TB disease is high, at about 50%.
 - However, with treatments currently recommended by WHO (a 4–6 months course of anti-TB drugs), about **85% of people with TB can be cured.**
- **Global Recovery in TB Diagnosis and Treatment:**
 - There is a **positive global recovery in the number of people diagnosed with TB** and treated in 2022, following two years of Covid-19-related disruptions.
 - Countries like India, Indonesia, and the Philippines, accounted for over 60% of the global reductions.
- **TB Incidence Rate:**
 - The TB incidence rate, which measures new cases per 100,000 population per year, increased by 3.9% between 2020 and 2022.
 - This increase **reversed the declining trend of about 2% per year** that had been observed for most of the past two decades.

What are the Findings Related to India?

- **TB Case Fatality Ratio in India:**
 - India reported a case **fatality ratio of 12%, indicating that 12% of TB cases** in the country resulted in death.
 - The report estimates that **3,42,000 TB-related deaths occurred in India in 2022**, with 3,31,000 among HIV-negative individuals and 11,000 among those with HIV.
- **Multidrug-Resistant TB (MDR-TB):**
 - India recorded 1.1 lakh cases of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) in 2022, highlighting the continued challenge of MDR-TB as a public health crisis.

What is Tuberculosis?

- **About:**
 - Tuberculosis is **an infection caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis**. It can practically affect any organ of the body. The most common ones are lungs, pleura (lining around the lungs), lymph nodes, intestines, spine, and brain.
- **Transmission:**
 - It is an airborne infection that spreads through close contact with the infected, especially in densely populated spaces with poor ventilation.

- **Symptoms:**
 - Common symptoms of active lung TB are cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Treatment:**
 - TB is a treatable and curable disease. It is treated with a standard 6-month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.
 - Anti-TB medicines have been used for decades and strains that are resistant to 1 or more of the medicines have been documented in every country surveyed.
- **Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB):**
 - It is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs.
 - MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs such as Bedaquiline.
 - Extensively **drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that **do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs**, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.

What are the Initiatives to Combat TB?

- **Global Efforts:**
 - The WHO has launched a joint initiative “**Find. Treat. All. #EndTB**” with the **Global Fund** and **Stop TB Partnership**.
 - WHO also releases the **Global Tuberculosis Report**.
- **India's Efforts:**
 - **National Strategic Plan (NSP)** for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025), The Nikshay Ecosystem (National TB information system), Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY- financial support), **TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign**.
 - Currently, **two vaccines VPM (Vaccine Projekt Management) 1002 and MIP (Mycobacterium Indicus Pranii)** have been developed and identified for TB, and are under Phase-3 clinical trial.
 - In 2018 **Nikshay Poshan Yojna** was launched, which aimed to support every Tuberculosis (TB) Patient by providing a Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of Rs 500 per month for nutritional needs.

Note:

Surrogacy Law

Why in News?

Recently, the Delhi High Court has questioned the **association of marital status** with eligibility for surrogacy under the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**.

- The petitioner challenged **Section 2(1)(s) of the Surrogacy Act**, which limits the right to avail surrogacy to Indian widows or **female divorcees between the ages of 35 and 45**.
- The petitioner's plea also challenges the regulation that compels a single woman (widow or divorcee) to **utilize her own eggs for surrogacy**. Due to her age, using her own gametes is medically inadvisable, and she **seeks a donor for female gametes**.

What is Surrogacy?

About:

- Surrogacy is an **arrangement in which a woman (the surrogate)** agrees to carry and give birth to a child on behalf of another person or couple (the intended parent/s).
- A surrogate, **sometimes also called a gestational carrier**, is a woman who conceives, carries and gives birth to a child for another person or couple (intended parent/s).
- **Altruistic Surrogacy:**
 - It involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.
- **Commercial Surrogacy:**
 - It includes surrogacy or its related procedures undertaken for a monetary benefit or reward (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

What is the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021?

Provisions:

- Under the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**, a woman who is a widow or a divorcee between the age of 35 to 45 years or a couple, **defined as a legally married woman** and man, can avail of surrogacy if they have a medical condition necessitating this option.
 - The intended couple **shall be a legally married** Indian man and woman, the man

shall be **between the ages of 26-55 years** and the woman shall be between the ages of 25-50 years, and shall **not have any previous biological, adopted, or surrogate child**.

- It also bans **commercial surrogacy**, which is punishable with a jail term of 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakhs.
- The law allows only altruistic surrogacy where no money exchanges hands and where a surrogate mother is genetically related to those seeking a child.

What are the Recent Changes Made by the Supreme Court?

- A government notification in March 2023 amended the law, **banning the use of donor gametes**.
 - It said "intending couples" must use their own gametes for surrogacy.
- The petition was filed in the Supreme Court **challenging the amendment as a violation of a woman's right to parenthood**.
- The Court interpreted the requirement for the child to be **"genetically related" as being related to the husband**.
- The Court emphasized that the law permitting gestational surrogacy is "woman-centric," meaning that the decision to have a surrogate child is **based on the woman's inability to become a mother** due to her medical or congenital condition.
- The Court clarified that when **Rule 14(a) of the Surrogacy Rules Applies**, which lists medical or congenital conditions that allow a woman to opt for **Gestational Surrogacy**, the child must be related to the intended couple, especially the husband.
 - **Gestational surrogacy** is a process where one person, who did not provide the egg used in conception, **carries a fetus through pregnancy and gives birth to a baby for another person or couple**.
- The Supreme Court stayed the operation of Rule 7 of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, to allow **the woman suffering from the Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser (MRKH) Syndrome** —a rare congenital disorder that affects the female reproductive system — to undergo surrogacy using a donor egg.
 - Rule 7 of the Surrogacy Act bans use of donor eggs for the procedure.

Note:

Walking Pneumonia

Why in News?

Recently, a mysterious influenza-like illness termed as **Walking Pneumonia** has gripped school children in China.

- The outbreak's exact cause is unknown, but medical experts speculate it might be linked to **mycoplasma pneumoniae**, a common bacterial infection known as 'walking pneumonia.'
- Chinese authorities assert it involves familiar pathogens like **mycoplasma pneumoniae**, **adenovirus**, and **influenza virus**, ruling out novel pathogens like **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) coronavirus**.

What is Walking Pneumonia?

- **About:**
 - Walking pneumonia, also known as atypical pneumonia, is a **milder form of pneumonia** caused by bacteria like **Mycoplasma pneumoniae**.
 - It's termed "walking" pneumonia because its symptoms are often mild enough that **individuals can continue their daily activities** without requiring bed rest or hospitalization.
 - The condition is **more prevalent among children, particularly those aged 5 to 15**, who are in close contact at schools and can easily transmit the infection to family members.
- **Transmission:**
 - Transmission occurs through airborne **droplets from coughing**, sneezing, or talking, making close contact a significant factor in spreading the infection.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Typical symptoms include a persistent cough, fever, sore throat, headache, runny nose, ear pain, and sometimes chest discomfort due to coughing.
- **Treatment:**
 - Treatment typically involves antibiotics to target the specific bacteria causing the infection.

What are the Initiatives Related to Pneumonia?

- **India:**
 - **Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully (SAANS)**: The aim is to reduce child mortality due to pneumonia, which contributes to around 15% of deaths of children under the age of five annually.

- The government aims to achieve a target of reducing pneumonia deaths among children to less than three per 1,000 live births by 2025.

- In 2014, India launched '**Integrated Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (IAPPD)**' to undertake collaborative efforts towards prevention of diarrhoea and Pneumonia related under-five deaths.

➤ Global:

- The **World Health Organisation** and **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** had launched an integrated Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) with the objective of **eliminating preventable childhood deaths from pneumonia and diarrhoea by 2025**.

Gender-Related Killings of Women and Girls

Why in News?

Recently, the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** and UN Women released a study titled-Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide), revealing an increase in gender-related killings of women and girls in 2022.

What is Femicide/Feminicide?

- Femicide or feminicide refers to the **deliberate killing of women or girls purely because they are female**. It's a gender-based crime rooted in deeply ingrained societal attitudes and discrimination against women.
- Femicide differs from homicide in that it specifically targets individuals due to their gender, often involving situations where women are killed by their partners, family members, or individuals due to reasons like misogyny, gender-based violence, or cultural beliefs that devalue women.

What are the Key Highlights of the Study?

- **Femicide Trends:**
 - Globally, nearly 89,000 women and girls were **killed intentionally in 2022**, the highest yearly number recorded in the past two decades.
 - While the overall number of homicides globally has begun to fall in 2022 after a spike in 2021, the **number of female homicides are not decreasing**.

Note:

Women in the cross hairs

The data for the charts were sourced from the report titled, "Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide)" published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN Women



Chart 1: The chart shows the year-wise intentional murder of women/girls across the globe for gender-related reasons

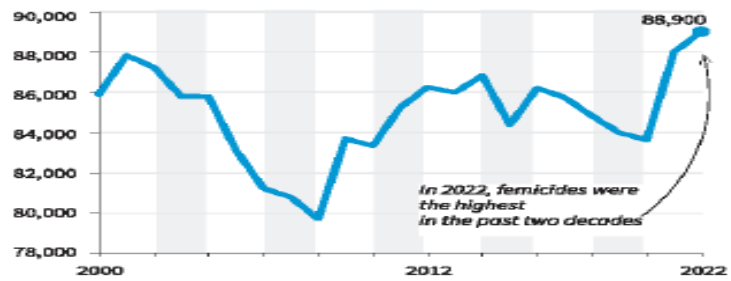


Chart 2: The chart shows male and female share of homicide victims. In general, victims of homicides worldwide tend to be men or boys



Chart 3: The chart shows the share of intimate partner/family-related homicides among all female and male homicides

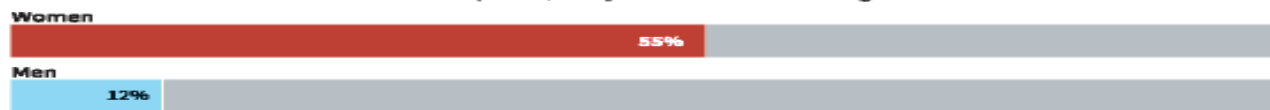


Chart 4: The chart shows the continent-wise split of the share of intimate partner/family-related homicides among all female and male homicides

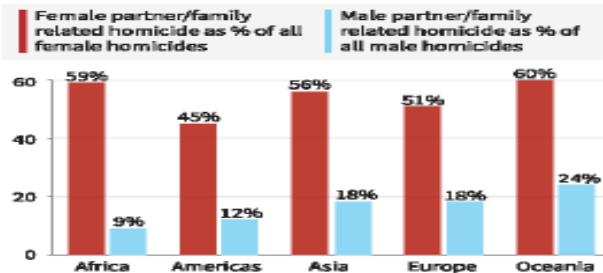
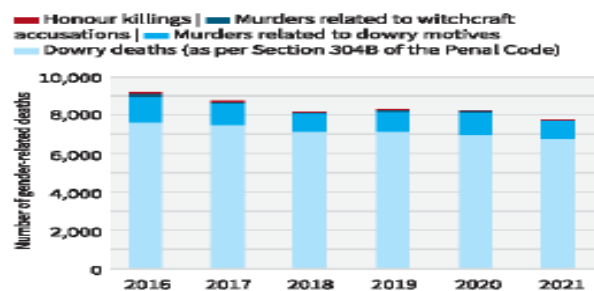


Chart 5: The chart shows the number of gender-related deaths in India between 2016-2021 and the reasons behind it



➤ Perpetrator-Victim Disparity:

- Women are more likely to be victims of intimate partner or family-related homicides compared to men.
- While most homicides worldwide are committed against men and boys (80% in 2022), women and girls are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the home: they represent approximately 53% of all victims of killings in the home and 66% of all victims of intimate partner killings.

➤ Continental Trends:

- Africa reported the highest number of intimate partner/family-related homicides of women in 2022, surpassing Asia for the first time in 13 years.

- The Americas, while reporting fewer cases, exhibited relatively higher rates of such femicides per 100,000 female population.

➤ Regional Variations and Recent Changes:

- With an estimated 20,000 victims in 2022, Africa has – for the first time since 2013 surpassed Asia as the region with the highest number of victims in absolute terms.
- In 2022, Africa was also the region with the highest number of victims relative to the size of its female population (2.8 victims per 100,000 women).
- Between 2010 and 2022, Europe witnessed an average reduction in the number of female intimate partner/family-related homicides (by 21%), albeit with differences across sub-regions and with some setbacks in Western and Southern Europe, especially since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Note:

Women in the cross hairs

The data for the charts were sourced from the report titled, "Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide)" published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN Women



Chart 1: The chart shows the year-wise intentional murder of women/ girls across the globe for gender-related reasons

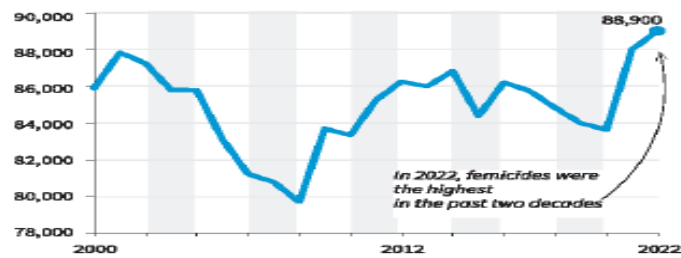


Chart 2: The chart shows male and female share of homicide victims. In general, victims of homicides worldwide tend to be men or boys

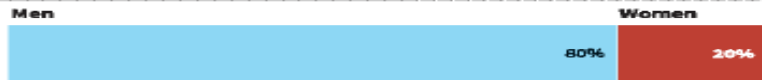


Chart 3: The chart shows the share of intimate partner/family-related homicides among all female and male homicides

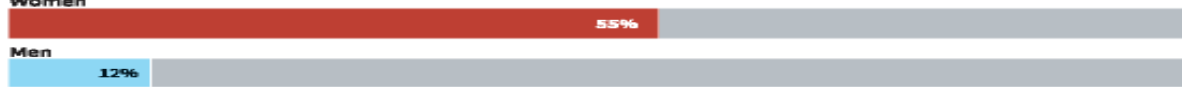


Chart 4: The chart shows the continent-wise split of the share of intimate partner/family-related homicides among all female and male homicides

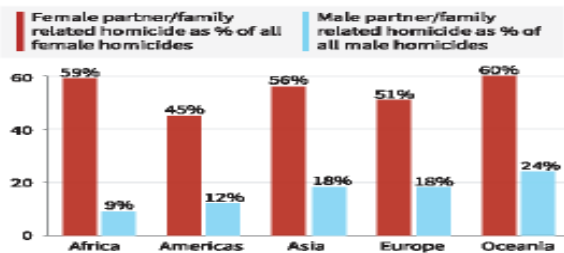
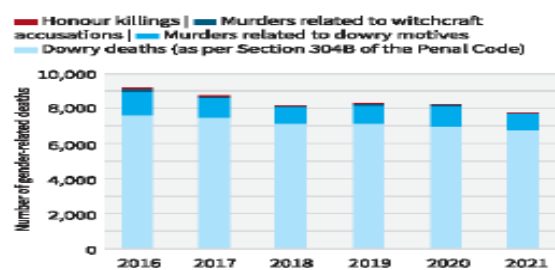


Chart 5: The chart shows the number of gender-related deaths in India between 2016-2021 and the reasons behind it



India-Specific Insights:

- India experienced a **slight decline in gender-based killings** over the past decade, although issues like dowry-related deaths, honour killings, and witchcraft accusations persist.
- Dowry-related reasons **consistently topped the list as the leading cause of gender-related deaths** in India, with honour killings and witchcraft-related murders forming a smaller percentage.

What is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)?

- It was established in 1997 and was named as a UNODC in 2002.
- It acts as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the **United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP)** and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

Key Initiatives for Tribal Groups

Why in News?

On the Occasion of **Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas (15th November)** the Prime Minister (PM) has launched three **key Initiatives** to ensure last-mile welfare scheme delivery and protection for **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.

- The PM launched 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra', Pradhan Mantri Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PM PVTG) Development Mission and Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan.

What is Janjatiya Gaurav Divas?

- The Janjatiya Gaurav Divas is celebrated every year on the **Birth Anniversary of Birsa Munda**, to recognize the efforts of the tribals in the preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of Indian values of national pride, valour, and hospitality.

Note:

- Tribals held several tribal movements across different regions of India against the British colonial rule. These tribal communities include Tamars, Santhals, **Khasis, Bhils, Mizos, and Kols** to name a few.

What are these Key Initiatives?

- **PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN):**
 - **About:** PM JANMAN aims to **protect and nurture tribal groups**, especially those on the verge of extinction, by providing them with necessary support, development, and connectivity to mainstream services and opportunities.
 - **Coverage:** The initiative covers 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) residing in 18 states and union territories, spread across 22,544 villages in 220 districts.
 - Approximately 28 lakh people belong to these identified tribal groups.
 - **Significance:** PM JANMAN underscores the government's commitment to uplifting and safeguarding tribal communities, preserving their cultural heritage, and integrating them into the mainstream development process.
 - It emphasizes the need to bridge the gap between tribal populations and essential services while ensuring their socio-economic empowerment.
- **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra:**
 - The focus of the Yatra will be on **reaching out to people, creating awareness and providing benefits of welfare schemes** like sanitation facilities, essential financial services, electricity connections, access to LPG cylinders, housing for the poor, food security, proper nutrition, reliable healthcare, clean drinking water, etc.
 - Enrolment of potential beneficiaries will be done through details ascertained during the Yatra.
 - The Yatra will start from districts with significant tribal populations initially and will cover all districts across the country.
- **PM PVTG Mission:**
 - The PM-PVTG Development Mission program aims to improve the socio-economic status of **Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.
 - For this, availability of Rs 24000 Crore for Scheduled Tribes has been envisaged in the Union Budget.

- The mission includes **providing basic facilities like safe housing**, clean drinking water and sanitation, education, health and nutrition, better access to roads in settlements for backward scheduled tribes.

What are the Other Government Initiatives Related to Tribals?

- **TRIFED**
- **Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools**
- **Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana**
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**

Granting Habitat Rights and Implications

Why in News?

Recently, the Chhattisgarh Government has granted habitat rights to its **Baiga PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group)** right after the Kamar PVTG received habitat rights in August 2023.

- The Baiga PVTG became the second group to be granted these rights in Chhattisgarh.
- Chhattisgarh has **seven PVTGs (Kamar, Baiga, Pahadi Korba, Abujmadiya, Birhor, Pando and Bhujia)**.

What is the Baiga Tribe?

- The Baiga (means sorcerers) tribe mainly lives in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.



Note:

- Traditionally, the Baiga lived a semi-nomadic life and practised slash and burn cultivation. Now, they are mainly dependent on **minor forest produce** for their livelihood.
 - Bamboo is the primary resource.
- Tattooing is an integral part of Baiga culture, every age and body part has a specific tattoo reserved for the occasion.

What are Habitat Rights?

➤ About:

- Habitat rights recognition provides the community concerned **rights over their customary territory of habitation**, socio-cultural practices, economic and livelihood means, intellectual knowledge of biodiversity and ecology, traditional knowledge of use of natural resources, as well as **protection and conservation of their natural and cultural heritage**.
- Habitat rights **safeguard and promote traditional livelihood** and ecological knowledge passed down through generations. They also help **converge different government schemes and initiatives from various departments** to empower PVTG communities to develop their habitats.
 - According to the FRA, “habitat” includes customary habitats and those in reserved and protected forests of PVTGs and other forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes.
- Out of 75 PVTG in India, **only three have habitat rights- the Bheria PVTG in Madhya Pradesh was the first**, followed by the Kamar tribe and now the Baiga tribe in Chhattisgarh.

➤ Procedure of Declaring Habitat:

- The procedure is based on a detailed guideline given for this purpose in 2014 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The process **involves consultation with traditional tribal leaders** to determine the extent of culture, traditions, and occupation.
- Coordination between state-level departments, including Forest, Revenue, Tribal, and Panchayat Raj, and with the UNDP team is essential for defining and declaring habitats.

➤ Legality:

- Habitat rights are granted to PVTGs under Section 3(1)(e) of the **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006** (also known as FRA).
- The recognition of Habitat rights grants PVTGs possession over their customary territory, encompassing habitation, economic and livelihood means, biodiversity knowledge.

Identification of PVTGs

- PVTGs are identified based on criteria such as **technological backwardness**, stagnant or declining population growth, **low literacy levels**, subsistence economy, and challenging living conditions.
- They face vulnerability in **health, education, nutrition, and livelihood**.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has identified **75 PVTGs in 18 states and one Union Territory**.
- In 1973, the **Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)** as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups. In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as PVTGs.

Global Hunger Index 2023

Why in News?

- In the **Global Hunger Index 2023**, India ranked **111th out of 125 countries**, indicating a serious level of hunger.
- Neighboring countries, such as **Pakistan (102nd)**, **Bangladesh (81st)**, **Nepal (69th)**, and **Sri Lanka (60th)**, scored better than India.

What is the Global Hunger Index ?

➤ About:

- The **Global Hunger Index (GHI)** is a peer-reviewed report, published on an annual basis by **Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe**.
- The GHI is a tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at **global, regional, and national levels**, reflecting multiple dimensions of hunger over time.
 - The GHI score is calculated on a 100-point scale reflecting the severity of hunger - **0 is the best score (implies no hunger)** and **100 is the worst**.

Note:

Note:

Concern Worldwide is an **international humanitarian organization** dedicated to tackling poverty and suffering in the world's poorest countries.

➤ Welthungerhilfe is a **private aid organization in Germany**. It was established in **1962**, as the German section of the **"Freedom from Hunger Campaign"**.

➤ **Calculation:**

○ Each country's GHI score is calculated based on a formula that combines **four indicators** that together capture the **multidimensional nature of hunger**:

- **Undernourishment:** The share of the population whose caloric intake is insufficient;
- **Child Stunting:** The share of children under the age of five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition;
- **Child Wasting:** The share of children under the age of five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition; and
- **Child Mortality:** The share of children who die before their fifth birthday, reflecting in part the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments.

➤ Alignment with **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**:

- The prevalence of undernourishment is an indicator for **SDG 2.1**, focusing on ensuring access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all.
- Child stunting and wasting rates are **indicators for SDG 2.2**, aiming to end all forms of malnutrition.
- Reducing preventable child deaths is an **SDG 3.2 goal**.

What are the Key Takeaways from GHI 2023?➤ **India's GHI Score:**

- Score Analysis:
 - India's GHI score 2023 stands at **28.7**, categorized as **"serious" on the GHI Severity of Hunger Scale**.

- This shows a slight improvement from its GHI 2015 score of **29.2**, which was also deemed serious.

- Also, compared to its alarming GHI scores of 38.4 in 2000 and 35.5 in 2008, India has made significant progress.

○ Related Data and References:

- Child stunting is prevalent at **35.5%** (India's **National Family Health Survey(NFHS) 2019-2021**)

- The prevalence of undernourishment in India is **16.6%** (State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report 2023)

- India's child wasting rate is a concerning **18.7%** (India's NFHS 2019-21), the highest among all countries in the report.

- The under-five mortality rate stands at **3.1%** (United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation January 2023)

➤ **Global Hunger Trends:**

- According to the GHI 2023 report, **Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Chile, China** are among the top ranked countries (i.e., low level of hunger) and **Yemen, Madagascar, Central African Republic** are the bottom.

- The **GHI 2023 score for the world is 18.3**, considered **moderate**, showing minimal improvement since 2015.

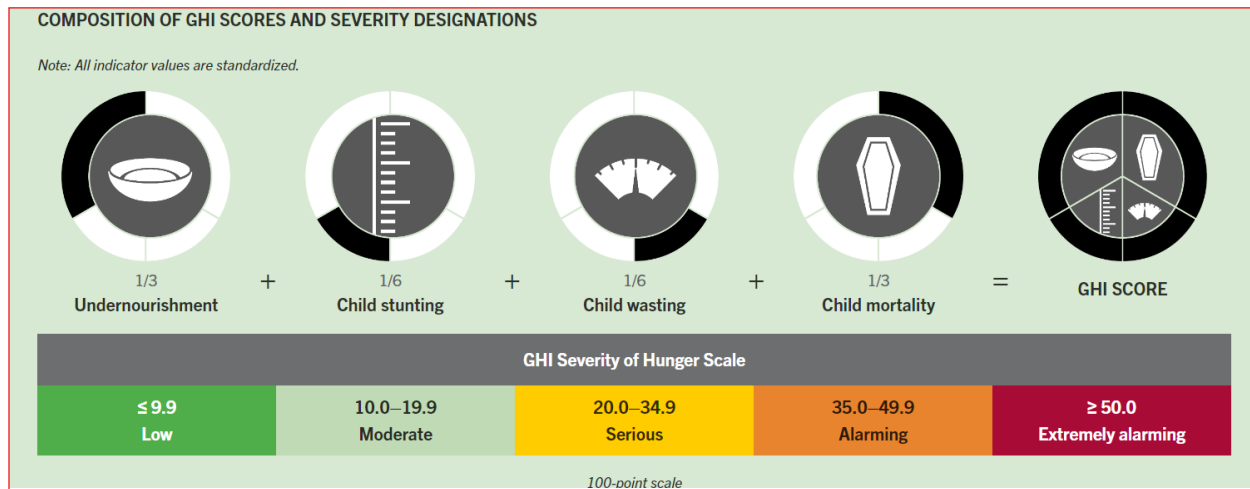
- The prevalence of **undernourishment** has risen from 572 million to approximately **735 million people since 2017**.

- The GHI attributed the stagnation to various crises, including **climate change, conflicts, economic shocks, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war**.

- These crises have exacerbated social and economic inequalities and hindered progress in reducing hunger worldwide.

Note:





Scheduled Areas in India

Why in News?

India's **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** constitute 8.6% of the population, residing in various states and union territories. **Article 244** of the Indian Constitution is a critical provision for the administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas.

What are Scheduled Areas?

➤ About:

- Scheduled Areas represent **regions covering 11.3% of India's land area**, inhabited by various **ST communities** comprising 8.6% of the country's population.
- They are **designated in 10 states under the Fifth schedule**: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh.
 - **4 States under the Sixth Schedule**: Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
 - In 2015, Kerala proposed to **notify 2,133 habitations, five-gram panchayats, and two wards in five districts as Scheduled Areas**; it awaits the Union government's approval.

➤ Criteria for Identification:

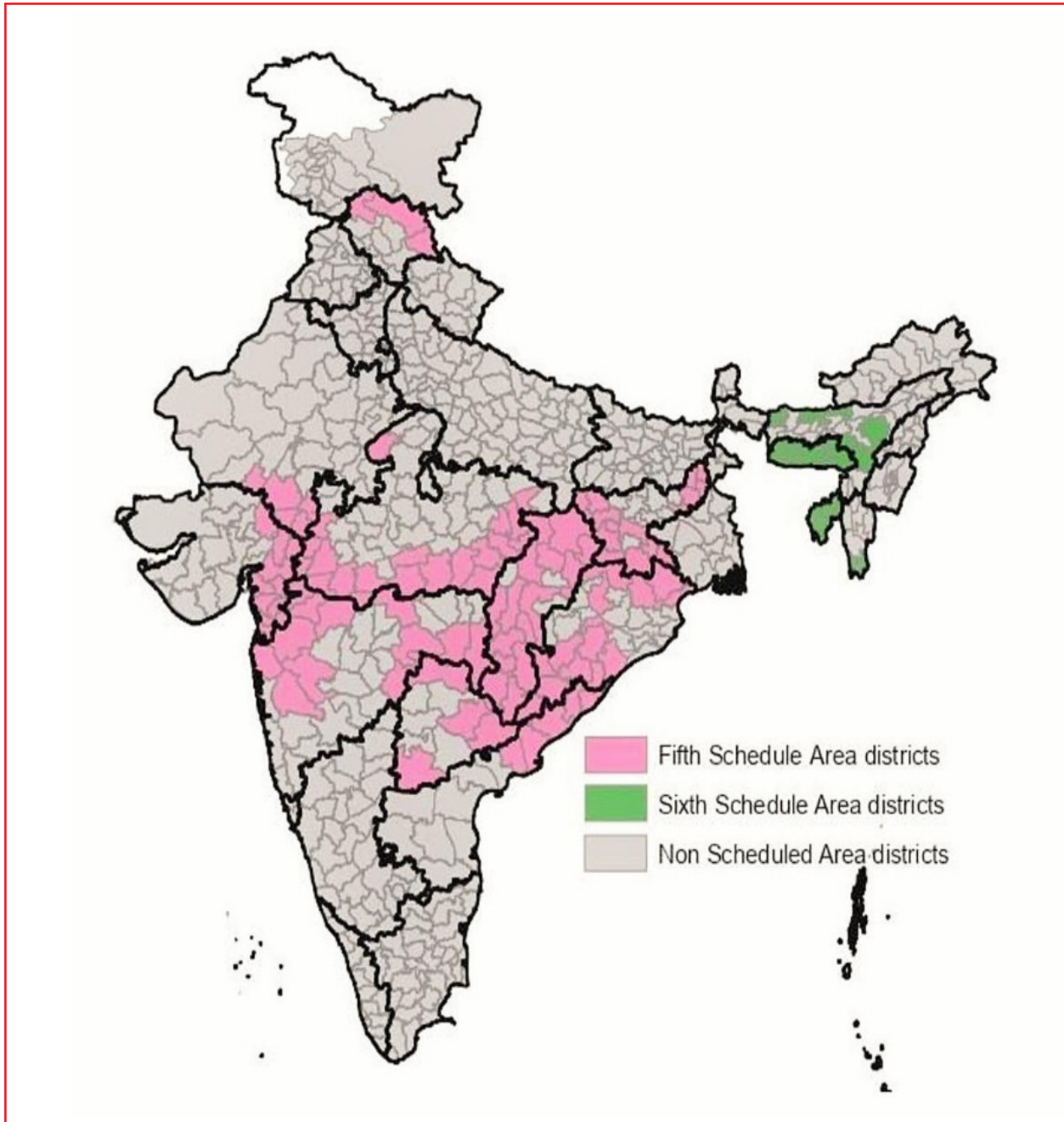
- The guiding norms for declaring an area as a Scheduled Area include **significant tribal population**, compactness, reasonable size, viability as an **administrative entity**, and economic backwardness compared to **neighboring areas**.

- The 2002 Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission or the **Bhuria Commission** recommended considering areas with **40% or more tribal population according to the 1951 Census as Scheduled Areas**.

Constitutional Provisions and Governance:

- **Article 244 (1)** applies the **Fifth Schedule** provisions to Scheduled Areas in states other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
 - **Article 244 (2)** applies the **Sixth Schedule** to the aforementioned states.
- **Tribal Advisory Council**: The President of India notifies Scheduled Areas, and states with Scheduled Areas establish a **Tribal Advisory Council** to advise the Governor on ST welfare matters.
- **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) of 1996**: It empowers gram sabhas, **granting them substantial authority through direct democracy**, prioritizing **Local Self-Governance**.
 - In 1995, the **Bhuria Committee**, constituted to recommend provisions for the extension of panchayat raj to Scheduled Areas, recommended including these villages, but this is yet to be done.
 - The President of India notifies **India's Scheduled Areas**. States with **Scheduled Areas need to constitute a Tribal Advisory Council** with up to 20 ST members.
 - They will advise the **Governor on matters referred to them regarding ST welfare**. The Governor will then submit a report every year to the president regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas.

Note:



What are the Concerns Related to Scheduled Areas?

- Despite demands from Adivasi organizations, a **significant portion (59%) of India's ST population is outside the purview of Article 244**, denying them rights protected under laws applicable to Scheduled Areas.
- The **absence of viable ST-majority administrative units** has been a common bureaucratic response,

which has further led to demands for the denotification of parts of Scheduled Areas.

- They are denied rights under the laws applicable to Scheduled Areas, including the **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013** and the **Biological Diversity Act 2002**.

Note:

What are the Provisions Related to STs in India?

- **Definition:**
 - The Constitution of India does not define the criteria for recognition of STs. As per **Census-1931**, STs are termed as “backward tribes” living in the “Excluded” and “Partially Excluded” areas.
 - The **Government of India Act of 1935** called for the first time for representatives of “backward tribes” in provincial assemblies.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 366(25):** It only provides a process to define STs:
 - “STs means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution.”
- **Statutory Provisions:**
 - Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 against Untouchability.
 - **Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.**
 - **Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.**
 - **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.**

World Mental Health Day

Why in News?

10th October marks **World Mental Health Day**, a global initiative aimed at raising awareness about **mental health issues** and rallying support for mental health care worldwide.

- In the context of India, this day **serves as a crucial reminder of the urgent need to address the mental health challenges** faced by the country’s **burgeoning adolescent population** (aged 10-19 years) which plays a pivotal role in its future prosperity and development.
- **Theme for World Mental Health Day 2023:** Mental health is a universal human right.

Note: World Mental Health Day was established on **10th October, 1992** by the **World Federation for Mental Health**. Since then, it has been observed every year.

What is the Status of Mental Healthcare in India?

- **About:**
 - Mental health refers to a **person’s emotional, psychological, and social well-being**, encompassing their overall mental and emotional state.
 - It involves a person’s ability to cope with **stress, manage their emotions**, maintain healthy relationships, work productively, and make rational decisions.
 - Mental health is an integral part of overall health and well-being, **just as important as physical health.**
- **Status in India:**
 - In India, according to **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences** data, more than **80% of people do not access care services** for a multitude of reasons, ranging from **lack of knowledge, stigma and high cost of care.**
 - The economic loss due to mental health conditions, between 2012-2030, is estimated at **USD 1.03 trillion (WHO).**
- **Government Initiatives Related to Mental Health:**
 - **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)**
 - **Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWC)**
 - **National Tele Mental Health Programme**
 - **Kiran Helpline**
 - **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram**
 - Yuva Spandana Yojana (Karnataka)

Caste-Census in Bihar

Why in News?

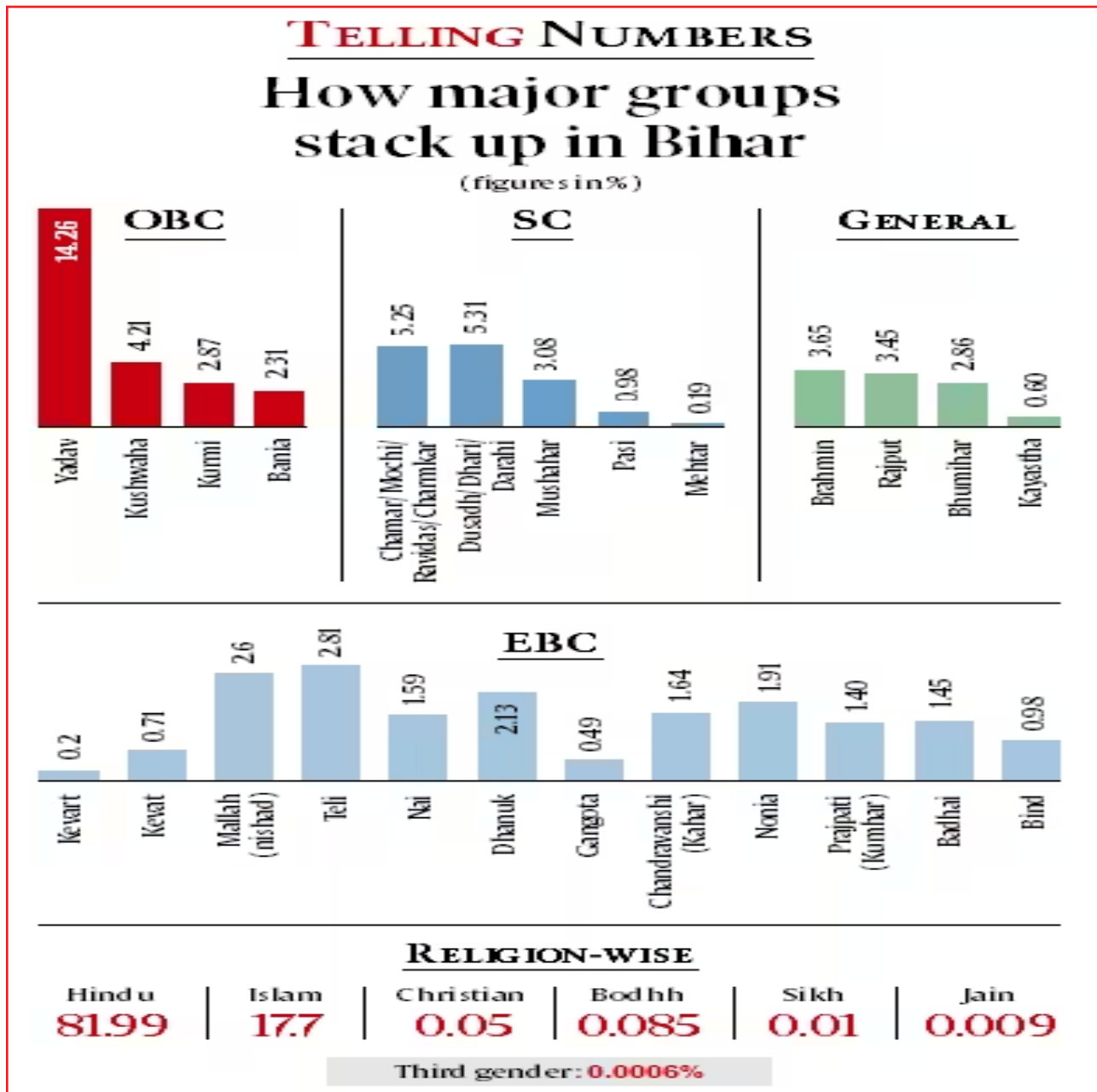
Recently, the Government of the State of Bihar released findings of the **Caste Survey, 2023** which revealed that **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** and **Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs)** together **constitute 63 %** of the state’s total population.

- The findings are supposed to have wider connotations in the State and National Elections and also in the identification of intended beneficiaries for various welfare schemes.

Note:

What are the Key Findings of the Bihar Caste Survey?

Different Castes and Communities (Bihar)	Percentage Population (%)
Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs)	36.01 %
Other Backward Classes (OBCs)	27.12 %
Scheduled Castes	19.65 %
Scheduled Tribes	1.68%
Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs and Jains	< 1 %
Total Population (Bihar)	13.07 crores



Note:

What was the procedure adopted in the Caste Survey?

The survey was carried out in two phases, which each had its own criteria and objectives.

- **First Phase:**
 - During this phase, the **number of all households** in Bihar were counted and recorded.
 - Enumerators were given a **set of 17 questions** which were to be mandatorily answered by the respondent.
- **Second Phase:**
 - During this phase data on people living in the **households, their castes, sub-castes, and socio-economic conditions** were collected.
 - However, filling the **Aadhaar** number, caste certificate number and ration card number of the head of the family, were optional.

What is the Significance of the Bihar Caste Survey Findings?

- **Increasing the OBC Quota:**
 - The survey results will amplify the clamour for increasing the **OBC quota beyond 27%**, and for a quota within quota for the EBCs.
 - The **Justice Rohini Commission**, which has been examining the question of **sub-categorisation of OBCs since 2017**, submitted its report and recommendations are not yet made public.
- **Redrawing of 50% Reservation Ceiling:**
 - The survey data will also reopen the debate over the **50% ceiling** on reservation imposed by the Supreme Court in its landmark ruling in **Indra Sawhney v Union of India (1992)**.
 - Depending upon the population of OBCs, the demand for increase in reservation quota in proportion to that of the population can arise from different quarters of the caste groups.
- **Fulfilment of Constitutional Obligations:**
 - Caste Survey will help attain the objectives as enunciated in **Directive Principles of State Policies (DPSPs)** as mentioned in **Part IV** of the constitution.
 - This will majorly help achieve the socio-economic objectives as outlined by the Constitution drafters.
- **Realisation of Sarvodaya:**
 - Caste Census can be properly utilised to develop targeted measures so as to reduce rampant inequality across the State and promote equity and social justice in the long term.

When was the last Caste Census Conducted in India?

- **Caste Census of 1931:**
 - The last caste census was **conducted in 1931**, and data was made publicly available by the British Government of the day.
 - This caste census became the basis for the implementation of **Mandal Commission Reports** and subsequent reservation policies by the government for **Other Backward Classes**.
- **Census of 2011:**
 - The Census of 2011 became the first time to collect Caste-based data after independence.
 - However, the data related to caste were not made public due to fear of political favouritism and opportunism.

What is the Census?

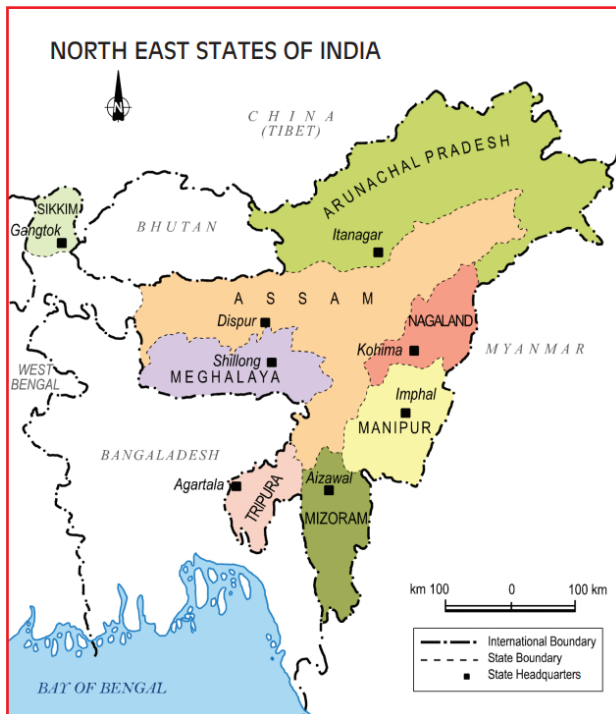
- **Origin of Census:**
 - The origin of the Census in India **goes back to the colonial exercise of 1881**.
 - Census has evolved and been used by the government, policymakers, academics, and others to capture the Indian population, access resources, map social change, **delimitation exercise**, etc.
- **First Caste Census as SECC (Socio-Economic and Caste Census):**
 - SECC was **conducted for the first time in 1931**.
 - SECC is meant to canvass every Indian family, both in rural and urban India, and ask about their:
 - **Economic status**, so as to allow Central and State authorities to come up with a range of indicators of deprivation, permutations, and combinations of which could be used by each authority to define a poor or deprived person.
 - It is also meant to ask every person their **specific caste name** to allow the government to **re-evaluate which caste groups** were economically worse off and which were better off.
- **Difference Between Census & SECC:**
 - The Census provides a **portrait of the Indian population**, while the SECC is a tool to identify beneficiaries of state support.
 - Since the **Census falls under the Census Act of 1948**, all data are considered confidential, whereas according to the SECC website, "all the personal information given in the SECC is open for use by Government departments to grant and/or restrict benefits to households."

Note:

Recognising the Heterogeneity of Northeast India

Why in News?

The Northeast region is home to **numerous ethnic communities** who have migrated from “all points of the compass, making it important to reject a **singular Northeast identity** and emphasizing its **rich linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity**.



What is the Ethnic Composition of the North-East?

➤ Ethnic Composition:

- The region is home to numerous ethnic communities, predominantly belonging to the **Indo-Chinese Mongoloid racial grouping**.
- Northeast India is known for its diverse population, which is made up of over 200 different ethnic groups, **each with its own distinct culture and traditions**.
 - Some of the major ethnic groups in the region include the Assamese, Bodos, Nagas, Mizos, Khasis, Garos, and Arunachalis.

State	Ethnic Groups
Arunachal Pradesh	Adis, Nyishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mismi, Khampti, Wancho, Tangsha, Monpa, etc.
Assam	Barmans, Bodos (Bodokacharis), Deori, Hojai, Sonowal Kacharis, Miri (Mising), Dimasa, Hajong, etc.
Meghalaya	The Khasis, the Garos, Jaintias, etc.
Manipur	Meities, Nagas, Kukis and Chins, Meitei Pangals (Meitei –Muslims) etc.
Mizoram	Lushei, Ralte, Hmar, Paite, Pawis (formerly known as Lais), etc.
Nagaland	Angami, Ao, Chang, Chiru, Phom, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Zeliang, etc.
Tripura	Tripuri, Reang, Chakma, Halam, Garo, Lusei, Darlong, etc.
Sikkim	Nepalis, Bhutias, Lepchas, etc.

- The region is also home to **several indigenous communities** that have managed to preserve their way of life, despite the rapid modernization taking place in other parts of India.

- These communities include the **Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh**, who practice a unique form of agriculture that involves cultivating rice on terraced fields, and the **Khasi people of Meghalaya**, who have a **matrilineal society** where women inherit property and have a central role in decision-making.

➤ Need for Rejecting Homogeneity of the Region:

- The tendency to homogenize the Northeast into a single category is a **fallacy that overlooks the intricate fabric** of its society.
- Such a view not only oversimplifies the reality but also perpetuates **misunderstanding and misrepresentation**.
- Each state within the Northeast holds a **distinct cultural heritage, language, and historical narrative**.
- By rejecting a monolithic identity of the region one can delve into the unique **characteristics of each state and community**, appreciating the richness that this diversity brings.

Note:

Why is it Important to Recognise Heterogeneity of the North-East?

➤ Preserving Cultural Heritage:

- The diverse cultural tapestry of the Northeast is a testament to the historical roots and practices of its various communities.
- From the vibrant festivals of **Assam to the ancient traditions of Sikkim**, each culture offers a **unique perspective on life, values, and beliefs**. Preserving and celebrating this heterogeneity ensures the safeguarding of these cultural legacies for future generations.

➤ Linguistic Identity:

- Northeast region is home to a **plethora of languages**, each representing the **nuanced worldview of its speakers**.
- By recognizing this **linguistic heterogeneity**, the distinctiveness of these languages and the communities that speak them can be honored.

➤ Social Cohesion:

- Acknowledging the diversity within the **Northeast promotes social cohesion and inclusivity**.

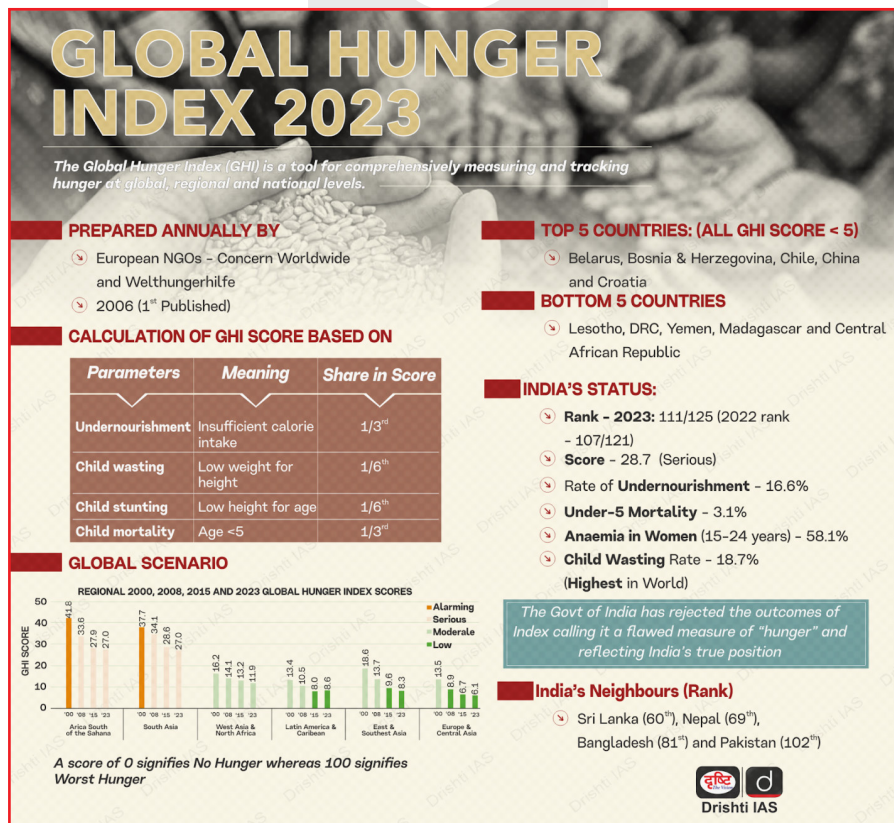
- It encourages a **sense of unity amid differences**, enabling a more harmonious coexistence. By understanding and appreciating the distinct backgrounds and experiences of various communities, social integration is enhanced, contributing to a stronger, united nation.

➤ Tailored Policies for Development:

- A one-size-fits-all approach is **ineffective and unfair**, hampering the region's progress.
- Tailored policies that consider the unique socio-economic, cultural, and historical contexts can foster **sustainable development and growth**.

Note: Descriptive Nicknames for Northeast States

- Arunachal Pradesh: Dawn-lit Mountains
- Assam: Gateway to North East
- Manipur: Jewel of India
- Meghalaya: Abode of Clouds
- Mizoram: Land of Blue Mountains
- Nagaland: Land of Festivals
- Sikkim: Himalayan Paradise
- Tripura: Land of Diversity



Note:

Avian Influenza

Why in News?

A recent study has shed light on significant shifts in the **ecology and evolution of highly pathogenic avian H5 influenza viruses**, revealing a change in their global distribution.

- These viruses have been of growing concern due to their potential impact on both avian and mammalian populations, including humans.

What are the Major Findings of the Study?

- While the epicenter of these viruses was originally **confined to Asia**, the study's findings suggest that this **epicenter has now expanded to include new regions in Africa and Europe**.
- The **two H5 strains originating from African and European bird populations** were found to have evolved through **genetic reassortment with low pathogenic viral variants** as they spread.
 - This genetic reassortment is a critical factor driving the evolution and diversification of these viruses.
- The study underlined that the increasing persistence of avian influenza in wild bird populations is a **catalyst for the evolution and spread of new viral strains**.
 - Wild birds play a crucial role in transmitting and amplifying these viruses, contributing to their ongoing evolution.

What is Genetic Reassortment?

- Genetic reassortment is a type of **genetic recombination that occurs when genes from two organisms are mixed to create a new genetic sequence**. This new sequence is called a recombinant.
- It can **increase genetic diversity during the evolution of seasonal viruses**. It can also lead to novel and potentially deadly viruses.

What is Avian Influenza?

- **About:**
 - Avian influenza, **often referred to as bird flu**, is a highly contagious viral infection that primarily

affects **birds**, particularly **wild birds and domestic poultry**.

- In 1996, highly **pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus** was first identified in domestic waterfowl in Southern China. The virus is named **A/goose/Guangdong/1/1996**.
- **Transmission to Humans and Related Symptoms:**
 - Human cases of **H5N1** avian influenza occur occasionally, but it is difficult to transmit the infection from person to person. As per **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, when people do become infected, **the mortality rate is about 60%**.
 - It can range from **mild flu-like symptoms**, including **fever, cough, and muscle aches**, to severe respiratory issues like **pneumonia, difficulty breathing, and even cognitive problems** such as altered mental status and seizures.
- **Avian Influenza and India:**
 - Initial Outbreak:
 - The initial outbreak of **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in India occurred in 2006 in Navapur, Maharashtra**, and was followed by annual outbreaks.
 - **H5N8 was first observed in India in November 2016**, mainly affecting wild birds across five states, with **Kerala reporting the most cases**.
 - The disease has been reported in **24 states and union territories**, resulting in the culling of over 9 million birds to control its spread.
 - Related Initiative:
 - India's approach to controlling Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) follows a **"detect and cull" policy** as outlined in the **National Action Plan for Prevention, Control, and Containment of Avian Influenza (revised - 2021)**.
- **Treatment:**
 - Antivirals have demonstrated effectiveness in the **treatment of avian influenza virus infections** in humans, lowering severity and the risk of death.

Note:



What are the Types of Influenza Virus?

Types	A Subtypes	HPAI vs LPAI
Influenza A (Infects a wide range of animals including birds)	Avian (Can infect humans) H5N1 H7N3 H7N7 H7N9 H9N2 H10N8	HPAI H5N1 LPAI H5N1 HPAI H5N8 LPAI H5N8
Influenza B (Mainly infects humans)	Swine (Can infect humans) H1N1 H1N2 H3N2	Subtypes can be classified as high path or low path based on the ability of the specific virus strain to kill chickens in the lab setting.
Influenza C (Infects humans and pigs but more rare than types A and B)	Most common human H1N1 H3N2	
Influenza D (Infects cattle)		

Note: HPAI stands for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and LPAI stands for Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Dengue

Why in news?

Recently, Dengue cases have surged significantly in some states like **Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu**.

What is Dengue?

➤ About:

- Dengue is a self-limiting febrile illness with symptoms ranging from asymptomatic to severe.
- Dengue is a mosquito-borne tropical disease caused by the dengue virus (Genus Flavivirus), transmitted by several species of female mosquito within the genus *Aedes*, principally ***Aedes aegypti***.

- This mosquito also transmits **chikungunya and Zika infection**.

➤ Serotypes of Dengue:

- There are 4 distinct, but closely related, serotypes (separate groups within a species of microorganisms

that all share a similar characteristic) of the virus that cause dengue (DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3 and DEN-4).

➤ Symptoms:

- Sudden high fever, severe headaches, pain behind the eyes, severe bone, joint, and muscle pain, etc.

➤ Dengue Vaccine:

- The dengue vaccine CYD-TDV or Dengvaxia was approved by the US Food & Drug Administration in 2019, the first dengue vaccine to get the regulatory nod in the US.

- **Dengvaxia** is basically a **live, attenuated dengue virus** which has to be administered in people of ages 9 to 16 who have laboratory-confirmed previous dengue infection and who live in endemic areas.

- Researchers at **India's National Centre for Biological Sciences**, in collaboration with nine other institutions in India, Africa, and the US, have developed India's **first and only DNA vaccine** candidate for dengue fever.

Note:



drishti

- In preliminary trials on mice, the candidate generated a robust immune response and improved survival rates after exposure to the disease.

➤ Controlling Dengue Using Bacteria:

- Researchers from the World Mosquito Program have **used mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia bacteria to successfully control dengue, leading to a 77% reduction in incidence in Indonesia.**

What is DNA Vaccine?

- A DNA vaccine is a type of vaccine that uses a small piece of DNA that codes for a specific antigen (a molecule that triggers an immune response) from a pathogen, such as a virus or bacterium, to stimulate an immune response.
- The DNA is injected directly into the body's cells, where it instructs the cells to produce the antigen.
 - The immune system then recognizes the antigen as foreign and mounts an immune response against it, which helps to develop immunity to the pathogen.
- DNA vaccines are third-generation vaccines.
- The ZyCoV-D is the world's first and India's indigenously developed DNA based vaccine for Covid-19.

Palliative Care

Why in News?

A recent study has shed light on the **overwhelming financial burden** faced by patients grappling with serious illnesses.

- As the cost of treating life-limiting illnesses pushes individuals into poverty, **palliative care** becomes **essential to address this critical issue** and advocate for holistic patient-centered care.

What is Palliative Care?

➤ About:

- **Palliative care** is a specialized approach to healthcare that focuses on **improving the quality**

of life and providing comprehensive support to individuals facing **serious illnesses or life-limiting conditions.**

- It is not about curing the disease but rather about addressing the **physical, emotional, social needs of the patient.**
- It differs from other medical specialties as it **addresses not only physical health but also social and economic realities.**

➤ Significance:

- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, palliative care is explicitly recognized under the **human right to health.**
 - It recognizes that palliative care is part of the comprehensive services required for **noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)** through the **Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013–2020.**
- Early initiation of palliative care in advanced disease stages can **reduce healthcare expenditure by up to 25%.**
 - Also, palliative care **emphasizes vocational rehabilitation** and social reintegration, enabling patients and families to earn a living and maintain their dignity.

Note: WHO estimates that 56.8 million people need palliative care each year, including 25.7 million in the last year of life. In India, it's estimated that **5.4 million people need palliative care each year.**

- Only about **14% of people who need palliative care receive it.**
- **Palliative Care Programme in India:**
 - While there is no dedicated budget for the **National Palliative Care Program in India**, it is included within the **'Mission Flexipool' under the National Health Mission (NHM).**
 - Additionally, the **National Program for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD) launched in 2010** focuses on addressing the rising burden of non-communicable diseases by offering comprehensive healthcare services spanning **promotive, preventive, and curative care across all levels of healthcare.**

Note:

Disabled Population and Disaster Preparedness

Why in News?

A recent survey by the [United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction \(UNDRR\)](#), released just ahead of the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction observed on **October 13**, reveals a lack of progress in government policies for **protecting people with disabilities during natural disasters** over the last decade.

What are the Findings of the UNDRR's Survey ?

Findings of Survey:

- The 2023 survey, covering 6,000 respondents from 132 countries, shows that **84% of people with disabilities** are not informed about evacuation routes, shelter homes, or personal preparedness plans, **compared to 71% in 2013**.
- **Only 11% of respondents** are aware of disaster management plans in their local areas, **down from 17% in 2013**, and less than half are aware of accessible disaster risk information.

Concerns of Disabled:

- People with disabilities **are at greater risk during disasters**, with up to 16% of the global population having disabilities and being **two-four times more likely to be killed by disasters**.
- Despite increased interest in participating in community-level disaster planning, **86% of respondents still feel excluded**, emphasizing the need for inclusion.

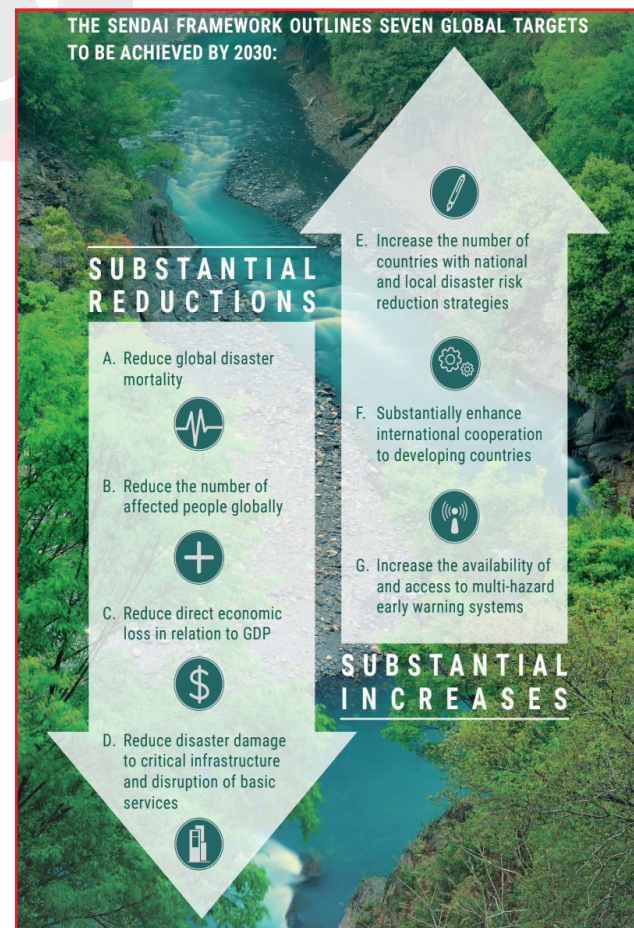
Suggestions of Survey:

- The report emphasizes the **interconnectedness of disasters and inequality**, with unequal access to services increasing the vulnerability of the most at-risk groups.
- The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#) calls for disability inclusion, accessible disaster risk information, and inclusive early warning systems.
- Strengthening **early warning systems is crucial**, as half of the countries lack these mechanisms, and timely warnings can significantly improve evacuation rates.
- Immediate action is needed to address these challenges and ensure meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities in **community disaster risk reduction planning**.

What is Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-30 ?

About:

- It was adopted at the **Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction**, 2015 in **Sendai, Japan**.
- The present Framework applies to the **risk of small-scale and large-scale**, frequent and infrequent, **sudden and slow-onset disasters caused by natural or man-made hazards**, as well as related **environmental, technological and biological hazards** and risks.
- It aims to guide the multi hazard management of disaster risk in development at all levels as well as within and across all sectors.
- It is the **successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters**.



Note:

➤ Actions to be taken in four Priority Areas:

- Understanding Disaster Risk:
 - To promote the **collection, analysis, management and use of relevant data** and practical information and ensure its dissemination.
 - To **systematically evaluate, record, share and publicly account for disaster losses** and understand the economic, social, health, educational, environmental impacts.
- Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk:
 - To carry out an **assessment of the technical, financial and administrative disaster risk management capacity** to deal with the identified risks at the local and national levels.
 - To encourage the establishment of necessary mechanisms and incentives to ensure high level of compliance with the existing safety-enhancing provisions of sectoral laws and regulations.
- **Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience:**
 - To allocate the necessary resources, including finance and logistics, as appropriate, at all levels of administration **for the development and the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies**, policies, plans, laws and regulations in all relevant sectors.
- Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction:
 - To establish **community centres** for the promotion of public awareness and the stockpiling of necessary materials to implement rescue and relief activities.
 - To **train the existing workforce and voluntary workers** in disaster response and strengthen technical and logistical capacities to ensure better response in emergencies.

What are the Initiatives to Empower the Persons with Disabilities (PwD)?

➤ Global:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
 - The **UN Convention on the Rights of PwD (UNCRPD)**, which was **adopted in 2006**, defines persons with disabilities as those “who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.
 - India **ratified the Convention in 2007**.
 - The Indian Parliament enacted the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** with a view to fulfilling the obligations under the **UNCRPD**.

➤ Indian Efforts for Persons with Disability:

- Constitutional Provisions:
 - **Article 41 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** states that the State shall make effective provision for securing right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
 - The subject of ‘relief of the disabled and unemployable’ is specified in the state list of the Seventh Schedule of the constitution.
- Legislation for Disabled - Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:
 - The **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** replaces the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
 - The types of disabilities have been **increased from 7 to 21**. The Act added mental illness, autism, spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, chronic neurological conditions, speech and language disability, **thalassemia, hemophilia, sickle cell disease, multiple disabilities including deaf blindness**, acid attack victims and **Parkinson’s disease** which were largely ignored in earlier Act.
 - It increases the **quantum of reservation for people suffering from disabilities from 3% to 4% in government jobs and from 3% to 5% in higher education institutes**.

Note:

- Every child with benchmark disability **between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education.**
- **Accessible India Campaign** (Creation of Accessible Environment for PwDs):
 - A nation-wide flagship campaign for achieving universal accessibility that will enable persons with disabilities **to gain access for equal opportunity and live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life in an inclusive society.**
 - The campaign targets at **enhancing the accessibility** of the built environment, transport system and Information & communication ecosystem.

Same Sex Marriage in India

Why in News ?

Recently, The **Supreme Court** has delivered its long awaited verdict **rejecting petitions** to legalise **same-sex marriage** and delved deeper on the provisions of the **Special Marriage Act, 1954** to examine the issue thoroughly, which have convergence and interrelationship with **homosexuality.**

What is the Observation of the Supreme Court (SC)?

- **Against Constitutional Validity:**
 - A five-judge Constitution Bench of the apex court headed by **Chief Justice of India** ruled in a **3:2 verdict** against giving constitutional validity to same-sex marriages.
- **Domain Of Parliament:**
 - The CJ, in his opinion, concludes that the **court can neither strike down or read words into the Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954** to include same sex members within the ambit of the **SMA 1954. The top court said it is for Parliament and state Legislature to formulate laws on it.**
- **Other Observations:**
 - However, at the same time, the **SC says the relationship of marriage is not a static one.**
 - **SC holds that** queer persons have an **equal right and freedom to enter into a “union”.**
 - **All five judges** on the Bench, agreed that **there is no fundamental right to marry** under the Constitution.

CJI and Justice Kaul (Minority Opinions): Favoured extension of **Civil Union** to same-sex couples:

- A **‘civil union’** refers to the legal status that allows same-sex couples specific rights and responsibilities that are normally conferred upon married couples. Although a civil union **resembles a marriage, it does not have the same recognition** in personal law as marriage.

What is the Legality of Same-Sex Marriages in India?

- The right to marry is **not expressly recognized either as a fundamental or constitutional right under the Indian Constitution but a statutory right.**
- Though marriage is regulated through various statutory enactments, its recognition as a fundamental right **has only developed through judicial decisions of India’s Supreme Court.** Such declaration of law is binding on all courts throughout India under **Article 141** of the Constitution.

➤ Earlier Views of Supreme Court on Same-Sex Marriages:

- Marriage as a **Fundamental Right (Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K.M. and others 2018):**
 - While referring to Article 16 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Right** and the **Puttaswamy case**, the SC held that the right to marry a person of one’s choice is integral to **Article 21** of the Constitution.
 - **Article 16 (2)** in the Indian constitution provides that there cannot be any discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them.
 - **The right to marry is intrinsic to the liberty which the Constitution guarantees as a fundamental right**, as the ability of each individual to take decisions on matters central to the pursuit of happiness. Matters of belief and faith, including whether to believe are at the core of constitutional liberty.
- **LGBTQ Community** Entitled to **all Constitutional Rights (Navjet Singh Johar and others v. Union of India 2018):**
 - The SC held that members of the LGBTQ community **“are entitled, as all other citizens, to the full range of constitutional rights including the liberties protected by the Constitution”** and are entitled to equal citizenship and “equal protection of law”.

Note:

What is the Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954?

➤ About:

- Marriages in India can be registered under the respective personal laws [Hindu Marriage Act, 1955](#), [Muslim Personal Law Application Act, 1937](#), or under the [Special Marriage Act, 1954](#).
- It is the duty of the Judiciary to ensure that the rights of both the husband and wife are protected.
- The **Special Marriage Act, 1954** has provisions for civil marriage for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party.
- When a person solemnized marriage under this law, then **the marriage is not governed by personal laws but by the Special Marriage Act.**

➤ Features:

- Allows people **from two different religious backgrounds to come together** in the bond of marriage.
- Lays down the procedure for **both solemnization and registration of marriage**, where either of the husband or wife or both are not Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs.
- **Being a secular Act**, it plays a key role in liberating individuals from traditional requirements of marriage.

Balancing Reproductive Autonomy and Unborn Child's Rights

Why in News?

The [Supreme Court of India](#) recently **denied permission to terminate a 26-week pregnancy** for a married woman under the provisions of the [Medical Termination of Pregnancy \(MTP\) Act, 1971](#).

What was the Issue in the Case?

➤ Case:

- The case involved a 27-year-old married woman who was in her 26th week of pregnancy, seeking legal permission to terminate her pregnancy.
 - The woman asserted her physical, emotional, mental, financial, and medical inability to

carry, deliver, or raise another child, citing her pre-existing conditions and experiences with postpartum depression.

- The woman sought recourse to the [Medical Termination of Pregnancy \(MTP\) Act of 1971](#) to plead her case.

➤ Judgment:

- The Court expressed **reluctance to order a medical termination** when the **pregnancy is viable** and does not pose an **immediate threat to the woman's life**.
 - The decision is grounded in the interpretation of **Section 5 of the MTP Act, 1971**, which allows abortion only if the woman's **life** and health are in immediate danger.
 - The three-judge Bench, led by the [Chief Justice of India \(CJI\)](#), emphasized that a **woman cannot claim an "absolute, overriding right" to abort**, particularly when medical reports confirm that the **pregnancy doesn't pose immediate danger to her life or that of the fetus**.
 - CJI distinguished the term 'life' in Section 5 of MTP Act, 1971 from its **broader usage in Article 21 of the Constitution**, emphasizing its application to **life-and-death situations**.
 - ◆ Article 21 protects an individual's fundamental right to a dignified and meaningful life.

➤ Government Stance:

- The government argues that the **woman's reproductive autonomy cannot infringe upon the rights of her unborn child**.
- Refers to the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act of 2021**, which extended the abortion deadline to **24 weeks** in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities.
 - Believes that **once a viable baby is present**, the relief should not be one-sided, and the **woman's right to bodily autonomy should not go beyond the Act**.
- Argues that the woman's fundamental right to choice can be curtailed.

Note:



➤ Implications and Challenges

- The case raises fundamental questions about **women's reproductive rights**, even in **late stages of pregnancy**, and the ethical considerations surrounding abortion.
 - Legal experts and advocates have differing opinions on whether an absolute right to terminate pregnancy should exist, especially in the absence of abnormalities.
- This complex legal and ethical dilemma highlights the need for further discourse and clarity on reproductive rights in India.
- The case also highlights the **challenges women face in accessing legal abortion services in India**.

What are the Legal Provisions Related to Abortion in India?

- Until the 1960s, abortion was illegal in India. The **Shantilal Shah Committee** was formed in the mid-1960s to examine the need for regulations. As a result, the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, of 1971** was passed, legalizing safe abortions and protecting women's health.
 - The MTP Act, of 1971, permits licensed medical professionals to perform abortions in specific predetermined situations as provided under the legislation.
 - The **MTP Act was amended in 2021** to allow certain categories of women, such as rape victims, minors, mentally ill women, etc., to **obtain abortions up to 24 weeks of gestation**, raising it from the previous 20 weeks.
 - It sets up state-level **Medical Boards to decide if a pregnancy may be terminated after 24 weeks** in cases of substantial fetal abnormalities.
 - The MTP Act also provides for the protection of women's privacy, confidentiality, and dignity in accessing safe abortion services.
- The **Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994**, which **prohibits sex-selective abortions** and regulates the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques for detecting genetic or chromosomal abnormalities in the foetus.

- The Constitution of India, which guarantees the right to life and **personal liberty to all citizens under Article 21**. This right has been interpreted by the Supreme Court of India to include the right to reproductive choice and autonomy for women.

India Ageing Report 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)** India, in collaboration with the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)** has unveiled the India Ageing Report 2023, highlighting the rapidly growing elderly population in India.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Demographic Trends:**
 - India's elderly population is growing rapidly, with a decadal growth rate of 41%.
 - By 2050, over 20% of India's population will be elderly.
 - The elderly population in India will surpass the **population of children (0 to 15 years old)** by 2046.
 - The population of people aged **80+ years is expected to increase by around 279%** between 2022 and 2050.
- **Higher Life Expectancy of Women:**
 - Women have a **higher life expectancy at ages 60 and 80** compared to men, with variations across states and territories.
 - For instance, in Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, women at **60 years have a life expectancy of 23 and 22 years**, respectively, which is four years greater than men at **60 years in these States** — as compared to the national average differential of only 1.5 years.
- **Poverty and Well-being:**
 - More than 40% of the elderly in India are in the poorest wealth quintile.
 - **Poverty** among the elderly is a concern, affecting their quality of life and healthcare utilization.
 - A substantial proportion of elderly individuals, especially women, are living **without any income, affecting their quality of life** and healthcare utilization.

Note:

➤ Regional Variations:

- There are significant inter-State variations in the elderly population and their growth rates.
- Most States in the southern region and select northern States such as Himachal Pradesh and Punjab reported a **higher share of the elderly population** than the national average in 2021, a gap that is expected to widen by 2036.

➤ Sex Ratio of the Elderly Population:

- The sex ratio among the elderly has been **climbing steadily since 1991**, with the ratio in the general population stagnating.
 - Between 2011 and 2021, the **ratio increased in India as a whole and across all regions**, barring the Union Territories and western India.
- In the northeast and the east, while the sex ratio of the elderly increased, it **remained below 1,000 in both years**, indicating that **men still outnumber the women** in these regions even at 60-plus years.
 - However in central India, where the sex ratio went from 973 in 2011 to 1,053 in 2021, implying that the women caught up with and outperformed the men in survival after 60 years over the decade.

➤ Low Awareness of Social Security Schemes:

- The elderly in India have **low awareness about the various social security schemes** designed for them.
- A little more than half of the elderly (55%) are aware of the **old-age pension scheme (IGNOAPS)**; 44% about the widow pension scheme (**IGNWPS**); and 12% about the Annapurna Scheme.

➤ Concern and Challenges:

- Poverty is **inherently gendered in old age** when older women are more likely to be widowed, living alone, with **no income and with fewer assets** of their own, and fully dependent on family for support.
- The major challenges facing India's aging population are the **feminisation and ruralisation** of this older population.

What are the Recommendations of the Report?

- Address the **lack of credible data on various issues** related to the elderly by including relevant questions in data collection exercises such as the **National Sample Survey**, the **National Family Health Survey**, and the **Census of India**. This will help in informed policymaking.
- Increase awareness about **existing schemes for older persons and bring all Old Age Homes** under regulatory purview. Encourage the creation and running of elderly self-help groups.
- Emphasize the **importance of elderly people living in multigenerational** households. Encourage policies that facilitate and support this living arrangement.
- Encourage in **situ (at home) ageing** as much as possible by creating short-term care facilities like creches or day-care facilities. The report suggests that elderly people receive better care when living with their respective families.

What is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)?

➤ About:

- It is a subsidiary organ of the **UN General Assembly** and works as a sexual and reproductive health agency.
- The **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** establishes its mandate.

➤ Establishment:

- It was established as a trust fund in 1967 and began operations in 1969.
- In 1987, it was **officially renamed the United Nations Population Fund** but the original abbreviation, 'UNFPA' for the **United Nations Fund for Population Activities** was retained.

➤ Objective:

- UNFPA works directly to tackle **Sustainable Development Goals** on health (**SDG3**), education (**SDG4**) and gender equality (**SDG5**).

➤ Fund:

- UNFPA is not supported by the **UN budget**, instead, it is **entirely supported by voluntary contributions** of donor governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, foundations and individuals.

Note:

State of Elementary Education in Rural India 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Education has released the **State of Elementary Education in Rural India - 2023** report, highlighting the **Prevalence of Smartphone Usage** among students.

- The report was based on a survey conducted by the **Development Intelligence Unit (DIU)**, a collaboration between NGO Transform Rural India and Sambodhi Research and Communications.

- The survey gathered responses from **6,229 parents of schoolchildren aged 6-16 in rural communities across 21 States**.

What are the Key Findings of the Survey?

- **Smartphone Usage and Entertainment:**
 - 49.3% have **access to smartphones**. 76.7% of parents indicated that their children **primarily use smartphones for playing video games**, indicating a **preference for entertainment over educational** activities.
 - Additionally, 56.6% of students use smartphones to **download and watch movies**, while 47.3% use them to download and listen to music.
 - In contrast, only **34% of students use smartphones for study-related downloads**, and a mere 18% access online learning via tutorials.

Aspiring for higher education

The table shows parental expectations of a child's educational attainment. About 78% of parents aspire for their girls to attain graduation or higher degrees



Dropping out: Parents of a section of girls said their daughters dropped out of school to help out in the family's earnings R. RAGU

Expected level of education of child	Boy (%)	Girl (%)	Total (%)
Up to elementary	4.4	3.9	4
Up to secondary	2.4	2.8	3
Higher secondary	11.1	15.2	13
Graduation	49.6	50.3	50
Postgraduation/Ph.D.	32.5	27.8	30

- About 80% of parents aspire for their children to become graduates or attain higher degrees
- The survey included responses of 6,229 parents across 21 States of India.

Source: State of Elementary Education in Rural India report

➤ Differential Access Based on Class:

- Smartphone access **varies across different class levels**. Students in higher classes (Class VIII and above) have greater access to smartphones (58.32%), while even **younger students (Classes I-III) show considerable access (42.1%)**.
- This indicates that smartphone **usage for entertainment is prevalent** across age groups, potentially impacting their educational engagement.

➤ Parental Aspirations and Engagement:

- 78% of parents aspire for their **children to attain graduation-level education** or above, however, there is a **gap in parental engagement**.
- Only 40% of parents **have daily conversations with their children** about their school learning, while 32% engage in such **conversations a few days a week**.

Note:

- **Reasons for School Dropout:**
 - **For girls**, 36.8% of parents mentioned that the need to contribute to family **earnings led to their daughters dropping out.**
 - Meanwhile, 31.6% attributed the **dropout to their child's lack of interest in studies**, and 21.1% believed household responsibilities played a role.
 - **For boys**, the primary reason for dropping out was a lack of interest in studies, cited by 71.8% of respondents, followed by **48.7% stating the need for boys to contribute to family earnings.**
- **Parent-Teacher Meetings and Learning Environment:**
 - 84% of parents reported regular attendance. Nonetheless, the two main reasons for non-attendance, are short notice and a lack of willingness.
 - Additionally, the availability of age-appropriate reading materials other than textbooks was **reported by 40% of parents**, highlighting the need for further resources to support children's learning at home.

What are the Recommendations?

- The findings emphasize the **need for targeted efforts to enhance the educational environment at home** and promote a balanced use of smartphones for both entertainment and learning purposes.

Organ Donation in India

Why in News?

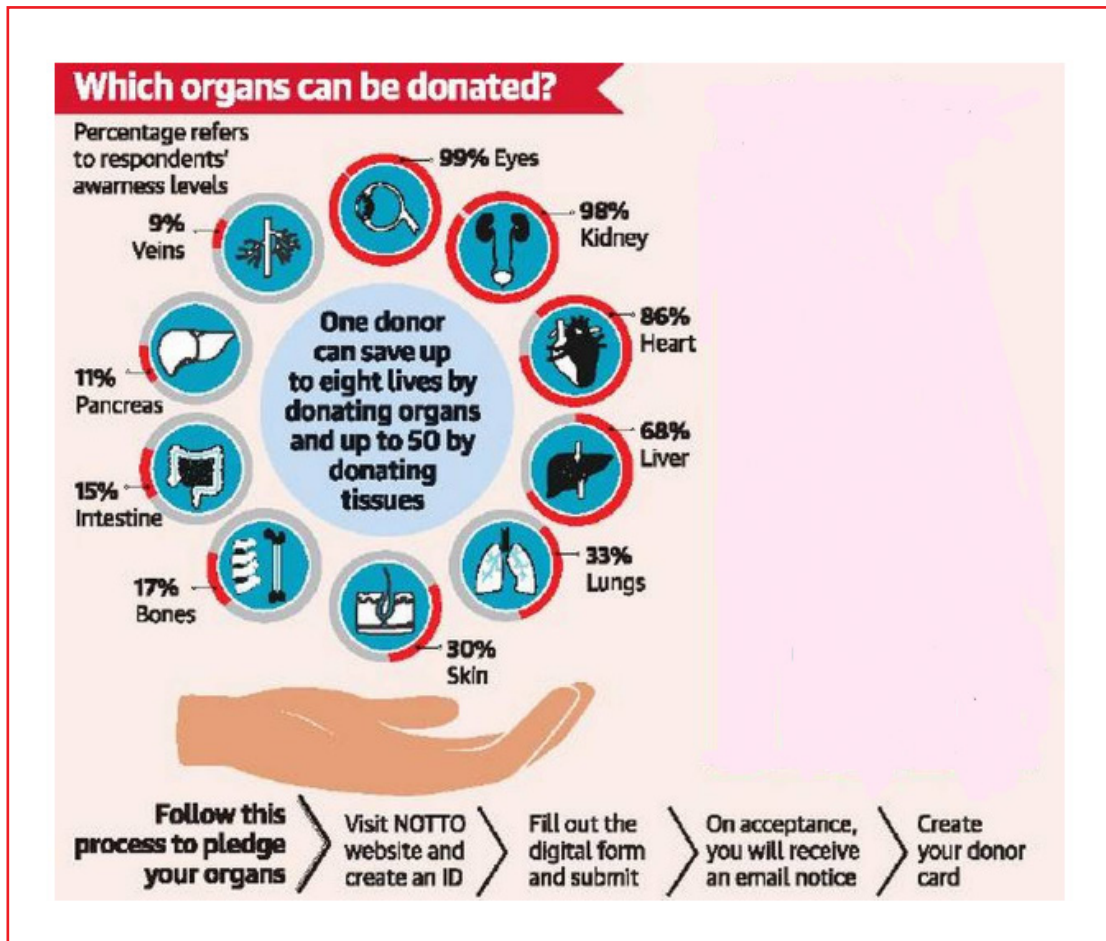
Recently, the **critical shortage of organ donations**, particularly **deceased donations**, has led to a dire situation in India, with thousands of patients waiting for transplants and a significant number losing their lives daily.

- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has earlier modified **National Organ Transplantation Guidelines**, allowing those above **65 years of age to receive an organ** for transplantation from deceased donors.
- In India, **the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994** provides various regulations for the removal of human organs and their storage. It also regulates the transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes and for the prevention of commercial dealings in human organs.

What is the Status of Organ Donation in India?

- **Growing Demand and Persistent Shortage:**
 - Over **300,000 patients are on the waiting list for organ donations in India.**
 - The supply of organ donors has not kept up with the increasing demand.
 - Approximately **20 individuals die daily while awaiting organ transplants** due to the shortage.
- **Slow Growth in Donor Numbers:**
 - Donor numbers, including **both living and deceased**, have shown slow growth over the years.
 - From **6,916 donors in 2014**, the count increased to about **16,041 in 2022**, indicating a modest rise.
 - The **deceased organ donation rate** in India has remained **consistently below one donor per million population for a decade.**
- **Deceased Organ Donation Rate:**
 - Urgent efforts are required to raise the deceased organ donation rate to address the shortage.
 - Countries like **Spain and the United States have achieved significantly higher donation rates, ranging from 30 to 50 donors per million population.**
- **Prevalence of Living Donors:**
 - Living donors constitute the majority, **accounting for 85% of all donors in India.**
 - However, deceased organ donations, especially for **kidneys, liver, and heart, remain considerably low.**
- **Regional Disparities:**
 - Disparities in organ donation rates exist among different states in India.
 - Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Maharashtra have reported the highest number of deceased organ donors.
 - Delhi-NCR, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and West Bengal are prominent regions with a high number of living donors.
- **Kidney Transplants:**
 - Kidney transplantation in India faces a significant disparity between demand and supply.
 - Annual demand for **200,000 kidney transplants is met with only around 10,000 transplants each year**, creating a substantial gap.

Note:



What are the Highlights of the New National Organ Transplantation Guidelines?

- **Removed Age Cap:**
 - Age limit for organ recipients eliminated due to improved life expectancy.
 - **NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization)** guidelines previously prohibited end-stage organ failure patients **above 65 years from registering for organ transplants.**
- **No Domicile Requirement:**
 - Domicile requirement waived for organ recipient registration.
 - **'One Nation, One Policy'** approach allows patients to register for organ transplants in any state.
- **No Registration Fees:**
 - Removal of registration fees for organ recipient registration.
 - States, including Gujarat, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Kerala, no longer charge fees for patient registration.

Note:

- NOTTO is set up under the **Directorate General of Health Services**, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, located in New Delhi.
- National Network division of NOTTO functions as the apex centre for all Indian activities for procurement, distribution and registry of organs and tissues donation and transplantation in the country.

POCSO Act

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has informed the **Lok Sabha** that the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**, is one of the crucial legislations enacted by the Government to protect children from Sexual Abuse.

Note:

What is the POCSO Act?

➤ About:

- **POCSO Act** came into effect on 14th November 2012 which was enacted in consequence to India's ratification of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992**.
- The aim of this special law is to address **offences of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse** of children, which were either not specifically defined or in adequately penalised.
- The Act defines a **child as any person below the age of 18 years**. The Act provides **punishment as per the gravity of offence**.
 - The Act was further reviewed and **amended in 2019** to introduce more stringent punishment including the death **penalty for committing sexual crimes on children**, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes against children.
 - The Government of India has also notified the **POCSO Rules, 2020**.

➤ Features:

- Gender-Neutral Nature:
 - The Act recognizes that both girls and boys can be victims of sexual abuse and that such abuse is a **crime regardless of the gender** of the victim.
 - This is in line with the **principle that all children have the right to protection from sexual abuse** and exploitation, and that laws should not discriminate based on gender.

➤ Ease in Reporting Cases:

- There is sufficient general awareness **now to report cases of sexual exploitation of children** not only by individuals but also by institutions as non-reporting has been made a specific **offence under the POCSO Act**. This has made it comparatively difficult to hide offences against children.

➤ Explicit Definition of Terms:

- The storage of child pornography material has been **made a new offence**.
- Further, the offence of 'sexual assault' has been defined in explicit terms (with increased minimum punishment) unlike an abstract definition of 'outraging modesty of a woman' in the **Indian Penal Code**.

➤ POCSO Rules 2020:

- Interim Compensation and Special Relief

- Rule-9 of the POCSO Rules allows the **Special Court to order interim compensation** for the child's needs related to relief or rehabilitation after the FIR's registration. This compensation is adjusted against the final compensation, if any.
- Immediate Payment of Special Relief:
 - Under the POCSO Rules, the **Child Welfare Committee (CWC)** may recommend immediate **payment for essential needs** like food, clothes, and transportation, using funds from the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), or funds maintained under the **Juvenile Justice Act 2015**.
 - The payment must be made within a week of receiving the CWC's recommendation.
- Support Person for the Child:
 - The POCSO Rules **empower the CWC to provide a support person** to assist the child throughout the **investigation and trial process**.
 - The support person is **responsible for ensuring the child's best interests**, including physical, emotional, and mental well-being, access to medical care, counseling, and education. They also inform the child and their parents or guardians about court proceedings and developments related to the case.

Note: In furtherance to the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018**, Department of Justice has started a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in October, 2019 for setting up of a total of 1023 **Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs)** (including 389 exclusive POCSO Courts) Across the country.

- As on May 31, 2023, a total of 758 FTSCs including 412 Exclusive POCSO (e-POCSO) Courts are functional in 29 States/UTs across the country.

What are the Initiatives to Curb Child Abuse?

- **Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit**
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**
- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**
- **Child Marriage Prohibition Act (2006)**
- **Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 2016**
- **POCSO Courts under Special Fast Track Courts.**

Note:

World Breastfeeding Week 2023

Why in News?

On the occasion of **World Breastfeeding Week 2023**, the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)** lauded the progress made by **several countries in increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates**, while also highlighting the potential for further advancements if breastfeeding is protected and supported, particularly in the workplace.

What is World Breastfeeding Week?

- **World Breastfeeding Week**, observed annually during the first week of August in commemoration of the **1990 Innocenti Declaration**.
 - In 1990, the Innocenti Declaration was signed by government policymakers, UN health agencies, and other organisations to **protect, promote, and support breastfeeding**.
- In **1991**, the **World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)** was formed as a global network, and since **1992**, the world has marked **Breastfeeding Week, annually**.
 - Since 2016, WBW has been aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
 - Breastfeeding can help achieve many of the 17 SDGs, including goals on **poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, and sustainable consumption**.
- **Theme 2023: "Let's make breastfeeding at work, work"**.
 - **UNICEF and WHO** called on governments, donors, civil society and the private sector to step up efforts to help eliminate barriers women and families face to achieving their breastfeeding goals and **reach the global 2030 target of 70%**.

What is the Progress in Exclusive Breastfeeding Rates?

- Exclusive breastfeeding involves **feeding babies only breast milk and excluding all other foods, liquids, infant formula**, or water, except for necessary medications or vitamin and mineral supplements.

- The practice of exclusive breastfeeding offers vital health benefits to infants, including **protection against common infectious diseases** and bolstering their immune systems, ensuring they receive essential nutrients for optimal growth and development.
 - Over the past decade, the global rate of exclusive breastfeeding has risen by an impressive 10% points, **reaching 48%**.

What are the Indian Government Initiatives Relates to Breastfeeding?

- **MAA - "Mothers Absolute Affection"**
 - MAA is a nationwide programme of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** to promote breastfeeding.
- **Vatsalya – Maatri Amrit Kosh**
 - Vatsalya, a **National Human Milk Bank and Lactation Counselling Centre** has been established in collaboration with the Norwegian government

UWW Suspends of Wrestling Federation of India

Why in News?

The **Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)**, the national governing body for wrestling, has been provisionally suspended by the **United World Wrestling (UWW)**, for not conducting its elections on time.

- This has serious implications for the Indian wrestlers, who will not be able to compete under the **national flag in the upcoming World Championships in Serbia**.

Why was the WFI Suspended by UWW?

- The UWW has suspended the WFI for violating its constitution, which mandates that **all member federations must hold their elections every four years**.
 - The WFI was supposed to hold its **elections in February 2023**, but they were delayed due to various reasons, including **allegations of sexual harassment**, intimidation, financial irregularities, and administrative lapse against the former WFI president and others by some prominent wrestlers.

Note:

- The UWW also wanted to protect the athletes and make the federation work properly again.

What are the Other Sports Bodies in India Facing Similar Conflicts?

- **FIFA (Fédération internationale de Football Association)**, the global governing body of football, **suspended All India Football Federation of India due to delayed elections in 2002, The ban was lifted subsequently.**
- The **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** and **International Hockey Federation (FIH)** also warned of potential bans for Indian sports bodies for similar reasons.
- In June 2020, the Indian government revoked recognition of **54 national federations for non-compliance with the National Sports Development Code of India 2011.**

Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)

- The WFI is the governing body of wrestling in India. It is **headquartered in New Delhi.**
- It is recognized by the **Government of India and the Indian Olympic Association.**
- It organizes various national and international wrestling events, such as the **Pro Wrestling League, the National Wrestling Championship, and the Asian Championships.**
- The WFI also **supports and trains Indian wrestlers who participate in the Olympic Games.**

United World Wrestling (UWW)

- UWW is the international governing body for the sport of amateur wrestling. It oversees wrestling at the **Olympics and the World Championships.**
- **UWW is headquartered in Corsier-sur-Vevey, Switzerland.**
- UWW was founded in 1912 as the **International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA)**. It changed its name to United World Wrestling in 2014.
- UWW has a vision to be globally recognized as an inspiring, innovative, and leading Olympic Federation³. Its mission is to lead the growth of wrestling around the world.

History of the Game of Wrestling in India

- Wrestling in India dates back to the **5th millennium B.C.**
- Ancient India practised wrestling known as **MallaYudha.**
- **Bhima from Mahabharata was a renowned wrestler, along with Jarasandha, Keechaka, and Balrama.**
- Ramayana also mentions wrestling, with **Hanuman as a notable wrestler.**
- Wrestling is referred to as **“Dangal” in India** and is a basic form of wrestling tournament. It’s called **“kushti” in Punjab and Haryana regions.**
- Originally a fitness activity and entertainment for royals, wrestling has evolved into a professional sport.

SC Allows Termination of Pregnancy for Rape Survivor

Why in News?

Observing that pregnancy outside marriage, especially in cases of sexual assault, is injurious and a cause of stress, the **Supreme Court of India** allowed a rape survivor from Gujarat to terminate her **27-week pregnancy.**

- The court **overruled the Gujarat High Court’s order** that denied her request and directed the hospital to carry out the procedure without any delay.
- Under the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Amendment Act 2021**, the upper limit for termination of pregnancy is 24 weeks.

What are the Legal Provisions Related to Abortion in India?

- Until the **1960s, abortion was prohibited in India**, and violating this led to imprisonment or fines under **Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code.**
 - The **Shantilal Shah Committee** was set up in the mid-1960s to investigate the need for abortion regulations.
 - Based on its findings, the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971** was enacted, **allowing safe and legal abortions, safeguarding women’s health, and reducing maternal mortality.**

Note:

- The **MTP Act, 1971**, allows **abortion up to 20 weeks of gestation**, with the consent of the **woman and on the advice of one registered medical practitioner (RMP)**. However, the law was updated in **2002 and 2021**.
 - The 2021 amendment **permits abortion from 20 to 24 weeks of gestation** for specific cases like rape survivors, with **approval from two doctors**.
 - It sets up **state level Medical Boards** to decide if a pregnancy may be terminated after

24 weeks in cases of substantial fetal abnormalities.

- It extends the failure of contraceptive clauses to **unmarried women (initially only married women)**, allowing them to seek abortion services on grounds of their choice, irrespective of their marital status.
 - Consent requirements vary based on age and mental state, ensuring medical practitioner oversight.

The MTP Act 1971 and The MTP Act Amendments 2021

	MTP Act 1971	The MTP Amendment Act 2021
Indications (Contraceptive failure)	Only applies to married women	Unmarried women are also covered
Gestational Age Limit	20 weeks for all indications	24 weeks for rape survivors Beyond 24 weeks for substantial fetal abnormalities
Medical practitioner opinions required before termination	One RMP till 12 weeks Two RMPs till 20 weeks	One RMP till 20 weeks Two RMPs 20-24 weeks Medical Board approval after 24 weeks
Breach of the woman's confidentiality	Fine up to Rs 1000	Fine and/or Imprisonment of 1 year

- **Recent Supreme Court judgments reaffirm women's bodily autonomy.** Courts recognized abortion rights in cases of rape and acknowledged reproductive choice as a component of personal liberty.

Note: In *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs. the Union Of India And Others (2017)*, the Supreme court recognized the constitutional right of women to make reproductive choices, as a part of **personal liberty under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution**, which, despite laying a robust jurisprudence on reproductive rights and the privacy of a woman, does not translate into a fundamental shift in power from the doctor to the woman seeking an abortion.

Nutrition's Role in Tuberculosis Prevention

Why in News?

Recently, two studies conducted by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** and published in prestigious journals such as **The Lancet** and **The Lancet Global Health**, have unveiled a pivotal connection between **nutrition and tuberculosis (TB) prevention**.

- **Reducing Activation of Tuberculosis by Improvement of Nutritional Status (RATIONS) trial** shows **correlation between nutritional support and the reduction of TB incidence**.

Note:

- **Weight gain's impact on TB mortality** revealing how increased weight among **malnourished TB patients** correlates with reduced mortality rates.

Note:

- As per **WHO**, India accounts for **27% of the global TB incidence and 35% of total TB-related deaths.**
- **India is set to eliminate TB by 2025.**

What are the Key Highlights of the Studies?

- A total of 5,621 people were given the **nutrient-dense food for a year while 4,724 people received food parcels with no extra nutrition.**
 - At the end of the trial, there was a 39% reduction in TB incidence in the intervention group versus the control one.

- Weight gain **decreased the risks of tuberculosis mortality in severely malnourished TB patients in Jharkhand.**
 - Instantaneous risk of death was reduced by 13% for a 1% weight gain and 61% for 5% weight gain.
- The study involved **2,800 severely malnourished TB patients in Jharkhand**, with a prevalence of undernutrition in 4 out of 5 patients.
 - Nutritional support was provided to individuals responding to TB drugs for six months, while the duration was 12 months for those with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis.
- An early weight gain in the **first two months was associated with a 60% lower risk of TB mortality.**
 - Patients showed higher treatment success, better weight gain, and low rates of weight loss during follow-ups.

Nutrition and Tuberculosis



- More than two-thirds of **trial participants were tribals**, most of whom were accessing ration from the PDS.

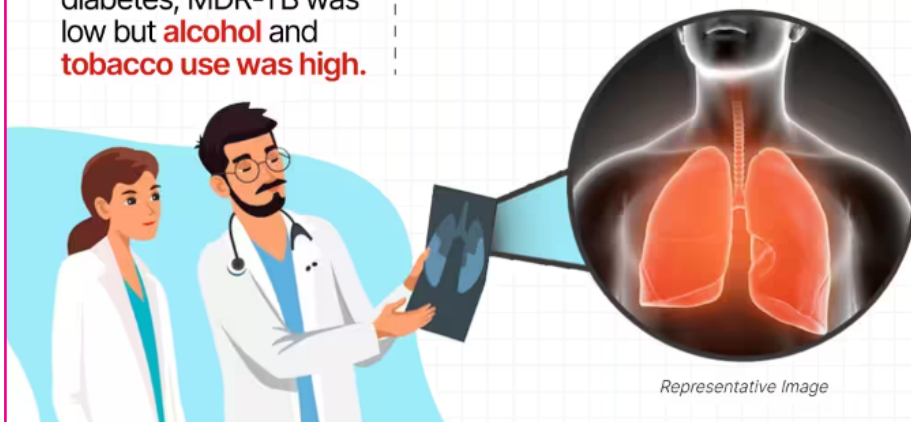
- **Undernutrition** (BMI < 18.5 kg/m²) was prevalent in four out of five patients, with severe undernutrition (BMI < 16 kg/m²) in nearly half of these.

- Prevalence of HIV, diabetes, MDR-TB was low but **alcohol and tobacco use was high.**

- Nearly one per cent of patients were **hypotensive, hypoxic**, or were unable to stand, indicating need for in-patient care.

- One of three contacts across all ages had **undernutrition** at enrolment.

- There was a **39 per cent reduction** of incidence of **all forms of TB** and a **48 per cent reduction** of incidence of **infectious TB** in the intervention group of families.



Note:

What is Tuberculosis?

- **About:**
 - Tuberculosis is an infection caused by bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It can practically affect **any organ of the body**. The most common ones are lungs, pleura (lining around the lungs), lymph nodes, intestines, spine, and brain.
- **Transmission:**
 - It is an airborne infection that spreads through **close contact with the infected**, especially in **densely populated spaces** with poor ventilation.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Common symptoms of active lung TB are cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Treatment:**
 - TB is a treatable and curable disease.
 - Anti-TB medicines have been used for decades and strains that are **resistant to 1 or more of the medicines have been documented** in every country surveyed.
 - **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a form of TB** caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs.
 - MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs such as Bedaquiline.
 - Extensively **drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of **MDR-TB** caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.

What are India's Initiatives to Combat TB?

- [Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan](#).
- [National Strategic Plan \(NSP\) for Tuberculosis Elimination \(2017-2025\)](#).
- [TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign](#).
- [Nikshay Poshan Yojna](#)

Eastern Equine Encephalitis

Why in News?

Mosquito-borne illnesses continue to pose a significant threat across various parts of the world, and one of the latest additions to this concern is the **emergence of the Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus in the United States**.

- This rare virus has recently been reported in **Alabama and New York**, with serious implications for public health.

What is Eastern Equine Encephalitis?

- **About:**
 - **Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)** is a viral disease that causes **inflammation of the brain (encephalitis)**. It spreads to **people and animals** by the bite of an **infected mosquito**.
 - **EEE** was first identified in **horses in Massachusetts, United States**, in 1831.
 - **Causes:** EEE is caused by the **Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV)**, which belongs to the **genus Alphavirus** and the family **Togaviridae**.
 - EEE virus has a single-stranded, positive-sense RNA genome.
 - EEEV is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes, particularly species belonging to the **Culisetamelanura group**.
 - These **mosquitoes feed on both birds (reservoir hosts) and mammals**, including **humans and horses** (dead-end hosts).
 - The virus **does not spread between humans** or from animals like horses to humans.
 - **Symptoms:** The symptoms associated with EEE can range from mild to severe, often progressing rapidly:
 - The virus typically begins with high fever, headache, chills, and nausea.
 - As the infection advances, more serious symptoms may develop, including **seizures, disorientation, and even coma**.
 - **Effects:**
 - Roughly **33% of individuals who are infected do not survive**, typically passing away between 2 to 10 days after the symptoms first appear.

Note:

- Survivors of the virus **might experience long-lasting neurological issues**, with a greater likelihood of occurrence in individuals above 50 and under 15 years of age.
- **Treatment:**
 - Currently, there are **no vaccines available to directly treat Eastern equine encephalitis**.
 - To mitigate the risk of infection, individuals are advised to take several precautionary steps, including **avoiding mosquito bites by using repellents and wearing protective clothing**.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

Why in News?

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), a debilitating **Neurodegenerative Disease**, presents a range of challenges for both patients and caregivers in India.

- Despite its rare occurrence, ALS profoundly impacts the **lives of those affected due to its progressive nature** and lack of effective treatment.

What is Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)?

- **About:**
 - ALS is a rare and **fatal type of motor neuron disease**. It is characterized by **progressive degeneration** of nerve cells in the spinal cord and brain.
 - It's often called **Lou Gehrig's disease**, after a famous baseball player who died from the disease.
 - ALS is one of the most **devastating of the disorders** that affects the function of nerves and muscles.
 - As motor neurons degenerate and die, they stop sending **messages to the muscles**, which causes the muscles to weaken, start to twitch (fasciculations), and waste away (atrophy).
 - Eventually, the brain loses its ability to initiate and control **Voluntary Movements**.
 - The **movements** that are **under our control** are called voluntary actions, such as walking, running, sitting etc.

- On the other hand, the movements that **are not under our control** are called **involuntary movements**.

- **Causes:**
 - Causes are not yet, in a few cases, **genetics is involved**.
 - ALS research is looking into **possible environmental causes of ALS**.
- **Symptoms:**
 - With ALS, there may be **weakness in a limb that develops over a matter of days** or, more commonly, a few weeks. Then, several weeks to months later, weakness develops in another limb. Sometimes the initial problem can be one of slurred speech or trouble swallowing.
- **Treatment:**
 - There is no cure and proven treatment for ALS.

What are the Initiatives to Tackle ALS?

- The Government's **National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD)**, 2021, introduced a significant provision offering **financial aid of up to Rs. 50 lakh to patients afflicted by Rare Diseases** and receiving treatment at designated Centers of Excellence.
 - The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** characterizes rare diseases as debilitating conditions with a prevalence of 1 or less per 1000 population.
- This policy initiative aims to support individuals, including **those with conditions like ALS**, by providing **substantial financial assistance** for their treatment.

Concerns Over Consuming Ultra-Processed Food

Why in News?

Recently, a report released by **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations** found that India's **Ultra-Processed Food Sector** grew at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 13.37 % in retail sales value from 2011 to 2021.

Note:

What is Ultra Processed Food?

➤ About:

- Processed food usually has **salt, sugar and fat added** to it. Food is considered ultra-processed if **five or more ingredients have been added** to the original product.
- These other ingredients are usually **flavour and taste enhancers, emulsifiers and colours**, and all of them are meant to **improve shelf life and taste** or make the food convenient to eat.
 - For instance, **atta in raw form is unprocessed**. Dalia, with salt and sugar added, is processed food. If we make **cookies out of atta** and add a lot of other things, **it is ultra-processed**.

➤ Concerns:

- Salt, sugar and fat are commonly added to **all processed food**. Such foods are not healthy to consume regularly or in large quantities.
- They can cause **obesity, hypertension, cardiac issues** and lifestyle diseases. The artificial chemicals added to ultra-processed food have a **negative impact on gut health**.
- Any imbalance in gut health can lead to a host of problems, from neurological **issues and stress to mood swings and obesity**.
- Most ultra-processed foods use taste enhancers, so people automatically get addicted to them.
 - On top of that, the natural food is broken down to such an extent that it gets absorbed very quickly by the body.
- The effect of high doses of simple sugar is that the body releases insulin, which makes you **feel hungry and want to eat more food**. That is why we say sugar is addictive.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

➤ Temporary Disruption and Rebounded:

- The **Covid-19 Pandemic** caused a temporary disruption, causing the annual growth rate of the Indian ultra-processed food sector to plummet from 12.65% in 2019 to 5.50% in 2020.
 - However, the sector rebounded remarkably, with an 11.29% growth recorded in 2020-2021.

➤ Dominant Categories and Sales Volume:

- The most popular ultra-processed food categories include **chocolate and sugar confectionery**, salty snacks, beverages, ready-made and convenient foods, and breakfast cereals.

- In terms of retail sales volume from 2011 to 2021, **beverages held the highest share**, followed by chocolate and sugar confectionery and ready-made and convenience foods.

➤ Health Consciousness and Changing Consumption Patterns:

- Health-conscious consumers shifted away from carbonated sugar-sweetened beverages to **fruit and vegetable juices** during the pandemic, potentially due to their perceived immune-boosting properties.
 - However, these alternative beverages may also contain high levels of free sugars.

What are the Recommendations?

➤ Stricter Advertising and Marketing Regulations:

- The report underscores the **necessity for stricter advertising and marketing regulations**, particularly concerning products like sweet biscuits that are popular among children.
 - The high salt content in salty snacks poses risks to consumers' health, making it crucial to address through regulations.

➤ Clear Definition of High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) Foods:

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** should collaborate with stakeholders to establish a clear definition of High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) foods.
- Linking the **tax structure with the definition of HFSS foods** through the GST Council can **incentivize healthier and reformulated options by imposing higher taxes** on products exceeding recommended levels of fat, sugar, and salt.

➤ Comprehensive National Nutrition Policy:

- There is a need for a **robust national nutrition policy** addressing both under- and over-nutrition, with well-defined objectives and targets, after thorough consultations with stakeholders.
 - Existing policies like **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0** lack comprehensive coverage of overnutrition and diet-related diseases.

➤ Nutritional Transition and Long-Term Goals:

- The report calls for a shift towards a healthier lifestyle, emphasizing the importance of reducing the consumption of ultra-processed foods and increasing the intake of whole grains.

Note:

- Low intake of whole grains has been identified as a **primary dietary risk factor for noncommunicable diseases in India.**

What are the Government Initiatives to Promote Healthy Lifestyle?

- **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.**
- **PM-POSHAN Scheme.**
- **Fit India Movement**

Dark Patterns

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, has established a 17-member task force to develop guidelines for consumer protection to address the issue of **Dark Patterns.**

- The Ministry has started classifying complaints received on the **National Consumer Helpline** to compile information on Dark Patterns, which can be used by the **Central Consumer Protection Authority** to initiate action under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**

What are the Dark Patterns?

- **About:**
 - Dark patterns, also known as deceptive patterns, refer to strategies employed by websites and apps to **make users perform actions they did not intend** to or discourage behaviors that are not advantageous for the companies.
 - The term was coined by Harry Brignull, a user experience (UX) designer, in 2010.
 - These patterns often **exploit cognitive biases and employ tactics** such as false urgency, forced actions, hidden costs etc.
 - They can range from overtly noticeable tricks to more subtle methods that users may not immediately recognize.
- **Types of Dark Patterns:** The **Consumer Affairs Ministry has identified nine types** of dark patterns being used by e-commerce companies:
 - **False Urgency:** Creates a sense of urgency or scarcity to pressure consumers into making a purchase or taking an action;

- **Basket Sneaking:** Dark patterns are used to **add additional products or services** to the shopping cart without the user's consent;
- **Confirm Shaming:** Uses guilt to make **consumers adhere**; criticises or attacks consumers for not **conforming to a particular belief** or viewpoint;
- **Forced Action:** Pushes consumers **into taking an action they may not want to take**, such as signing up for a service in order to access content;
- **Nagging:** Persistent **criticism, complaints**, and requests for action;
- **Subscription Traps:** Easy to sign up for a **service but difficult to quit** or cancel; option is hidden or requires multiple steps;
- **Bait & Switch:** Advertising a **certain product/service but delivering another**, often of lower quality;
- **Hidden costs:** Hiding additional costs **until consumers are already committed** to making a purchase;
- **Disguised ads:** Designed to **look like content**, such as news articles or user-generated content.

How do Companies Use Dark Patterns?

- Social media companies and Big Tech firms such as **Apple, Amazon, Skype, Facebook, LinkedIn, Microsoft, and Google** use dark or deceptive patterns to downgrade the user experience to their advantage.
 - Amazon came under fire in the **European Union** for its confusing, multi-step cancelling process in Amazon Prime subscription. Amazon, in 2022, made its cancellation process easier for online customers in European countries.
- **LinkedIn users often receive unsolicited, sponsored messages** from influencers.
 - Disabling this option is a difficult process with multiple steps that requires users to be familiar with the platform controls.
- Google-owned **YouTube nags users to sign up for YouTube Premium with pop-ups**, obscuring final seconds of a video with thumbnails of other videos.

What are the Global Efforts to Combat Dark Patterns?

- In March 2021, California in the US passed amendments to the **California Consumer Privacy Act**, prohibiting dark patterns that hindered consumers from exercising their privacy rights.

Note:

- The UK issued guidelines in April 2019, which were **later enforceable under the Data Protection Act, 2018**, restricting companies from using manipulative tactics to lure underage users into low privacy settings.

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** organized a **review-cum-workshop** to evaluate and accelerate the planning and implementation of the **second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U 2.0)** across the country.

- The **issue of open defecation** has once again garnered attention following the recent release of the **Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) report** on water, sanitation, and hygiene by the **WHO** and the **UNICEF** for the year 2022.

What is Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban?

➤ About:

- **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)** was launched on October 2, 2014, by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** as a national campaign to promote cleanliness, sanitation, and proper waste management in urban areas.
- It aimed to make cities and towns across India clean and free from open defecation.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 1.0:**
 - The first phase of SBM-U focused on **achieving the target of making urban India ODF** by providing access to toilets and promoting behavioral change.
 - SBM-U 1.0 was successful in achieving the target and **100% of urban India was declared ODF**.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 (2021-2026):**
 - SBM-U 2.0, announced in Budget 2021-22, is the continuation of **SBM-U first phase**.
 - The second phase of SBM-U aimed to **go beyond ODF to ODF+, and ODF++**, and focus on making urban India **garbage-free**.
 - It emphasized **sustainable sanitation practices, waste management, and the promotion of a circular economy**.

➤ Achievements:

- **Open Defecation Free (ODF):**
 - Urban India has become **Open Defecation Free (ODF)**, with all **4,715 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** completely ODF.
 - **3,547 ULBs are ODF+** with functional and hygienic community and public toilets, and **1,191 ULBs are ODF++ with complete faecal sludge management**.
 - **14 cities are certified Water+**, which entails treatment of wastewater and its optimum reuse.
- **Waste Processing:**
 - **Waste Processing in India** has gone up by over **4 times from 17% in 2014 to 75% in 2023**, aided through **100% door-to-door waste collection in 97% wards** and **source segregation** of waste being practised by citizens across almost **90% wards in all ULBs in the country**.
- **Garbage Free Cities:**
 - The **Garbage Free Cities (GFC)-Star rating protocol launched in January 2018** has increased from only **56 cities in the first year to 445 cities till date**, with an ambitious target of having at least **1,000 3-star GFC by October 2024**.
 - The **2023-24 budget** has reinforced India's commitment to building a circular economy through an enhanced focus on **scientific management of dry and wet waste**.

What is Open Defecation Free Status?

- **ODF:** An area can be notified or declared as ODF if at any point of the day, not even a single person is found defecating in the open.
- **ODF+:** This status is given if at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained.
- **ODF++:** This status is given if the area is already ODF+ and the faecal sludge/septage and sewage are safely managed and treated, with no discharging or dumping of untreated faecal sludge and sewage into the open drains, water bodies or areas.

Note:

NHRC and UN Human Rights Council

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** has called for an action taken report from the Odisha government regarding the Balasore train accident.

- Simultaneously, **India recently voted in favor** of a draft resolution tabled in the **United Nations Human Rights Council**, condemning and strongly rejecting acts of desecration of the Holy Quran.
- The draft resolution, titled '**Countering religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence**,' gained support from multiple nations, including **Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Ukraine, and the UAE**. The resolution emphasizes the **condemnation of acts of religious hatred and calls for accountability** according to international human rights law.

What is the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)?

- **About:**
 - Ensures protection of rights **related to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of individuals**.
 - Rights guaranteed by the **Indian Constitution** and **international covenants enforceable by Indian courts**.
- **Establishment:**
 - Established on **October 12, 1993**, under the Protection of **Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993**.
 - Amended by the **Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006**, and **Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2019**.
 - Established in conformity with the **Paris Principles**, adopted for promoting and protecting human rights.
- **Composition:**
 - The Commission consists of a **chairperson, five full-time Members and seven deemed Members**.
 - Chairman is a former **Chief Justice of India** or a **Supreme Court judge**.

➤ Appointment and Tenure:

- Chairman and members appointed by the **President** on the recommendations of a **six-member committee**.
 - Committee consists of the Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, leaders of the Opposition in both Houses of Parliament, and the Union Home Minister.
- Chairman and members hold office **for a term of three years or until they reach the age of 70**.

➤ Role and Function:

- Possesses powers of a **civil court with judicial proceedings**.
- Empowered to utilize services of central or state government officers or investigation agencies for investigating human rights violations.
- Can investigate matters within **one year of their occurrence**.
- Functions are primarily recommendatory in nature.

➤ Limitations:

- The Commission cannot inquire into **any matter after one year from the date** of the alleged human rights violation.
- Limited jurisdiction in cases of human rights violations by armed forces.
- Lacks authority to act in cases of human rights violations by private parties

What is the United Nations Human Rights Council?

➤ About:

- An **inter-governmental body** within the **United Nations** responsible for promoting and protecting **human rights worldwide**.
- Established in 2006 by the **United Nations General Assembly**, replacing the former **United Nations Commission on Human Rights**.
- The Office of the **High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** serves as the Secretariat and is based in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

➤ Membership:

- It consists of **47 United Nations Member States** elected by the UN General Assembly.

Note:

- Membership based on equitable geographical distribution, with seats allocated to different regions.
- Members **serve for three-year terms** and are not eligible for immediate re-election after two consecutive terms.
- **Procedures and Mechanisms:**
 - **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** assesses human rights situations in all UN Member States.
 - The Advisory Committee provides expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues.
 - Complaint Procedure allows individuals and organizations to bring human rights violations to the Council's attention.
 - UN Special Procedures monitor and report on specific thematic issues or human rights situations in countries.
- **Issues:**
 - The composition of membership raises concerns, as some countries accused of human rights abuses have been included.
 - Disproportionate focus on certain countries, such as Israel, has been criticized.
- **India's involvement:**
 - In 2020, **India's National Human Rights Commission** submitted its as a part of the third round of the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** process.
 - India was elected to the Council for a **period of three years beginning 1st January 2019**.

Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023

Why in News?

Recently, the **Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2023** has been released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** and the **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)**.

- The MPI measures “interlinked deprivations in health, education and standard of living that **directly affect a person's life and wellbeing**”.

What are the Key Highlights of the Index?

➤ Global Outlook:

- Globally, 1.1 billion people (18% of the total population) **out of 6.1 billion people**, are acutely **multidimensionally poor and live** in acute multidimensional poverty across 110 countries.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has **534 million poor and South Asia has 389 million**.
 - These two regions are home to approximately **five out of every six poor people**.
- Children under 18 years old account for half of MPI-poor people (566 million).
- The poverty rate among children is 27.7%, while among adults it is 13.4 %.

➤ Outlook for India:

- **Poverty in India:** India still has **more than 230 million people who are poor**.
 - The UNDP defines, “Vulnerability — the share of people who are not poor but **have deprivations in 20 - 33.3%** of all weighted indicators — can be much higher.
 - India has **some 18.7% population** under this category.
- **India's Progress in Poverty Reduction:** India is among 25 countries, including Cambodia, China, Congo, Honduras, Indonesia, Morocco, Serbia, and Vietnam, that **successfully halved their global MPI values within 15 years**.
 - Some 415 million Indians escaped poverty between 2005-06 and 2019-21.
 - The incidence of poverty in India declined significantly, from **55.1% in 2005/2006 to 16.4% in 2019/2021**.
 - In 2005/2006, approximately 645 million people in India experienced multidimensional poverty, a number that decreased to about **370 million in 2015/2016 and further to 230 million in 2019/2021**.
- **Improvement in Deprivation Indicators:** India progressed significantly in all the three **deprivation indicators: Health, Education, Standard of living**.
 - Decline in poverty has been **equal as well, cutting across regions and socio-economic groups**.

Note:

- The poorest states and groups, including children and people in disadvantaged caste groups, **had the fastest absolute progress.**
- The percentage of people who were multidimensionally poor and deprived of nutrition decreased from 44.3% in 2005/2006 to 11.8% in 2019/2021, and child mortality fell from 4.5% to 1.5%.

What is the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index?

➤ About:

- The index is a key international resource that measures acute multidimensional poverty across **more than 100 developing countries.**
- It was first launched in **2010 by the OPHI and the Human Development Report Office of the UNDP.**
- The MPI monitors deprivations in 10 indicators spanning health, education and standard of living and includes both incidence as well as intensity of poverty.

➤ MPI Indicators and Dimensions:

- A person is multidimensionally poor if **she/he is deprived in one third or more (means 33% or more)** of the weighted indicators (out of the ten indicators). Those who are deprived in one half or more of the weighted indicators are considered living in extreme multidimensional poverty.

World Zoonosis Day

Why in News?

The **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** recently conducted an awareness program on **zoonotic diseases** as part of the **Aazadi Ka Amrit Mahostav** initiative on **World Zoonosis Day (July 6th, 2023).**

- The program aimed to **educate farmers about zoonotic disease** risks and national efforts for prevention. Due to their **close contact with animals**, farmers are at higher risk of contracting zoonotic diseases.
- The importance of the **"One Health" concept** is highlighted in addressing zoonotic disease risks.

What is World Zoonosis Day?

➤ History:

- World Zoonosis Day marks the anniversary of the **first vaccination against a zoonotic disease.**
- On **July 6, 1885, Louis Pasteur**, a French scientist, successfully administered the **first vaccine for zoonotic disease.**

➤ Significance:

- World Zoonosis Day educates people about the **risks and impacts of zoonotic diseases** on human and animal health.
- **60% of known infectious diseases and 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic**, according to the **World Health Organization (WHO).**

What are Zoonotic Diseases?

➤ About:

- Zoonotic diseases are illnesses that can be transmitted **between animals and humans.** These diseases can be caused by **bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi.**

➤ Classification:

○ Based on Pathogens:

- **Bacterial Zoonoses:** These diseases are caused by **bacterial infections** that can be transmitted from **animals to humans.**
 - Examples include **anthrax, and brucellosis.**
- **Viral Zoonoses:** Well-known viral zoonotic diseases include **rabies, Ebola, and Covid-19.**
- **Parasitic Zoonoses:** Diseases such as **toxoplasmosis and leishmaniasis** fall under this category.
- **Fungal Zoonoses:** Zoonotic fungal infections, like **ringworm** are caused by fungi that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

○ Based on Animal Species:

- **Wildlife Zoonoses:** These diseases primarily **involve interactions between humans and wildlife**, such as **hantavirus infections transmitted by rodents** or diseases spread by wild birds, like **avian influenza (bird flu).**
- **Domestic Animal Zoonoses:** Diseases such as **brucellosis from cattle or toxoplasmosis from cats**, fall under this category.

Note:

- **Based on Mode of Transmission:**
 - **Direct Contact Zoonoses:** Infections that occur through **direct contact with infected animals**, their body fluids, or contaminated surfaces.
 - Examples include **rabies transmitted through animal bites** and Q fever from contact with infected livestock.
 - **Vector-Borne Zoonoses:** Diseases transmitted by vectors such as **mosquitoes and ticks**.
 - Examples include **Lyme disease** transmitted by ticks and **dengue** fever transmitted by mosquitoes.
 - **Waterborne Zoonoses:** **Leptospirosis** from contaminated water sources is an example of waterborne zoonotic disease.

What are India's Initiatives Related to Zoonotic Diseases?

- **National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP):**
 - Played a vital role in controlling two major zoonotic diseases: **Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD)** and **Brucellosis**.
- **Mobile Veterinary Units (MVUs):**
 - MVUs have been deployed to provide veterinary services at farmers' doorsteps, including disease diagnosis, treatment, minor surgeries, and raising awareness about the management of diseased animals.
- **Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2023:**
 - The focus of the rules is on **anti-rabies vaccination of stray dogs** and neutering of stray dogs as means of population stabilization.
- **National One Health Programme for Prevention & Control of Zoonoses:**
 - Focuses on strengthening surveillance, diagnosis, prevention and control of zoonotic diseases through inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration.
- **Vaccination efforts:**
 - Focus on achieving 100% vaccination coverage for FMD in buffalo, sheep, goat, and pig populations, as well as vaccinating 100% of bovine female calves aged 4-8 months for brucellosis.

Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana

Why in News?

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India has been working towards creating an inclusive and equitable society for all its citizens and **Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)** is one of the Schemes in that direction.

What is Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana?

- **About:**
 - Earlier the AVYAY, was known as National Action Plan for Senior Citizen (NAPSrc), which was revamped, renamed as **Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana** in April 2021.
 - It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme **aimed at empowering senior citizens in India**.
- **Objective:**
 - This scheme **recognizes the invaluable contribution made by the elderly to society** and seeks to **ensure their well-being and social inclusion**.
 - By recognizing the invaluable contributions of the elderly to society, **the government aims to empower and uplift them**, ensuring their active participation and inclusion in all aspects of life.
- **Components:**
 - **Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC):** It provides financial assistance to **eligible organization's for running and maintenance of Senior Citizen Homes/ Continuous Care Homes** to improve the quality of life of the senior citizens, especially indigent senior citizens by providing basic amenities etc.
 - **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY):** It provides eligible senior citizens suffering from any of the **age-related disability/ infirmity**, with assisted living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/ infirmity manifested such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and loco-motor disabilities.
 - Financial criteria for beneficiaries are either the Senior Citizen belongs to **'Below Poverty Line' (BPL)** category, or he/ she has income up to Rs. 15,000 (Rupees Fifteen Thousand) per month.

Note:

➤ Achievements:

- Nearly 1.5 lakh beneficiaries are staying in the **Senior Citizen homes**.
- 361 districts across the country have been covered.
- During the last 3 financial years a total of **Rs. 288.08 crore grants in aid released and number of beneficiaries is 3,63,570**.
 - Under RVY a total of 269 camps have been held and the Number of beneficiaries of this camp is over 4 lakhs. Under this scheme, a total amount of **Rs. 140.34 crore has been released during the last 3 financial years** and a total number of 8,48,841 devices were distributed to 1,57,514 beneficiaries in 130 camps.

➤ Significance:

- The AVYAY stands as a testament to the government's commitment to the well-being and empowerment of senior citizens in India.
- By addressing their **financial, healthcare, and social needs**, the scheme aims to empower the elderly, ensuring their active participation and inclusion in society.
- Through this initiative, the **government strives to create an environment where senior citizens can live a life of dignity, respect**, and fulfilment, acknowledging their invaluable contributions to the nation.

What are the Initiatives Related to Elderly in India?

- **National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP)**
- **National Helpline for Senior Citizen (14567)**
- **Seniorcare Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE)**
- **National Social Assistance Programme**
- **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)**
- **SAMPANN Project**
- **SACRED Portal for Elderly**

Children and Domestic Labour

Why in News?

Recently, an incident came into light where a couple was accused of hiring a 10-year-old girl as a **stay-at-home**

help to care for their 4-year-old son and was subjected to physical and mental abuse on several occasions.

- This incident highlights the issue of **Child Labour in Domestic Work**.

What is Child Labor?

➤ Child Domestic Labour:

- Child domestic work is a **general reference to children's work in the domestic work sector** in the home of a third party or employer.
- Child labor in domestic work refers to **situations where domestic work is performed by children below the relevant minimum age** (for light work, full-time non-hazardous work), in hazardous conditions or in a slavery-like situation.

➤ Hazards of Child Domestic Work:

- The **ILO (International Labour Organization)** has identified a number of hazards to which **domestic workers are particularly vulnerable** some of the most common risks children face in domestic **service include**,
 - **Long and tiring working days**; use of toxic chemicals; carrying heavy loads; handling dangerous items such as knives and hot pans; insufficient or inadequate food and accommodation etc.
- The **risks are compounded** when a child lives in the household where he or she works as a domestic worker.

Status of Child Labor in India:

- As per the **National Crime Records Bureau Report 2022**, in 2021, around 982 cases were registered under the **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986**, with the **highest number of cases registered in Telangana**, followed by Assam.
- According to a study by **Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL)**, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of working **children from 28.2% to 79.6% out of the 818 children** who were surveyed, mainly because of the **Covid-19** pandemic and closure of schools.
- The states in India having highest child labour employers are – **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra**.

Note:

What are the Government Initiatives to Curb Child Labour in India?

- **Right to Education Act (2009)**
- **Article 24:**
 - Forbids employment of children under 14 years of age in dangerous jobs like factories and mines. However, it didn't prohibit their employment in any harmless or innocent work.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986):**
 - Amended in 2016 as **Child & Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, completely prohibited employment of children below 14 years of age in all occupations and processes.**
- **The Factories Act (1948)**
- **National Policy on Child Labour (1987)**
- **Pencil Portal**
- **Ratifying Conventions of the International Labour Organization:**
 - **The Minimum Age Convention (1973) - No. 138**
 - **The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (1999) - No. 182**

World Hepatitis Day

Why in News?

World Hepatitis Day (WHD) takes place every year on **28th July** bringing the world together under a single theme to raise awareness of the global burden of viral hepatitis and to influence real change.



What are the Key Points Related to WHD?

- **Theme 2023:** One life, one liver.

➤ Significance:

- On this day, communities, people, and politicians may **learn about the many varieties of hepatitis**, as well as about preventative strategies, testing, and treatment choices.
- It promotes **global advocacy and cooperation in the fight** against the rising number of hepatitis-related diseases and fatalities.

What is Hepatitis?

➤ About:

- The word hepatitis refers to any **inflammation of the liver** — the irritation or **swelling of the liver cells** from any cause.
- It can be acute (inflammation of the liver that presents with sickness — jaundice, fever, vomiting) or chronic (inflammation of the liver that lasts **more than six months, but essentially showing no symptoms**).

➤ Causes:

- Usually caused by a group of viruses known as the **“hepatotropic” (liver directed)** viruses, including A, B, C, D and E.
- Other viruses may also cause it, such as the varicella virus that causes chicken pox.
- **SARS-CoV-2**, the virus causing Covid-19 may injure the liver too.
- Other causes include **drugs and alcohol abuse**, fat buildup in the liver (fatty liver hepatitis) or an **autoimmune process in which a person's body makes antibodies** that attack the liver (autoimmune hepatitis).

➤ Types of Hepatitis:

- **Hepatitis A virus (HAV):** It is an inflammation of the liver that can cause mild to severe illness.
 - It is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food and water or through direct contact with an infectious person (sex practices).
 - **Almost everyone recovers fully from hepatitis A with a lifelong immunity** (few people with HAV could die from fulminant hepatitis).
 - A safe and effective vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis A.

Note:

- **Hepatitis B virus (HBV):** It is a viral infection that attacks the liver and can cause both acute and chronic disease.
 - It is most commonly transmitted from mother to child during birth, in early childhood, during sex with an infected partner, unsafe injections.
 - **Hepatitis B can be prevented by vaccines.**
- **Hepatitis C virus (HCV):** The virus can cause both acute and chronic hepatitis, ranging in severity from a mild illness to a serious, lifelong illness including liver cirrhosis and cancer.
 - It is a bloodborne virus and most infection occurs through exposure to unsafe health care, blood transfusions, injection drug use and sexual practices.
 - Direct-acting antiviral medicines (DAAs) can cure more than 95% of persons with hepatitis C infection, but access to diagnosis and treatment is low.
 - **There is currently no effective vaccine against hepatitis C.**
 - **Hepatitis D virus (HDV):** It is a virus that requires hepatitis B virus (HBV) for its replication. It affects globally nearly 5% of people who have a chronic infection with HBV.
 - Hepatitis B and D can infect people together (co-infection) or one after the other (super-infection). This is more common in native people, dialysis patients and drug users. Having both viruses is very bad for the liver and can cause cancer or death.
 - **Hepatitis D infection can be prevented by hepatitis B immunization, but treatment success rates are low.**
 - **Hepatitis E virus (HEV):** It is an inflammation of the liver caused by infection with the HEV. It is found worldwide, but most common in East and South Asia.
 - The virus is transmitted via the fecal-oral route, principally via contaminated water.
 - **A vaccine to prevent hepatitis E virus infection has been developed and is licensed in China but is not yet available elsewhere.**

What are the Government Initiatives to Tackle Hepatitis?

- **National Viral Hepatitis Control Program:**
 - The Program aims to end viral hepatitis as a **public health threat by 2030** in the country.
- **India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP):**
 - Hepatitis B is included under India's UIP which provides **free of cost vaccination against eleven vaccine-preventable diseases** i.e., Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Pneumonia and Meningitis due to Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib), Measles, Rubella, Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Rotavirus diarrhoea.

Empowering India's Senior Citizens

Why in News?

Recently, the **Minister of State for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** provided valuable insights into the accomplishments of the **Seniorcare Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE) Portal** and **Senior Able Citizens for Re-Employment in Dignity (SACRED) Portal** the significant contributions made under the **Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)**.

- These initiatives have been **instrumental in addressing the needs and concerns of India's senior citizens**, fostering innovation, providing employment opportunities, and ensuring the overall well-being of the elderly population.

What is SAGE Portal?

- The SAGE Portal serves as a catalyst to **attract entrepreneurs and start-ups** to invest in the "**silver economy**" segment, fostering innovation in elderly care solutions.
- SAGE provides convenient "**one-stop access**" for stakeholders, including **senior citizens and their families**, to discover and access a wide range of products and services catering to their needs.
- The government plays a crucial role as a facilitator, enabling the elderly to access the products and services offered by identified start-ups through the SAGE Portal.

Note:

- Selected start-ups or start-up ideas receive equity support of up to Rs. 1 crore per project through the **Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI)**.
- The government ensures that the **total government equity in the start-up does not exceed 49%**.

Silver Economy

- The silver economy is the system of **production, distribution and consumption of goods and services aimed at using the purchasing potential of older and ageing people** and satisfying their consumption, living and health needs.
- The silver economy is **analyzed in the field of social gerontology** (study of aging) **not as an existing economic system but as an instrument of ageing policy** and the political idea of forming a potential, needs-oriented economic system for an aging population.
- Its **main element is gerontechnology** (Technology pertaining to aged people) as a new scientific, research and implementation paradigm.

What is SACRED Portal?

- SACRED Portal **empower senior citizens and provide them with opportunities for re-employment**.
- This portal specifically targets citizens aged **60 years and above, focusing on the needs and requirements of this age group**.
- The portal provides opportunities for senior citizens to **find suitable jobs and work options that match their preferences and skills**.
- The SACRED Portal employs a **virtual matching system** that aligns the **preferences of senior citizens with private enterprises** seeking experienced individuals.
- Through job opportunities, the SACRED Portal helps senior citizens attain **financial security and reduces their dependence on external support**.

What is Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)?

- **About:**
 - The AVYAY aims to provide **holistic support for senior citizens**.

Components:

- **Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC):**
 - This component grants aid to implementing agencies to run and maintain **Senior Citizens Homes, offering shelter, food, medical care, and entertainment opportunities for indigent senior citizens**.
- **State Action Plan for Senior Citizens (SAPSrC):**
 - States and Union Territories receive grant-in-aid to create a pool of trained geriatric caregivers, conduct special cataract drives, and implement other state-specific welfare activities for indigent senior citizens.
- **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY):**
 - This component provides eligible senior citizens suffering from age-related disabilities with **assisted living devices, enhancing their bodily functions and overcoming their disabilities**.
- **Elderline - National Helpline for Senior Citizens (NHSC):**
 - The **Elderline** offers a **toll-free helpline (14567)** to provide free information, guidance, emotional support, and field intervention in cases of abuse, ensuring an improved quality of life for senior citizens.
- **Senior-care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE):**
 - This component aims to encourage youth to think about the problems of the elderly and come up with innovative ideas for elderly care and **promote them into start-ups by providing equity support**.
- **Outcomes:**
 - Nearly **1.5 lakh beneficiaries** are staying in the Senior Citizen homes.
 - During the last 3 financial years a total of Rs. 288.08 crore grants in aid released and **number of beneficiaries is 3,63,570**.
 - Improved **quality of life and social integration for indigent elderly individuals**.
 - Promotion of an inclusive society that values and respects senior citizens.
 - Economic growth through the development of the "silver economy" and employment generation.

Note:

What are the Other Initiatives Related to Elderly in India?

- **National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP)**
- **National Social Assistance Programme**
- **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)**
- **SAMPANN Project**

Quick-Fix Water Management

Why in News?

Recently, India's increasing **water stress** has been met with a growing inclination towards **quick-fix solutions by non-profits and civil society organizations**.

- • However, these quick fixes **may not be sustainable in the long run**. It's essential to examine these quick fixes carefully and ensure we adopt strategies that can last for the future.

What are Quick-fix Water Solutions?

➤ About:

- Quick-fix water solutions refer to **immediate and often temporary measures** implemented to **address water-related issues**, particularly in **regions facing water scarcity or challenges in water management**.

➤ Various Interventions:

- **River Widening, Deepening, and Straightening:** Modifying natural watercourses to increase **water-carrying capacity**.
- **Water Harvesting Competitions:** Encouraging communities to **harvest rainwater** and adopt water-saving practices.
 - Limited impact without comprehensive water management strategies.
- **Tree Planting Along Riverbanks:** Stabilizes **soil and prevents erosion**.
 - May not fully address larger water management issues.
- **Quick Infrastructure Development:** Rapid construction of water facilities like **sewage treatment plants and water grids**.

- **Artificial Recharge of Aquifers:** Injecting **water into underground aquifers to replenish groundwater levels**.

- Requires sustainable management to combat depletion.

- **Desalination Plants:** Converting **seawater into freshwater to meet coastal water needs**.

- Energy-intensive and expensive, making it less viable in some areas.

➤ Quick-fix Water Solutions Initiatives:

○ Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan:

- Maharashtra government initiative (2014) aimed to make the state **drought-free by 2019** through river widening, deepening, and straightening, check dams, and desilting.

- Experts criticize it for being **unscientific, ecologically damaging, leading to erosion, biodiversity loss, and increased flood risk**.

○ Water Cups:

- A competition initiated by a non-profit organization in 2016 incentivized Maharashtra villages to harvest water for **drought-proofing**.
- Critics question the validity and sustainability, as it overlooked water quality, groundwater impact, social equity, and maintenance mechanisms.

What are the Government Initiatives to Tackle India's Water Crisis?

➤ Amrit Sarovar Mission:

- **Amrit Sarovar Mission** launched on April 24, 2022, the mission aims to develop and **rejuvenate 75 water bodies** in each district as part of the **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav** celebration.
- The mission seeks to improve **water storage and quality in local water bodies**, contributing to better water availability and ecosystem health.

➤ Atal Bhujal Yojana:

- This scheme targets certain **water-stressed areas in Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh**.

Note:



- The primary objective of **Atal Bhujal Yojana** is to manage demand for groundwater through scientific means, involving **local communities for sustainable groundwater management**.
- **Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA):**
 - CGWA **regulates and controls groundwater usage** by industries, mining projects, and infrastructure projects across the country.
 - CGWA and States issue **No Objection Certificates (NOCs)** for groundwater extraction in line with guidelines, ensuring responsible water usage.
- **National Aquifer Mapping Program (NAQUIM):**
 - **Central Ground Water Board** is implementing **NAQUIM** to map **aquifers in the country, covering an area of 25.15 lakh sq km**.
 - The study reports and management plans are shared with States/UTs to facilitate informed interventions.
- **Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Groundwater- 2020:**
 - Prepared in collaboration with States/UTs, the Master Plan outlines the construction of about **1.42 crore Rain Water Harvesting and artificial recharge structures**.
 - The plan targets harnessing **185 billion Cubic Meters (BCM) of water, promoting water conservation and recharge**.

World Fragile X Day

Why in News?

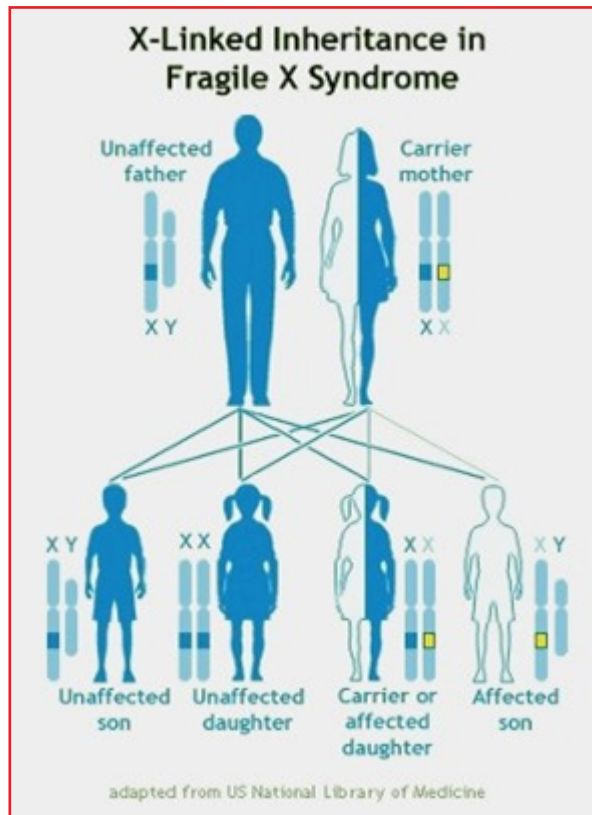
The World Fragile X Awareness Day is marked on 22nd July every year, started in 2021 to raise awareness about the rare genetic illness, **Fragile X or Martin-Bell syndrome**.

What is Fragile X or Martin-Bell Syndrome?

- **About:**
 - Fragile X syndrome (FXS) is an **inherited genetic disease passed down from parents to children** that causes intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- FXS is the most common **hereditary cause of mental disability** in boys. It affects 1 in 4,000 boys.
 - It's less common in girls, affecting about 1 in every 8,000. Boys usually have more severe symptoms than girls.
- People with FXS usually experience a range of developmental and learning problems.
- The disease is a **chronic or lifelong condition**. Only some people with FXS are able to **live independently**.
- **Causes:**
 - FXS is caused by a defect in the FMR1 gene located on the **X chromosome**.
 - The FMR1 (Fragile X Mental Retardation 1 gene) gene is located on the X chromosome in humans. It is responsible for **producing a protein called FMRP (Fragile X Mental Retardation Protein)**, which plays a crucial role in normal brain development and function.
- **Risks:**
 - Women who are carriers are at an increased risk for premature menopause, or menopause that starts before the age of 40.
 - Men who are carriers are at increased risk for a condition known as **Fragile X Tremor Ataxia Syndrome (FXTAS)**.
 - The disorder results in **progressive cerebellar ataxia**, action tremor, Parkinsonism and cognitive decline.
 - It also can lead to **difficulty with balance and walking**. Male carriers may also be at an **increased risk for Dementia**.
- **Linked with Inheritance:**
 - Women who carry **Fragile X have a 50% chance** of passing the mutated gene to **each of her children**. If she passes the affected gene, her children **will either be carriers, or they will have Fragile X syndrome**.
 - Men who carry Fragile X will pass the **premutation to all their daughters** but none of their sons. These daughters are **carriers, but they do not have Fragile X syndrome**.

Note:



Diabetes Mellitus and Tuberculosis

Why in News?

For a very long time, India has been experiencing the burden of two severe **Epidemics, Diabetes Mellitus (DM)** and **Tuberculosis (TB)**, however few know how deeply these **diseases are interlinked**.

- Currently, India has around **74.2 million people living with diabetes** while **TB affects 2.6 million Indians every year**.

How Are DM and TB Interlinked?

- **Risk of Developing Respiratory Infections:**
 - The DM increases the **risk of developing respiratory infections**. DM is a major risk factor that increases the incidence and severity of TB.
 - **Among people with TB, the prevalence of DM was found to be 25.3%** while 24.5% were pre-diabetic, in a 2012 study in tuberculosis units in Chennai.

- **DM Hampers the Recovery of TB:**
 - DM not only increases the risk of TB but also hampers the recovery process and **prolongs the time for TB bacteria to be eliminated** from the body.
 - The impaired cell-mediated immunity in **DM affects the body's ability to fight infections**, including TB.
- **Alters the Defense Mechanism:**
 - Uncontrolled DM alters the **defense mechanisms in the lungs**, making individuals more susceptible to TB infection.
 - Additionally, the altered functions of small blood vessels in the lungs and poor nutritional status, common in DM, create an environment that facilitates the **invasion and establishment of TB bacteria**.
- **Likelihood of Unfavorable TB Treatment Outcomes:**
 - DM increases the likelihood of unfavorable TB treatment outcomes, such as treatment **failure, relapse/reinfection, and even death**.
 - The coexistence of TB and DM in patients may also **modify TB symptoms, radiological findings, treatment, final outcomes, and prognosis**.
 - The dual burden of DM and TB not only impacts the health and survival of individuals but also **places a significant burden on the healthcare system**, families, and communities.

What can be done to Tackle Both DM and TB?

- Provide **individualized care for TB and DM patients**, integrating treatments and addressing comorbidities.
- Improve patient education, support, and nutrition to **enhance TB treatment outcomes**.
- Strengthen healthcare programs for TB and DM, **build resilient and integrated health systems**, and use research to inform evidence-based decision-making.

What is Diabetes Mellitus (DM)?

- **About:**
 - DM is a disorder in which the **body does not produce enough or respond normally to insulin**, causing blood sugar (glucose) levels to be abnormally high.

Note:

- The name Diabetes Mellitus is often used rather than diabetes alone, to distinguish this disorder from **Diabetes Insipidus**.
 - Diabetes insipidus is a relatively rare disorder that does not affect blood glucose levels but, just like diabetes mellitus, **causes increased urination**.
- While **70–110 mg/dL fasting blood glucose is considered normal**, blood glucose levels between **100 and 125 mg/dL is considered prediabetes**, and **126 mg/dL or higher is defined as diabetes**.
- **Types:**
 - **Type 1 Diabetes:**
 - The body's immune system **attacks the insulin-producing cells** of the pancreas, and more than 90% of them are **permanently destroyed**.
 - The pancreas, therefore, produces little or no insulin.
 - Only about 5 to 10% of all people with diabetes have type 1 disease. Most people who have type 1 diabetes develop the **disease before age 30**, although it can develop later in life.
 - **Type 2 Diabetes:**
 - The pancreas often continues to produce insulin, sometimes even at higher-than-normal levels, especially early in the disease.
 - However, the body develops **resistance to the effects of insulin**, so there is not enough insulin **to meet the body's needs**. As type 2 diabetes progresses, the **insulin-producing ability of the pancreas decreases**.
 - Type 2 diabetes was once rare in children and adolescents but has become more common. However, it usually begins in people older than 30 and becomes progressively more common with age.
 - About 26% of people older than 65 have type 2 diabetes.

What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

- Tuberculosis is an infectious disease that can **cause infection in your lungs or other tissues**.
- It commonly affects lungs, but it can also affect other organs like your **spine, brain or kidneys**.

- TB is caused by a **bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis***. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain.

The three stages of TB are:

- Primary infection.
- Latent TB infection.
- Active TB disease.

Adoption in India

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** has recently highlighted the significant **backlog of adoption cases in Maharashtra**, with the highest number of pending adoption cases in India (329 awaiting resolutions).

- In January 2023, the **Bombay HC directed the state government not to transfer pending adoption proceedings to District Magistrates**, (as mandated under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021), leading to confusion and hindering progress.

What is the Status of Child Adoption in India?

- **About:**
 - It is a **legal and emotional process** that involves **accepting the responsibility of caring for a child** who is not biologically related to the adoptive parents.
 - The process of adoption in India is monitored and regulated by the **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)**, which is part of the Ministry of Women and Child Care.
 - **CARA is the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country adoptions.**
 - CARA is also designated as the **Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions** in accordance with the provisions of the **Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, 1993**, ratified by Government of India in 2003.
- **Laws Related to Adoption in India:**
 - Adoptions in India are governed by two laws: **the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA)** and the **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015**.

Note:

- Both laws have their separate eligibility criteria for adoptive parents.
- Those applying under the **JJ Act have to register on CARA's portal after which a specialised adoption agency carries out a home study report.**
 - After it finds the candidate eligible for adoption, a child declared legally free for adoption is referred to the applicant.
- Under HAMA, a **"dattakahom" ceremony or an adoption deed or a court order is sufficient to obtain irrevocable adoption rights.**
 - **Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs are legalized to adopt kids under this Act.**
- **Recent Development:**
 - The Parliament passed the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021** in order to amend the Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act), 2015.
 - The key changes include authorising **District Magistrates and Additional District Magistrates to issue adoption orders under Section 61 of the JJ Act.**
 - Earlier in JJ Act 2015, adoption of a child is final on the issuance of an adoption order by the civil court.
 - The Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced the **Adoption Regulations-2022**, which has streamlined the adoption process.
 - **District Magistrates (DMs) and Child Welfare Committees** have been directed to upload adoption orders and case status in real time.
 - Since the implementation of the **Adoption Regulations-2022**, 2,297 adoption orders have been issued by DMs nationwide, resolving a significant portion of pending cases.

Global Gender Gap Report 2023: WEF

Why in News?

Recently, 17th edition of the **Global Gender Gap Report 2023** has been released by the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**, evaluating the **status of Gender Parity** across 146 countries.

What is the Global Gender Gap Index?

➤ About:

- It benchmarks countries on their progress towards **gender parity in four Key dimensions** with Submatrices.
 - Economic Participation and Opportunity
 - Educational Attainment
 - Health and Survival
 - Political Empowerment
- On each of the four sub-indices as well as on the overall index the **GGG index provides scores between 0 and 1**, where 1 shows full gender parity and 0 is complete imparity.
- It is the longest-standing index, **which tracks progress towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in 2006.**

➤ Objectives:

- To serve as a **compass to track progress on relative gaps** between women and men on health, education, economy and politics.
- Through this annual yardstick, the **stakeholders within each country are able to set priorities** relevant in each specific economic, political and cultural context.

What are the Key Findings?

➤ Global Gender Gap Score:

- The global gender gap score in 2023 **stands at 68.4%**, indicating a modest improvement of 0.3% points compared to the previous year.
- At the current rate of progress, it would take **131 years to achieve full gender parity**, showing a significant slowdown in the overall rate of change.

➤ Top-Ranking Countries:

- Iceland has **maintained its position as the most gender-equal country** for the 14th consecutive year, with a **gender gap score of 91.2%**.
 - It is the only country to have closed over 90% of its gender gap.
- Three other Nordic countries—Norway (87.9%), Finland (86.3%), and Sweden (81.5%)—join **Iceland in the top five rankings**, highlighting their strong commitment to gender equality.

Note:

- **Health and Survival:**
 - The gender gap in health and survival has closed by 96% globally.
- **Political Empowerment:**
 - The political empowerment gender gap remains significant, with a closure rate of 22.1% globally and a projected timeline of 162 years to close the gap.
- **Educational Attainment:**
 - The gender gap in educational attainment **has closed by 95.2%**, with significant progress **made over the 2006-2023 period**.
 - The gender gap in educational attainment is projected to close in 16 years.
- **Economic Participation and Opportunity:**
 - The gender gap in economic participation and opportunity **stands at 60.1% globally**, highlighting the persistent challenges in achieving gender equality in the workforce.
 - The gender gap in economic participation and opportunity is projected to close in 169 years.

How has India Fared in the Gender Gap Report 2023?

- **India's Rank:**
 - India has made significant progress, **rising from 135th (in 2022) to 127th** out of 146 countries in the report's 2023 edition, indicating an improvement in its ranking.
 - **India's neighbours Pakistan ranked at 142**, Bangladesh at 59, China at 107, Nepal at 116, Sri Lanka at 115 and Bhutan at 103.
 - The country has improved by **1.4 percentage points and eight positions** since the last edition, marking a partial **recovery towards its 2020 parity level**.
 - India had closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap.
- **Gender Parity in Education:**
 - India has achieved **parity in enrolment across all levels** of education, reflecting a positive development in the country's education system.
- **Economic Participation and Opportunity:**
 - India's progress in economic participation and opportunity remains a challenge, with **only 36.7% gender parity achieved** in this domain.

- While there has been an uptick in parity in wages and income, there is a **slight drop in the representation of women** in senior positions and technical roles.
- **Political Empowerment:**
 - India has made strides in political empowerment, **achieving 25.3% parity** in this domain. Women represent **15.1% of parliamentarians**, which is the highest representation **since the inaugural report in 2006**.
 - 18 countries — including Bolivia (50.4%), India (44.4%) and France (42.3%) — have achieved **women's representation of over 40%** in **Local Governance**.
- **Health and Survival:**
 - There is a 1.9%-point improvement in India's sex ratio at birth, **after more than a decade of slow progress**.
 - However, India, along with Vietnam, China, and Azerbaijan, still **has relatively low scores on the Health and Survival sub-index** due to **skewed sex ratios**.

What are the Indian Initiatives to reduce Gender Gap in Social, Economic and Political Life?

- **Economic Participation and Health and Survival:**
 - **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** It ensures the protection, survival and education of the girl child.
 - **Mahila Shakti Kendra:** Aims to empower rural women with opportunities for skill development and employment.
 - **Mahila Police Volunteers:** It envisages engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers in States/UTs who act as a link between police and community and facilitates women in distress.
 - **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh:** It is an apex micro-finance organization that provides micro-credit at concessional terms to poor women for various livelihood and income generating activities.
 - **Sukanya Samridhi Yojna:** Under this scheme girls have been economically empowered by opening their bank accounts.
 - **Female Entrepreneurship:** To promote female entrepreneurship, the Government has initiated Programmes like Stand-Up India and Mahila e-Haat (online marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs/ SHGs/NGOs), Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESSDP).

Note:

- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya:** They have been opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs).
- **Political Reservation:** Government has reserved **33% of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions for women.**
- **Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives:** It is conducted with a view to empowering women to participate effectively in the governance processes.

One Nation One Anganwadi Program

Why in News?

More than 57,000 migrant workers have registered for the special **one nation one Anganwadi program on Poshan Tracker App.**

- Poshan app will allow migrant workers to access nurseries at their respective locations by using the Poshan Tracker App on mobile phones.

What is Poshan Tracker App?

- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD)** has **launched** an application called **Poshan Tracker.**
 - The **Poshan Tracker** management application provides a **360-degree view of the activities of the Anganwadi Centre.**
- The app facilitates efficient service delivery by digitizing and automating the tasks performed by Anganwadi Workers.
- To support their work, smartphones procured through **Government e-Market (GeM)** have been provided to the workers.
 - Additionally, a **designated individual has been appointed in each state** to offer technical support and resolve any issues related to downloading and using the new Poshan Tracker application.
- **Migrant workers** who have registered in their original state **can visit the nearest Anganwadi in their current place of residence to access the schemes** and services provided through the app.

What is Poshan Abhiyan?

- **About:**
 - **POSHAN Abhiyaan (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition)**

was **launched** the Prime Minister on **8th March 2018 in Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan.**

➤ **Objectives:**

- Prevent and reduce Stunting in children (0-6 years)
- Prevent and reduce under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) in children (0-6 years)
- Reduce the prevalence of anemia among young Children (6-59 months)
- Reduce the prevalence of anemia among Women and Adolescent Girls in the age group of 15-49 years
- Reduce Low Birth Weight (LBW).

What is Anganwadi?

- **Anganwadi Services** (Now renamed as **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0**) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented by States/UTs.
 - It provides a **package of six services**, namely, (i) Supplementary Nutrition; (ii) Pre-school Non-formal Education; (iii) Nutrition & Health Education; (iv) Immunization; (v) Health Check-up; and (vi) Referral Services.
 - It provides services to all eligible beneficiaries, namely, children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers through the platform of Anganwadi Centres across the country.
 - Three of the services viz. Immunization, Health Check-up and Referral Services are related to health and are provided through **NRHM** & Public Health Infrastructure.

What are the other related Initiatives?

- **Anemia Mukh Bharat Abhiyan**
- **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**
- **PM Poshan SHAKti Nirman (PM-POSHAN).**

Tobacco Cultivation and Food Insecurity

Why in News?

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has released a new report highlighting the **urgent need to prioritise food production over tobacco cultivation.**

Note:



- The report emphasises that approximately **349 million people worldwide are currently facing acute food insecurity**, while **valuable fertile land is being occupied by tobacco farming**. The tobacco industry's interference in efforts to substitute its crops exacerbates the **global food crisis**.
- Also, **World No Tobacco Day, observed annually on May 31** serves as a reminder of the ongoing battle against global tobacco **epidemic**. The theme of 2023 is **"Grow food, not tobacco"**.

Note: Food insecurity refers to a situation where individuals or communities do not have reliable **availability, accessibility, affordability, to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food** that meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life.

How is the Global Food Crisis Related to Tobacco Farming?

- **Land Use Competition:** Both **food production and tobacco farming require land resources**.
 - Tobacco farming is prevalent in over 124 countries, occupying significant agricultural land that could be utilised for food production.
 - **This competition for arable land can limit food production** and exacerbate the global food crisis, especially in areas where food security is already a challenge.
 - The **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** also warns of increasing acute food insecurity in various regions worldwide.
- **Resource Diversion:** Tobacco farming requires significant amounts of resources, including **water, fertilisers, and labour**.
 - The diversion of these resources to tobacco production can result in limited availability for food crops, contributing to **decreased agricultural productivity and food shortages**.
- **Financial Impact:** Tobacco farming can be **financially lucrative for farmers**, leading them to prioritise tobacco cultivation over food crops.
 - This preference for cash crops like tobacco may **reduce the incentive to grow staple food crops**, which are essential for addressing hunger and food security concerns.
- **Environmental Impact:** Tobacco farming practices can have adverse environmental effects.

- **Deforestation, soil degradation, and water pollution** are often associated with tobacco cultivation. These environmental impacts can further strain the availability of natural resources needed for sustainable food production.
- **Health Consequences:** Tobacco use is a major public health concern, leading to numerous diseases and premature deaths worldwide. **Tobacco farming poses serious health risks to farmers**, including **exposure to pesticides** and the **absorption of nicotine through the skin**.
 - The health consequences of tobacco-related illnesses can indirectly impact food security by **reducing the productive workforce and placing additional burdens on healthcare systems, diverting resources away from food-related initiatives**.
 - According to the **WHO**, tobacco use kills more than **8 million people every year** and exposes millions more to second-hand smoke.

Note: Nicotine is a chemical compound found in the leaves of the tobacco plant (*Nicotiana tabacum*) and some other plants in the nightshade family. It is an **alkaloid** that is both a sedative and a stimulant.

What is the Status of Tobacco Consumption in India?

- **Status:**
 - Tobacco use is known to be a major risk factor for several **non-communicable diseases** such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, **diabetes**, and chronic lung diseases. **Nearly 27% of all cancers in India are due to tobacco usage**.
 - India is also the **second largest consumer and producer of tobacco after China**.
 - Nearly **267 million adults (15 years and above) in India (29% of all adults)** are users of tobacco, according to the **Global Adult Tobacco Survey India, 2016-17**.
- **Indian Initiatives to Curb Tobacco Consumption:**
 - The **Promulgation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Ordinance, 2019** prohibits **Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement of e-Cigarettes**.

Note:

- The **Government of India** launched the **National Tobacco Quitline Services** (NTQLS) which have the sole objective to provide telephone-based information, advice, support, and referrals for tobacco cessation.
- The Union Finance Minister of India announced a **16% increase in National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD)** on cigarettes in the **Budget 2023-24**.
- The **Union Health Ministry of India** has announced **new regulations requiring Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms** to display tobacco-related health warnings during streamed content.
 - OTT platforms must attach anti-tobacco health spots at the beginning and middle of programs that display tobacco products or their use.
 - Health spots and tobacco-related warnings are already mandatory for television and films in India.

What are WHO's Actions to Address Tobacco Farming?

- The WHO emphasises the significance of the **Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC)**, the first international agreement aimed at reducing tobacco consumption and its adverse health effects.
- WHO has partnered with the **UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and the **World Food Programme (WFP)** to launch the Tobacco Free Farms initiative, which aims to assist farmers in countries such as Kenya and Zambia by providing microcredit lending, knowledge, training, and support for cultivating alternative crops.

National Commission for Scheduled Castes

Why in News?

The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** has recently issued a notice to **Zomato**, regarding an advertisement that was deemed "inhuman" and casteist.

What is the National Commission for Scheduled Castes?

- **About:**
 - The **NCSC** is a **constitutional body** established with a view to provide safeguards against

the exploitation of Scheduled Castes and to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests.

- **History:**
 - **Special Officer:**
 - Initially, the **constitution provided for the appointment of a Special Officer under Article 338**. The special officer was designated as the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
 - **65th Amendment Act, 1990:**
 - It amended **Article 338 of the Constitution** and replaced the one-member system with a multi-member **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.
 - **89th Amendment Act, 2003:**
 - **Article 338 was amended**, and the erstwhile National Commission for SC and ST was replaced by two separate Commissions from the year 2004 which were:
 - **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** and
 - **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)**
 - **Composition:**
 - The NCSC comprises a **Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and three additional Members**.
 - These positions are **filled through the President's appointment, indicated by a warrant under his hand and seal**.
 - Their **conditions of service and tenure of office** are also determined by the President.
 - **Functions:**
 - To **investigate and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the SCs** and to evaluate their working;
 - To **inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the SCs**;
 - To **participate and advise on the planning process of socioeconomic development of the SCs** and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union or a state;
 - To **present to the President, annually and at such other times as it may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards**;

Note:

To make **recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or a state for the effective implementation of those safeguards** and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the SCs

Till **2018**, the commission was also required to discharge similar functions with regard to the **other backward classes (OBCs)**. It was relieved from this responsibility by the **102nd Amendment Act, 2018**.

What are the Other Constitutional Provisions for Upliftment of the Schedule Caste?

- **Article 15:** This article specifically addresses the **issue of discrimination based on caste**, emphasizing the **protection and upliftment of Scheduled Castes (SCs)**
- **Article 17:** This article abolishes **untouchability** and prohibits its practice in any form. It seeks to **eliminate social discrimination and promote the equality and dignity of all individuals**.
- **Article 46: Promotion of Educational and Economic Interests:** This article directs the **State to promote the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections of society** and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- **Article 243D(4):** This provision mandates the **reservation of seats for SCs in Panchayats (local self-government institutions)** in proportion to their population in the area.
- **Article 243T(4):** This provision ensures the **reservation of seats for SCs in Municipalities (urban local bodies)** in proportion to their population in the area.
- **Article 330 and Article 332** provide for reservation of seats in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the **Lok Sabha and in the legislative assemblies of the States** (respectively).

UNDP's 2023 Gender Social Norms Index

Why in News?

Biased gender social norms continue to impede progress towards achieving gender equality and violate human rights, according to the **United Nations**

Development Programme (UNDP).

- Despite global efforts and campaigns advocating for women's rights, a significant percentage of people still hold biased beliefs against women.
- The **UNDP's 2023 Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI)** provides insights into the persistence of these biases and their impact on various aspects of women's lives.

What are the Key Findings of the Index?

- **About:**
 - UNDP tracked people's attitudes towards women in four dimensions: **political, educational, economic and physical integrity**. UNDP reports that **nearly 90% of people still hold at least one bias against women**.
- **Findings:**
 - **Political Participation and Representation:** Biases in gender social norms contribute to a **lack of equality in political participation**. Approximately **half of the world's population believes men make better political leaders**, while **two in five believe men make better business executives**.
 - **Countries with greater bias exhibit lower representation of women in parliament.**
 - On average, the **share of heads of state or government who are women has remained around 10% worldwide since 1995**, and women hold just over a quarter of parliament seats globally.
 - Women are **grossly underrepresented in leadership in conflict-affected countries**, mainly at the negotiation tables in the recent conflicts in **Ukraine (0%), Yemen (4%), and Afghanistan (10%)**.
 - **Indigenous women, migrant women, and women with disabilities** face even more significant challenges in attaining political representation.
 - **Economic Empowerment:** Despite progress in education, **gender gaps in economic empowerment persist**.
 - The increase in women's education has not translated into better economic outcomes.
 - In **59 countries where adult women are more educated than men, the average income gap is 39%**.

Note:

- **Domestic Chores and Care Work:** Countries with higher bias in gender social norms witness a significant disparity in domestic chores and care work.
 - Women spend **nearly six times more time on these tasks than men**, limiting their opportunities for personal and professional growth.
 - Also, Alarmingly, **25% of people believe it is justified for a man to beat his wife**, revealing deep-rooted biases.

Hopeful Signs and Breakthroughs: While overall progress has been limited, an increase in the share of people with no bias in any indicator is observed in **27 out of 38 surveyed countries**.

The **largest improvements were seen in Germany, Uruguay, New Zealand, Singapore, and Japan**, with progress greater among men than women.

Breakthroughs in gender social norms have been achieved through policies, regulations, and scientific advancements.

- **The Urgent Need for Change:** Biased gender social norms not only impede women's rights but also hinder societal development and well-being.
 - The **lack of progress in gender social norms coincides with a decline in the Human Development Index (HDI)**.
 - Achieving freedom and agency for women benefits society as a whole.

What are the Recent Government Schemes Related to Women Empowerment?

- [Sukanya Samridhi Yojna](#)
- [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme](#)
- [One Stop Centre](#)

Manual Scavenging in India

Why in News?

Recent revelations by the **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** highlight that **only 508 out of 766 districts have declared themselves manual-scavenging free**.

- This discrepancy raises concerns about the **true extent of manual scavenging and the effectiveness of government efforts**.

What is Manual Scavenging?

- **Manual scavenging** refers to the practice of manually **cleaning, handling, and disposing of human excreta** and other waste materials from dry latrines, open drains, and sewers.
 - In India, manual scavenging has been a long-standing issue, although it has been **officially banned since 1993**.

What are the Constitutional Safeguards and Legal Provisions for Manual Scavengers?

- **Constitutional Safeguards:** The **Constitution of India** guarantees several rights and protections for manual scavengers such as:
 - **Article 14:** Equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.
 - **Article 17:** Abolition of untouchability and prohibition of its practice in any form.
 - **Article 21:** Protection of life and personal liberty.
 - **Article 23:** Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour.
- **Legal Provisions:** The **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013** is the main legislation that aims to prohibit and eliminate manual scavenging in India. It prohibits the employment or engagement of anyone as a manual scavenger and also prohibits anyone from constructing or maintaining insanitary latrines.

What are the Government Initiatives and Supreme Court Directions to Curb Manual Scavenging?

- **Supreme Court Directions:**
 - In 2014, a Supreme Court order made it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died in sewage work since 1993 and **provide Rs. 10 lakh each as compensation to their families**.
- **Rehabilitation Effort:**
 - **Payout and Subsidies:**
 - Approximately **58,000 manual scavengers have been identified and given a one-time cash payout of ₹40,000 each**.

Note:

- Around 22,000 manual scavengers have been connected to skills training programs.
- Subsidies and loans are available to support those interested in starting their own businesses. The objective is to eliminate manual scavenging deaths entirely.
- **Merger with NAMASTE Scheme:**
 - The scheme for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers has been merged with the **NAMASTE scheme for 100% mechanisation of sewer work**.
 - The **FY 2023-24 Union Budget** lacks specific allocation for the rehabilitation scheme but **allocates ₹100 crore to the NAMASTE scheme**.
 - The NAMASTE scheme necessitates the **identification and profiling of all septic tank/sewer workers, provision of occupational training and safety equipment, and enrollment in health insurance under the Ayushman Bharat scheme**.
- **Other Related Initiatives:**
 - **Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge**
 - **Swachhta Abhiyan App**
 - **Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan**
 - **National Commission for Safai Karamchari**

Medicines Patent Pool Agreement for Leukaemia

Why in News?

Recently, the **Medicines Patent Pool (MPP)**, a **United Nations**-backed group signed sub-licence agreements with three India-based companies to make certain **Cancer Drugs** more accessible and cheaper for patients.

- These agreements **allow the production of generic versions of Novartis' cancer treatment drug Nilotinib, primarily used for Chronic Myeloid Leukaemia (CML), in several countries**.
- The licence covers **India, seven middle-income countries, and 44 territories**, allowing the generic versions of Nilotinib to be supplied, subject to local regulatory authorization.

What is the Medicines Patent Pool?

- MPP is a **United Nations-backed public health organisation** working to increase access to, and facilitate the **development of, life-saving medicines** for Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC).
- It was founded in July 2010, based in Geneva, Switzerland.
- MPP partners with civil society, governments, international organisations, industry, patient groups, and other stakeholders, to **prioritise and license needed medicines and pool Intellectual Property** to encourage generic manufacture and the development of new formulations.
- As of now, MPP has signed agreements with **twelve patent holders for thirteen Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) antiretrovirals, one HIV technology platform, three hepatitis C direct-acting antivirals, a tuberculosis treatment, a long-acting technology, two experimental oral antiviral treatments for Covid-19 and a Covid-19 serological antibody technology**.

What is Chronic Myeloid Leukaemia (CML)?

- **About:**
 - It is one of the types of **Leukemia**, which is a **blood-cell cancer** that affects the **bone marrow and the blood**. Other types are,
 - Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL)
 - Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)
 - Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL).
 - It is characterized by the **uncontrolled growth of abnormal white blood cells** called myeloid cells.
 - CML typically progresses **slowly, and it is often diagnosed during** the chronic phase.
- **Diagnosis:**
 - CML is typically diagnosed through a combination of blood tests and bone **marrow examination**.

Adoption in India

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** has recently highlighted the significant **backlog of adoption cases in Maharashtra**, with the highest number of pending adoption cases in India (329 awaiting resolutions).

Note:

- In January 2023, the **Bombay HC directed the state government not to transfer pending adoption proceedings to District Magistrates**, (as mandated under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2021), leading to confusion and hindering progress.

What is the Status of Child Adoption in India?

➤ **About:**

- It is a **legal and emotional process** that involves **accepting the responsibility of caring for a child** who is not biologically related to the adoptive parents.
- The process of adoption in India is monitored and regulated by the **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)**, which is part of the Ministry of Women and Child Care.
 - **CARA is the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country adoptions.**
 - CARA is also designated as the **Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions** in accordance with the provisions of the **Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, 1993**, ratified by Government of India in 2003.

➤ **Laws Related to Adoption in India:**

- Adoptions in India are governed by two laws: **the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA)** and the **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015**.
 - Both laws have their separate eligibility criteria for adoptive parents.
- Those applying under the **JJ Act have to register on CARA's portal after which a specialised adoption agency carries out a home study report**.
 - After it finds the candidate eligible for adoption, a child declared legally free for adoption is referred to the applicant.
- Under HAMA, a **"dattakahom" ceremony or an adoption deed or a court order is sufficient to obtain irrevocable adoption rights**.
 - **Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs are legalized to adopt kids under this Act.**

➤ **Recent Development:**

- The Parliament passed the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act,**

2021 in order to amend the Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act), 2015.

- The key changes include authorising **District Magistrates and Additional District Magistrates to issue adoption orders under Section 61 of the JJ Act**.
 - Earlier in JJ Act 2015, adoption of a child is final on the issuance of an adoption order by the civil court.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced the **Adoption Regulations-2022**, which has streamlined the adoption process.
 - **District Magistrates (DMs) and Child Welfare Committees** have been directed to upload adoption orders and case status in real time.
 - Since the implementation of the **Adoption Regulations-2022**, 2,297 adoption orders have been issued by DMs nationwide, resolving a significant portion of pending cases.

World Menstrual Hygiene Day

Why in News?

Recently, on the occasion of **World Menstrual Hygiene Day**, **Child Rights and You (CRY)** an NGO released the findings of a study conducted to assess the **awareness and knowledge of menstrual hygiene and health among adolescent girls in India**.

- The study conducted for two months with the participation of nearly 4,000 girls aged 10-17 years from 38 districts across the country, sheds light on the **perceptions, practices, and challenges faced by young girls regarding menstruation**.

What is World Menstrual Hygiene Day?

➤ **About:**

- World Menstrual Hygiene Day, also known as **Menstrual Hygiene Day**, is an annual global advocacy day **celebrated on May 28th**.
- The day aims to **raise awareness and promote good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) practices worldwide**.

Note:

- **Reason for May 28th:**
 - Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed on the 28th day of the fifth month.
 - Represents the **average length of the menstrual cycle**, which is often around 28 days.
 - Symbolizes the **average duration of menstruation**, which lasts **around five days each month**.
- **History:**
 - Started in 2013 by **Germany-based NGO WASH United**.
 - Initially launched as a 28-day social media campaign to raise awareness about menstruation.
 - Positive response led to the establishment of Menstrual Hygiene Day on May 28, 2014.
- **Theme:**
 - Theme for 2023: **“Making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030.”**
- **Significance:**
 - Highlights the importance of menstrual hygiene for the well-being and dignity of individuals who menstruate.
 - Promotes proper menstrual hygiene practices:
 - Using clean and safe menstrual products.
 - Maintaining personal hygiene during menstruation.
 - Managing menstrual discomfort effectively.
 - Advocates for improved access to menstrual products, particularly in low-income communities.
 - Encourages knowledge acquisition about bodies, menstrual cycles, and reproductive health.

What are the Key Findings from the Study?

- Close to 12% of young girls believed **menstruation is a curse from God** or caused by disease.
- 4.6% of the **girls had no knowledge about the cause of menstruation**.
- 84% of the girls correctly identified menstruation as a **biological process**.
- 61.4% of the girls acknowledged the existence of societal embarrassment related to periods.
- 44.5% of the girls used **homemade absorbents or cloth instead of sanitary pads**.

- Hesitation or shyness, difficulty in disposing of pads, poor availability, and lack of knowledge were reasons for not using sanitary pads.
- The girls received information about menstruation from their mothers, female friends and elder sisters.

World Food India 2023

Why in News?

- In celebration of the **International Year of Millets in 2023**, India's Ministry of Food Processing Industries will be organizing the second edition of 'World Food India 2023', which aims to **showcase India's rich food culture and attract global investments in the diverse food processing sector**.
- The event will take place from **3rd-5th November 2023** in New Delhi.

What is World Food India 2023?

- **About:**
 - **World Food India 2023** is a gateway to the **Indian food economy**, facilitating partnerships between Indian and foreign investors.
 - It will be a **one-of-a-kind gathering of manufacturers, producers, food processors, investors, policymakers, and organisations** from across the global food ecosystem.
 - It is a promising platform to **showcase, connect and collaborate in retail, processing, technology transfer, manufacturing, and cold chain logistics, along the global food value chain**.
 - It will showcase investment opportunities in **backward linkages, processing equipment, research and development, cold chain storage, start-ups, logistics, and retail chains**.
- **Focus Pillars:**
 - **Shree Anna (Millets): Leveraging India's Super Food for the World**
 - Millets are ancient grains that have been part of **India's rich heritage for millennia**.
 - They are **super foods that provide high nutrition, gluten-free options, climate resilience, and eco-friendliness**.

Note:

- Millets can enhance **food security, nutrition security, and sustainability in the face of global challenges** such as climate change, population growth, and malnutrition.
- The **United Nations** has declared 2023 as the **International Year of Millets (IYM 2023)** with the aim of increasing the production and consumption of millets worldwide.
- **Exponential Food Processing: Positioning India as the Global Hub**
 - **India has a vision to become a global hub for food processing** and create a competitive advantage for itself in the world food market.
 - To achieve this vision, India intends to boost its enablers that can **support and accelerate its food processing industry**.
 - One of the key enablers is **Financing Agri Food Value Chains**. Providing adequate and affordable credit to the food processing sector, **especially to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)** that constitute a major part of the industry is one of the key focus areas of India.
- **Strategic Segments: Unlocking Potentials for Growth**
 - India has a dynamic and diverse food processing industry that encompasses several sub-sectors such as **marine products, fruits and vegetables products, meat and poultry products, RTE/RTC (packaged foods), and dairy products**.
 - These sub-sectors have **immense potential for growth in terms of production, consumption, exports, and value addition**.
- India is one of the **world's largest producers and consumers of food products**.
 - India leads the world in the **production of milk, bananas, mangoes, papayas, guavas, ginger, okra and buffalo meat**, ranks **second in the production of rice, wheat, potatoes, garlic, cashew nuts**.
- **Efficient Ecosystem - Harnessing Opportunities with Inclusion**
 - An **efficient and all-encompassing ecosystem necessitates dismantling barriers and establishing a coordinated and integrated**

framework. The creation of value chains and the promotion of knowledge sharing are crucial to generate inclusive opportunities.

- In order to entice foreign investment, the **government has opened the doors to 100% foreign direct investment and is making efforts to enhance its standing in the Ease of Doing Business index**.
- **Sustainable Development: Processing for Prosperity**
 - **Sustainable Development** constitutes a fundamental component in the attainment of **Processing for Prosperity**.
 - These technologies, encompassing renewable energy sources and **sustainable agricultural and food processing practices**, have become prominent and promising trends, signifying a transformation in the global approach towards a **more sustainable future**.

World Food India 2017:

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries launched the **first edition of World Food India in 2017 with the theme of Transforming the Food Economy**.
 - The event aimed to **introduce the world to India's diverse and rich food culture**.

Self Help Group Kudumbashree

Why in News?

Recently, the President of India has inaugurated the **25th anniversary** celebrations of **Kudumbashree**, the largest **Self-Help Group (SHG)** network in the country.

- The president also released a handbook called "chuvadhu" (meaning footsteps) that outlined ideas for the **future of the movement and highlighted its achievements** so far.

What is Kudumbashree?

- **About:**
 - Kudumbashree was established in 1997 in Kerala, aiming at eradicating poverty and empowering women following the **recommendations of a government-appointed task force**.

Note:



- The mission was launched with the support of the Government of India and **NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development)**.
- Kudumbashree meaning ‘prosperity of the family’ in the Malayalam language and therefore focuses on **poverty alleviation and women empowerment**, promoting democratic leadership and provides support structures within the “Kudumbashree family.”
- **Operation:** The mission operates through a **Three-Tier structure** consisting of,
 - **Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs)** at the primary level
 - **Area Development Societies (ADS)** at the ward level
 - **Community Development Societies (CDS)** at the local government level.
 - This structure forms a **large network of Self-Help Groups**.
- **Goal:**
 - The goal of Kudumbashree is to eliminate absolute poverty within a specific timeframe of 10 years, with the active involvement of local self-governments.
 - Through its mission and self-help group approach, Kudumbashree aims to uplift families and empower women to improve their socio-economic status and overall well-being.
- **Significance:**
 - It has empowered women, generated employment, alleviated poverty, and initiated various social initiatives.
 - It has become **Kerala’s biggest social capital, and its members have become elected representatives in local government bodies**.
 - During a severe flood that occurred in **Kerala five years ago**, Kudumbashree, the self-help group network, **donated Rs 7 crore to the Chief Minister’s distress relief fund**.
 - They contributed more money than tech giants like Google and Apple and even surpassed the contribution of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
 - Many of the Kudumbashree workers themselves were **victims of the flood, but they still wanted to help others** by contributing to the relief fund.

What are the Initiatives Related to Women Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation?

- **Ujjawala Yojna**
- **Swadhar Greh**
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**
- **Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme**
- **Mahila e-haat**
- **Mahila Bank**
- **Mahila Coir Yojana**
- **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)**
- **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme**

Hysterectomy

Why in News?

Concerned about the **high risk faced by poor and less-educated women**, especially in rural areas, who undergo **unjustified hysterectomies**, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has **initiated measures to address this issue**.

What is Hysterectomy?

- **About:**
 - A hysterectomy is a **surgical procedure** that involves the **removal of the uterus (womb)**, the organ in a woman’s body where a baby develops during pregnancy.
- **Types:**
 - When only the uterus is removed, it is called a **partial hysterectomy**.
 - When the uterus and cervix are removed, it is called a **total hysterectomy**.
 - When the uterus, cervix, part of the vagina, and a wide area of ligaments and tissues around these organs are removed, it is called a **radical hysterectomy**.
- **Indications for Hysterectomy in India:**
 - Hysterectomy is performed in India for gynecological conditions like **fibroids** (non-cancerous growths that develop in or around the womb), **endometriosis** (disease in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus), **abnormal bleeding, and pelvic inflammatory disease**, when other treatments fail.

Note:

- It is also utilized as part of cancer treatment to remove cancerous tissues and in cases of severe, unresponsive pelvic pain.

What are the Issues Associated with Hysterectomy in India?

- **Increase Hysterectomies in Younger Women:**
 - The recent **Supreme Court** judgment in *Dr. Narendra Gupta vs Union Of India, 2023* highlighted that in **developed countries, hysterectomies are typically performed on premenopausal women aged 45 and above.**
 - However, **community-based studies in India** have shown an increasing number of hysterectomies among younger women, ranging from **28 to 36 years old.**
- **NFHS Data:**
 - According to the most recent **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5** empirical data, **3% of women aged 15-49 have had a hysterectomy.**
 - The prevalence of hysterectomy is the highest in **Andhra Pradesh (9%), followed by Telangana (8%), and lowest in Sikkim (0.8%) and Meghalaya (0.7%)** among women aged 15–49.
 - The prevalence of hysterectomy was highest in Southern region, i.e., **4.2%, which was also greater than the national prevalence, followed by Eastern part of India (3.8%).**
 - On the other hand, the **lowest prevalence was observed in the Northeast region, i.e., only 1.2%**
- **Unnecessary Hysterectomies:**
 - A **public interest litigation (PIL)** filed in 2013 highlighted the issue of “unnecessary hysterectomies”.
 - The PIL revealed that in the states of **Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan**, women were subjected to hysterectomies that were deemed unnecessary, endangering their health.
 - Private hospitals were found to be involved in performing these unnecessary hysterectomies. **More than two-thirds (70%) of women who have undergone a hysterectomy had the operation in a private health facility.**
 - Misuse of the procedure was also observed, with healthcare institutions exploiting it to **claim higher insurance fees under various government healthcare schemes.**

What are the Efforts to Address the Issue?

- **Supreme Court Direction:**
 - In response to the PIL, the **Supreme Court** directed states and union territories to adopt the health guidelines formulated by the Centre to monitor and prevent unnecessary hysterectomies. The implementation of these guidelines was mandated within a **three-month timeframe.**
 - There has been a **serious violation of the fundamental rights** of the women who underwent unnecessary hysterectomies.
 - The SC in *Dr. Narendra Gupta vs Union Of India 2023* acknowledged that the **right to health is an intrinsic part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.** Life, to be enjoyed in all its diverse elements, must be based on robust conditions of health.
 - SC also urged an action plan to tackle the problem including suggestions to **create national, state and district-level hysterectomy monitoring committees** and the **inauguration of a grievance portal.**
- **Health Ministry Guidelines:**
 - In 2022, the **Health Ministry** issued guidelines aimed at preventing unnecessary hysterectomies. States were **instructed to comply with these guidelines to ensure appropriate use of the procedure.**
 - Recently, the ministry has directed the states to share data on the **hysterectomies performed by medical institutions**
 - **Compulsory audits for all hysterectomies** were also advised, similar to the **existing audits conducted for maternal mortality.**

Kurmis' Push for ST Status

Why in News?

- Recently, the Kurmi Community has called off the agitation in Bengal, asking for the inclusion in the **ST (Scheduled Tribe)** Status from **Other Backward Class (OBC).**
- They also want their Kurmali language to be included in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.**

Note:

What is the Background?

- Kurmis were not included among the communities classified as STs in the 1931 Census and were **excluded from the ST list in 1950**.
- In 2004, the Jharkhand government recommended the community be added to the ST list **rather than be categorized as OBCs**.
- Following the recommendation, the matter went to the **Tribal Research Institute (TRI)**, which held that Kurmis are a sub-caste of **Kunbis and not tribals**. Based on this, the **Centre rejected the demand of Kurmis** to be considered as ST.
- According to the Tribal Development Department of the state government, the state's tribal population is almost 53 lakhs as per Census 2011, or about 5.8% of the state's total population.

What is the Process of Inclusion under ST?

- The process for including a community in the list of ST follows a set of **modalities established in 1999**.
- The respective State or Union Territory government must **initiate the proposal for inclusion, which then goes to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry** and subsequently to the Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI).
- If the ORGI approves the inclusion, the proposal is then sent to the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes**, and if they concur, the proposal is forwarded to the Cabinet for amendment to the **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950**.

Who are the Kurmis?

- **About:**
 - Kurmis are a landowning farming community whose **status varies from place to place**.
 - Kurmis are referred to as **"progressive farmers" who "avail of maximum benefits of all the development schemes** available in the area and region.
 - Kurmis are distributed across several states — Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Goa, and Karnataka.
- **Caste Status:**
 - In most states, Kurmis belong to the OBC in both the central and state lists for reservations.

- In Gujarat, Patels, who are linked to Kurmis, are in the general category, and have been demanding OBC status.
- In West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand — where **Kurmi is written as 'Kudmi'** — Kurmis want to be included among Scheduled Tribes.
- **Kurmali Language:**
 - Kurmali language is a language spoken by the Kurmi community, primarily in the Indian states of **Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha**.
 - The Kurmali language is a **member of the Indo-Aryan language family** and **belongs to the Bihari language family**. It shares some similarities with Maithili and Magahi. It has its own script called "Kurmi Kudali" which is a modified version of the Devanagari script.

PRET & The Big Catch-Up Initiatives

Why in News?

In response to the **Covid-19** pandemic, **two initiatives - PRET and the Big Catch-up - have been launched to better prepare for future outbreaks** of similar scale and devastation, as well as to **boost vaccination rates among children**.

What is the PRET Initiative?

- **About:**
 - **The Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET) Initiative** was launched by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** and operates under the aegis of the **International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005**, which is a critical international legal instrument for managing public health emergencies.
 - The initiative **was announced at the Global Meeting for Future Respiratory Pathogen Pandemics** held in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Aim:**
 - It focuses on improving pandemic preparedness for groups of pathogens based on their mode of transmission.
- **Three Tiers of Pandemic Preparedness:** It recognizes that there are three tiers of systems and capacities relevant to pandemic preparedness:

Note:

- those that are cross-cutting for all or multi-hazards
- those that are relevant for groups of **pathogens** (respiratory, arboviruses etc.)
- those that are specific to a pathogen.

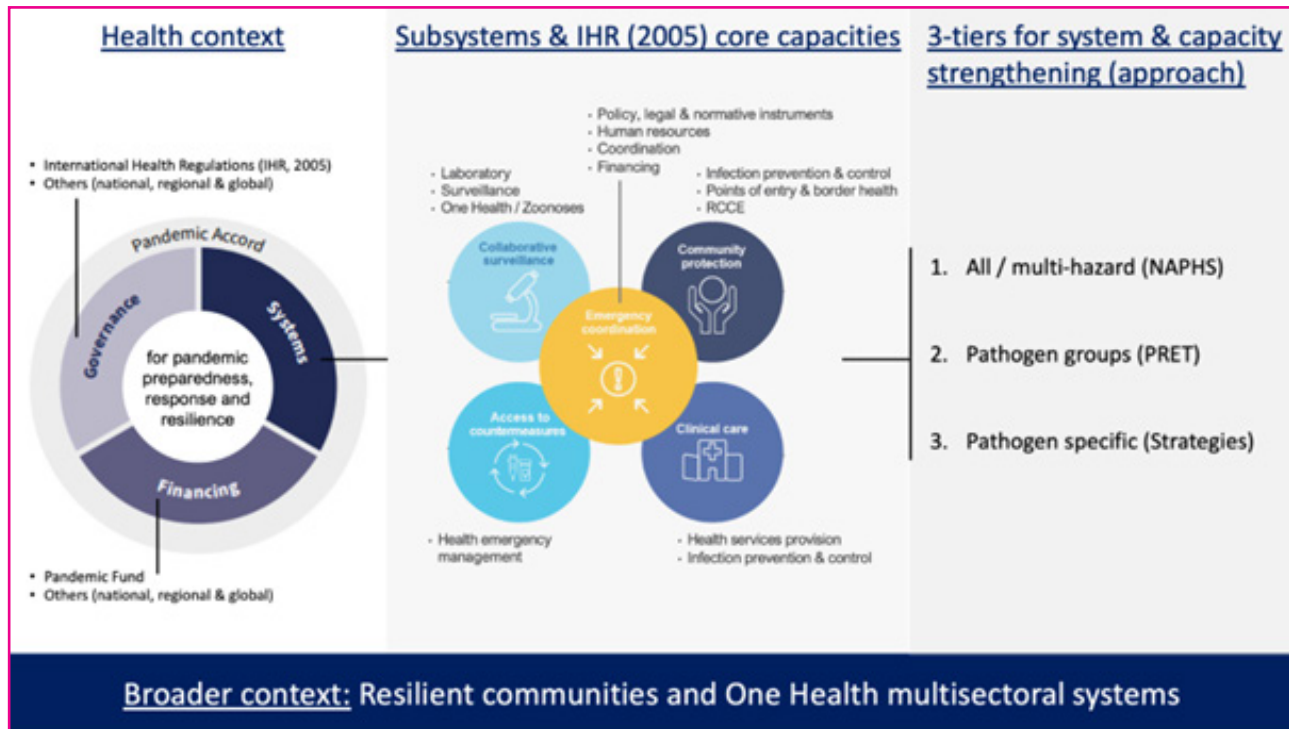
➤ **Coordinating Efforts:**

- As part of its efforts, the WHO convenes an informal coordination forum known as the **Respiratory Pathogens Partners Engagement Forum (R-PEF)** which enables WHO and partners to

exchange information on planned activities and other developments on planned activities.

Note:

- In Feb 2023, WHO published a '**Zero-Draft**' of the **Pandemic Treaty**, aiming to bring in Global and National-Level **Pandemic Preparedness**.
- It calls for **increased global coordination and cooperation in the preparation for and response to pandemics** and other global health emergencies.



What is The Big Catch-Up Initiative?

➤ **About:**

- It was launched by the WHO, UNICEF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation along with **Immunization Agenda 2030** and many other global and national health partners, a **targeted global effort to boost vaccination**.

➤ **Aim:**

- It **aims to protect populations from vaccine-preventable outbreaks like -measles, diphtheria, polio and yellow fever** - save children's lives and **strengthen national health systems**.

➤ **Main Focus:**

- The initiative will **pay special attention to the 20 countries** — Afghanistan, Angola, Brazil,

Cameroon, Chad, DPRK, DRC, Ethiopia, **India**, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Madagascar, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Tanzania and Vietnam which are home to a majority of the children who have missed their vaccine doses.

➤ **Salient Features of the Plan:**

- Strengthening health care workforces
- Improving health service delivery
- Building trust and demand for vaccines within communities
- Addressing gaps and obstacles to restoring immunisation

➤ **Need:**

- More than 100 countries **registered a drop in immunisation levels** as the pandemic burdened

Note:



health services as well as disrupted imports and exports of medical supplies.

- Access to healthcare was further compounded by strict lockdown measures, travel restrictions and depleting financial and human resources.
 - **India is among the 20 countries in the world where around 75% of children have missed essential immunisation** against preventable but critical diseases in 2021.
- **India's Efforts for Vaccination:**
 - As a result of the pandemic, immunisation efforts have been hampered, and some countries have already begun showing considerable progress.
 - **India managed to record a strong recovery in essential vaccines in 2022**
 - India's Major Initiatives for Vaccination include:
 - **Covid Vaccine Drive**
 - **Universal Immunization Programme** which includes **Indradhanush 4.0**
 - **Mass Immunization Campaign for Measles-Rubella (MR)**
 - **Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV)**
 - **CERVAVAC vaccine for the prevention of cervical cancer**
 - **Pulse polio programme**

Note:

- **World Immunization Week** is a health campaign coordinated by the WHO) and **celebrated in the last week of April, every year.**
- It aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease.

Hakki Pikki Tribal Community

Why in News?

More than **181 members of the Hakki Pikki tribal community from Karnataka** are stuck in violence-hit **Sudan**.

What are the Characteristics of the Hakki Pikki Tribe?

- **About:**
 - The **Hakki Pikki tribe is a semi-nomadic tribe** traditionally engaged in **bird catching** and hunting, **living in forest areas in west and south India.**

- It is a **Scheduled Tribe** in Karnataka and their origin is said to be an ancestral relation with the legendary **Ranapratap Singh**.
- **Origination and Settlement:**
 - The Hakki Pikki tribe is believed to have originated from **Gujarat and Rajasthan** and **migrated to south India via Andhra Pradesh**.
 - The tribe is divided into four clans and has a population of **11,892 in Karnataka**.
 - The 4 clans are **Gujaratia, Panwar, Kaliwala and Mewarasand** can be **equated with castes in the traditional Hindu society**.
- **Society:**
 - The **usual age of marriage among the tribe is 18 for women and 22 for men**, and **cross-cousin marriages are preferred**.
 - The society is **matriarchal**, and **Monogamy is the norm**.
 - Hakki Pikkis in Karnataka follow Hindu traditions and celebrate all Hindu festivals.
 - **Education levels** among the Hakki Pikkis are **still low**.
- **Livelihood:**
 - The forest is the main natural resource of the Hakki Pikki.
 - The tribe has faced challenges due to **stricter wildlife protection laws**, leading them to **shift from hunting to selling herbal oils, spices, and plastic flowers** in local temple fairs.
- **Migration to Africa:**
 - In recent years, **members of the Hakki Pikki tribe have been travelling to African countries** to sell their products as there is a **huge demand for Ayurvedic products in the continent**.
 - African countries offer better market opportunities, with the potential for higher returns on investment in raw materials such as hibiscus powder, oil extraction, gooseberry, Ayurvedic plants, etc.

State of World Population Report: UNFPA

Why in News?

Recently, the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** has released the **State of World Population**

Note:

report 2023, which states that India will overtake China to become the **world's most populous country by the middle of 2023**.

- The State of World Population is **published annually which covers and analyzes developments and trends in world population** and demographics, as well as shedding light on specific regions, countries and population groups and the unique challenges they face.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Population Estimation:**
 - India's population is pegged to reach 142.86 crore against China's 142.57 crore by July 2023.
 - **25%** of India's population is in the age group of **0-14 years**, **18% in the 10-19 age group**, 26% in the age bracket of 10-24 years, **68% in the 15-64 years age group**, and 7% above 65 years.
 - India will have 29 lakhs more people than its Asian neighbour.
 - The **United States** is a third populated country, with a population of 340 million.
- **Slowing Population:**
 - Population growth in both India and China has been slowing, despite accounting for more than one-third of the estimated global population.
- **Fertility Rate:**
 - India's total **Fertility Rate**, was estimated at 2, lower than the world average of 2.3.
 - Developed regions projected a fertility rate of 1.5, less developed regions 2.4 and less developed countries 3.9.
- **Life Expectancy:**
 - The average life expectancy for an **Indian male** was projected as 71 and 74 for females.
 - On average, the life expectancy for males **globally** was projected to be 71 and 76 for females.
 - For **developed regions**, the average life expectancy for males was projected at 77 and 83 for females — the highest of all.
 - For **less developed regions**, the ages are 70 for males and 74 for females, while for least developed countries, it is 63 for males and 68 for females.
- **Gender Rights:**
 - Violence by an intimate partner in the last 12 months was reported by 18% of women, while

66% of women had decision-making on sexual and reproductive **health and reproductive rights in India**.

- A little over 80% of women had some say in decision-making regarding their own healthcare.
- **Population Growth Concentrations:**
 - More than half of the projected increase in global **population up to 2050** will be **concentrated in eight countries** — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania.

What is the UNFPA?

- **About:**
 - It is a subsidiary organ of the **UN General Assembly** and works as a sexual and reproductive health agency.
 - The **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** establishes its mandate.
- **Establishment:**
 - It was established as a trust fund in 1967 and began operations in 1969.
 - In 1987, it was officially renamed the United Nations Population Fund but the original abbreviation, 'UNFPA' for the United Nations Fund for Population Activities was retained.
- **Objective:**
 - UNFPA works directly to tackle **Sustainable Development Goals** on health (SDG3), education (SDG4) and gender equality (SDG5).
- **Fund:**
 - UNFPA is not supported by the UN budget, instead, it is entirely supported by voluntary contributions of donor governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, foundations and individuals.

International Women's Day: Women in Armed Forces

Why in News?

Recently, on the occasion of **International Women's Day**, Group Captain Shaliza Dhami has been selected to take over the command of a **frontline combat unit in the Western sector** (facing Pakistan).

Note:

- She will be the **first woman officer in the IAF to command a missile squadron in the Western sector.**

What are the Key Points about International Women's Day?

- **About:** It is celebrated **annually on 8th March**. It includes:
 - Celebration of women's achievements,
 - raising awareness about women's equality,
 - lobbying for accelerated gender parity,
 - fundraising for female-focused charities, etc.
- **Brief History:**
 - Women's Day was **first celebrated back in 1911 by Clara Zetkin**, who was a German. The **roots of the celebration had been in the labour movement across Europe and North America.**
 - However, it was only in **1913 that the celebrations were shifted to 8th March**, and it has remained that way ever since.
 - International Women's Day was **celebrated for the first time by the United Nations in 1975.**
 - In December 1977, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a **United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace** to be observed on any day of the year by Member States, in accordance with their historical and national traditions.
- **Theme:**
 - The theme for International Women's Day, 2023, according to the United Nations is **"DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality"** and it aims to emphasize the importance of technology in bringing gender issues to light.

What is the Status of Women in Armed Forces?

- **Background:**
 - The **Indian Air Force started inducting women fighter pilots in 2016**. The first batch had three women fighter pilots who currently fly the **MiG-21, Su-30MKI** and **Rafale**.
 - Women officers have started taking command of **various Army units** in arms and services including **Engineers, Signals, Army Air Defence, Intelligence Corps, Army Service Corps, Army Ordnance Corps and Electronics and Mechanical Engineers.**

Current Statistics:

- There are **10,493 women officers serving in the armed forces**, the majority in the medical services.
- The **Indian Army**, being the largest of the three services, **has the largest number of women officers at 1,705, followed by 1,640 women officers in the Indian Air Force, and 559 in the Indian Navy.**
- In January 2023, the army deployed a **woman officer, Captain Shiva Chouhan, on the Siachen glacier for the first time.**
- In **February 2023, the army began assigning women officers to command roles outside of the medical stream for the first time.**
 - Around **50 of them** are set to head units in **operational areas under the Northern and Eastern Commands** responsible for guarding India's borders with China.
- The **Navy has also started inducting women officers on frontline ships, earlier a no-go zone for women officers.**
 - Many of them have been posted in the **sensitive northern and eastern commands of the Army.**

What are the Concerns Related to Gender Equality?

- **Global:**
 - UN Secretary General stated that **Gender equality is growing more distant**. On the current track, **UN Women puts it 300 years away.**
 - According to the UN, **legal restrictions have kept 2.7 billion women from accessing the same choice of jobs as men.**
 - As of 2019, **less than 25% of parliamentarians were women.**
 - **One in three women** experience **gender-based violence.**
- **India Specific:**
 - According to **CMIE data**, as of **December 2021**, while the male LFPR was 67.4%, the **female LFPR was as low as 9.4%.**
 - Even if one sources data from the **World Bank**, **India's female labor force participation rate is around 25%** when the global average is 47%.

Note:

- In the **Global gender gap index** (which measures progress towards gender parity), **India slipped to 135th place in 2022.**
 - However, recently the **WEF has agreed to make changes in criteria for Global Gender Gap Reports** by **taking into account the participation of women at panchayat level** to rank countries in its future reports. **It will better India's position at the global level.**
- As per the data compiled by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union** (IPU), of which India is a member, **women represent just 14.44% of the total members of the Lok Sabha.**
- According to a 2018 study by the **International Labour Organization** (ILO), **more than 95% of India's working women are informal workers** who work in labour-intensive, low-paying, highly precarious jobs/conditions, and **with no social protection.**

Doha Political Declaration on LDCs

Why in News?

The **5th United Nations** Conference on the **Least Developed Countries (LDC5)** concluded with adoption of the '**Doha Political Declaration**' by the world leaders.

- The declaration is a key outcome of the **second part of LDC5 conference** held under the **theme "From Potential to Prosperity" in Qatar.**

What are the Key Highlights of the Declaration?

- **Doha Programme of Action:**
 - It focuses on implementing the **Doha Programme of Action (DPoA)**, the 10-year plan to put the **world's 46 most vulnerable countries back on track** to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).**
 - DPoA for the Decade (2022-2031) was agreed upon during the first part of the LDC5 conference in March 2022 in New York, the US.
 - DPoA (2022-2031) consisted of **Six Key Focus Areas,**
 - Eradicating **Poverty**

- Leveraging the potential of science and technology to fight against multidimensional vulnerabilities and to achieve the SDGs
- Addressing **Climate Change**
- Environmental Degradation
- Recovering from **Covid-19** and building resilience against future shocks for risk-informed sustainable development.

➤ **Need for the Declaration:**

- The 46 LDCs are being hit the hardest by multiple crises including the **Covid-19 Pandemic, Climate Crisis**, growing Inequalities, rising Debt Burdens and economic shocks.
- They have contributed **minimally to Carbon Dioxide Emissions**, but disproportionately **bear the burden of climate change impacts.**
- These countries, which include 33 African nations, face the challenge of high **debt costs while having inadequate liquidity** to provide essential services.
- The LDCs are the **worst performers on the progress made towards achieving SDGs**, according to the **Sustainable Development Report 2022.**

What are LDCs?

- LDCs are a group of countries identified by the United Nations as having the **lowest indicators of socioeconomic development.** These countries are characterized by high levels of poverty, low levels of human capital, and limited access to basic services, such as healthcare and education.
- Currently, **there are 46 countries** on the United Nations' list of LDCs.
 - Africa (33);
 - Asia (9);
 - Caribbean (1): Haiti;
 - Pacific (3): Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.
- The list of LDCs is reviewed **every three years by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP)**, a group of independent experts that report to the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** of the United Nations.
- Following a triennial review of the list, the CDP may recommend, in its report to ECOSOC, countries for addition to the list or graduation from LDC status.

Note:



Women and Men in India 2022

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released **Women and Men in India 2022 report**.

What are the Findings of the Report?

➤ Sex Ratio:

- The **sex ratio** at birth went up by three points to 907 in 2018-20 from 904 in 2017-19.
- India's sex ratio (females per 1,000 males) is expected to improve to **952 by 2036**, up significantly from 943 in 2011.

➤ Labour Force Participation:

- India's Labour Force Participation Rate for those above 15 years of age has been on the rise since 2017-2018. However, **women are severely lagging behind** men.
 - The rate was 77.2 for males and 32.8 for females in 2021-22, with no improvement in this disparity over the years.
- Less participation is due to social **factors, educational qualifications and gender**

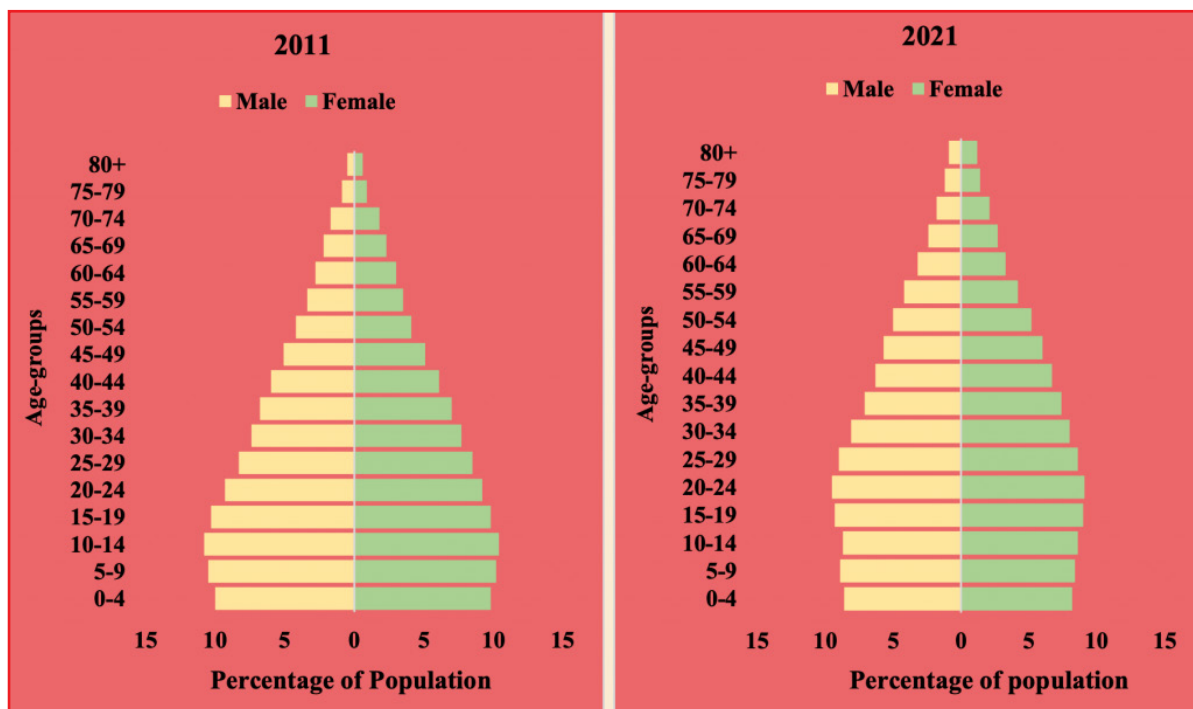
discrimination in terms of wages and opportunities in the workplace.

➤ Population Growth:

- The population growth, already **on a downward trend from 2.2% in 1971 to 1.1% in 2021**, is projected to fall further to 0.58% in 2036.
- In absolute figures, this translates into 1.2 billion people with 48.5% female population as per **Census 2011** to an expected 1.5 billion in 2036 with a marginal improvement in the female population share (48.8%).

➤ Age of Sex Structure:

- India's age and sex structure, as per which the population under 15 years of age is expected to decline and the **population above 60 years is expected to increase by 2036**.
- Accordingly, **the population pyramid will undergo a shift as the base of the pyramid in 2036 would narrow down**, while the middle would be broadened.
 - The age and sex structure of a country's population can affect gender issues in a variety of ways. Age structure impacting various aspects of societies is determined primarily by trends in fertility and mortality.



Note:

- **Access to Health Information and Services:**
 - Lack of access to resources and decision-making power, restrictions on mobility, etc make access to health **information and services more difficult for women** and girls than men and boys.
- **Fertility Rate:**
 - The age-specific **fertility rate** for the 20-24 year and 25-29 years age group between 2016 and 2020 reduced from 135.4 and 166.0 to 113.6 and 139.6 respectively.
 - This is likely a function of **economic independence by attaining proper education** and securing a job.
 - The same indicator for the 35-39 years age group increased from **32.7 in 2016 to 35.6 in 2020**.
 - The mean age for marriage has improved marginally up from 22.1 years in 2017 to 22.7 years in 2020.

Reservation for Women in Politics

Why in News?

A political party recently called for the long-delayed Women's Reservation Bill to be introduced in **Parliament**.

- The **Rajya Sabha** passed the **Women's Reservation Bill** on 9 March 2010. However, the **Lok Sabha** never voted on the bill. The bill lapsed since it was still pending in Lok Sabha.

What is the Background of the Reservation for Women in Politics in India?

- The issue of reservation for women in politics **can be traced back to the Indian national movement**. In 1931, in their letter to the British Prime Minister, submitting the **official memorandum jointly issued on the status of women** in the new Constitution by three women's bodies, leaders Begum Shah Nawaz and **Sarojini Naidu**.
- The **National Perspective Plan for Women** recommended in 1988 that reservation be provided to women right from the **level of the panchayat to that of Parliament**

- These recommendations paved the way for the historic enactment of the **73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution** which mandate all State governments to reserve **one-third of the seats for women** in Panchayati Raj Institutions and **one-third** of the offices of the chairperson at all levels of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, and in urban local bodies, respectively. Within these seats, **one-third are reserved for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe women**.
- Many States such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Kerala have made legal provisions to ensure **50% reservation for women in local bodies**.

What is Women Representation Bill?

➤ **About the Bill:**

- The Women's Reservation Bill proposes to reserve **33% of seats** in the **Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women**.
- Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory.
- Reservation of seats for women shall cease to **exist 15 years after the commencement of this Amendment Act**.

➤ **Need:**

- According to **Global Gender Gap Report 2022**, India ranks **48th out of 146 in Political Empowerment** (Percentage of Women in Parliament and in Ministerial Positions) dimension.
 - Notwithstanding its rank, its **score is quite low at 0.267**. Some of the best-ranking countries in this category score much better. For instance, **Iceland is ranked 1 with a score of 0.874** and **Bangladesh is ranked 9 with a score of 0.546**.
- Women's right to self-representation and self-determination;
- The various surveys do indicate that **women representatives from Panchayati Raj have worked commendably in the development and overall well-being of society** in villages and many of them would definitely want to work on the larger scale, however, they face various challenges in the political structure prevalent in India.

Note:



➤ Arguments Against the Bill:

- Women are **not a homogeneous community say like, a caste group**. Therefore, the same arguments made for caste-based reservations cannot be made for women.
- Reserving seats for women is opposed by some who claim that doing so violates the **Constitution's guarantee of equality**. If there is a reserve, they claim, women won't be competing on merit, which could decrease their status in society.

➤ Arguments in Favour of the Bill:

- Affirmative action is necessary to better the condition of women, as political parties are inherently patriarchal.
- Women are **still under-represented in Parliament**, and reservations will ensure that women form a strong lobby to fight for issues that are often ignored.
- More women in decision-making positions are needed **to address the high percentage of crimes against women, low participation of women in the workforce**, low nutrition levels, and skewed sex ratio.

World Athletics Bans Transgender Women

Why in News?

World Athletics, the governing body for athletics, has announced a **ban on transgender women from competing in elite female competitions** if they have gone through **male puberty**.

- The council has also imposed **stricter regulations on athletes with Differences in Sex Development (DSD)** by reducing the **maximum amount of plasma testosterone for athletes in half**, from 5 to 2.5 nanomoles per litre.

What are the Major Points Related to the Ban?

- According to **World Athletics**, the **ban on transgender women** competing in elite female competitions is based on the need to **protect the female category**.
- The tighter rules will impact **DSD athletes** such as **Caster Semenya, Christine Mboma, and Francine Niyonsaba**.

- At the **2020 Olympics**, **Semenya and Niyonsaba were both barred from the 800m race and turned their attention to the 5,000m**, while **Mboma won silver in the 200m**.

- Swimming's world governing body, **World Aquatics**, has also **banned transgender women from elite competition** if they have experienced any part of male puberty.

What is DSD?

- It is a condition in which an **individual's physical sex characteristics do not align with typical male or female** development.
 - This can include various genetic, hormonal, or anatomical differences, leading to conditions such as **intersex or ambiguous genitalia**.
- In the context of athletics, **DSD athletes may have naturally high levels of testosterone**, which has been a subject of controversy and regulation in sports.
 - **For instance, DSD athletes have male testes** but do not produce enough of the hormone **Dihydrotestosterone (DHT)** that is necessary for the **formation of male external genitalia**.

NAMASTE Scheme

Why in News?

Union Budget 2023-2024 has allocated nearly **Rs 100 crore for the National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)** and the government is looking to enable **100% mechanical desludging of septic tanks and sewers in all cities and towns**.

- The process of extending the Scheme to all the **Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** of the country has been initiated.

What is the NAMASTE Scheme?

- **About:**
 - It was launched in 2022 as a **Central Sector Scheme**.
 - The scheme is being undertaken **jointly by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE)** and aims to eradicate unsafe sewer and septic tank cleaning practices.

Note:

- **Objectives:**
 - Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India.
 - All sanitation work is performed by skilled workers.
 - No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter.
 - Sanitation workers are collectivised into **Self Help Groups (SHGs)** and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises.
 - Strengthened supervisory and monitoring systems at National, State and Urban Local Body (ULB) levels to ensure enforcement and monitoring of safe sanitation work.
 - Increased awareness among sanitation services seekers (individuals and institutions) to seek services from registered and skilled sanitation workers.

What are the Key Features of the Scheme to be Implemented in all ULBs?

- **Identification:** NAMASTE envisages identifying the Sewer/Septic Tank Workers (SSWs).
- **Occupational Training and distribution of PPE Kits to SSWs.**
- **Assistance for Safety Devices to Sanitation Response Units (SRUs).**
- **Extending Health Insurance Scheme Benefits** to identified SSWs and their families under the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).
- **Livelihood Assistance:** The Action Plan will promote mechanization and enterprise development by providing funding support and subsidy (capital +interest) to the sanitation workers, to procure sanitation related equipments.
- **IEC (Information Education and Communication) Campaign:** Massive campaigns would be undertaken jointly by the ULBs & NSKFDC (National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation) to spread awareness about the interventions of NAMASTE.

Trends in Maternal Mortality: UN

Why in News?

According to the **United Nations' (UN)** new report "**Trends in Maternal Mortality**", of the estimated 287,000 maternal deaths recorded in 2020, 70 % took place in sub-Saharan Africa.

- The **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** — deaths per lakh live births — in the region was at a dangerous high of 545, many times greater than the world average of 223.

What are the Key Findings of the Report?

- **Statistics:**
 - Every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth, revealing **alarming setbacks for women's health over recent years**, as maternal deaths either increased or stagnated in nearly all regions of the world.
 - There were an estimated 287,000 maternal deaths worldwide in 2020, which is a **slight decrease from 309,000 in 2016** when the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** came into effect.
 - Although there has been significant progress in **reducing maternal deaths between 2000 and 2015**, gains largely stalled, or in some cases even reversed, after this point.
- **MMR:**
 - In 2020, about 70% of all maternal deaths were in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - The **top three sub-regions in the world with a high or very high MMR** were found in **sub-Saharan Africa**,
 - Western Africa at 754, middle Africa at 539 and eastern Africa at 351.
 - On the country level, a similar trend was seen with South Sudan (1,223), Chad (1,063) and Nigeria (1,047) recording an extremely high — greater than 1,000 — MMR.
 - With approximately 82,000 maternal deaths in 2020, **Nigeria accounted for over a quarter (28.5%) of all estimated global maternal deaths** in the pandemic year.
 - From 2000 to 2020, declines in the MMR stagnated in sub-Saharan Africa, northern Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and western Asia, and eastern and south-eastern Asia.
- **Causes of Maternal Deaths:**
 - Severe bleeding, **high blood pressure, pregnancy-related infections**, complications from unsafe abortion, and underlying conditions that can be aggravated by pregnancy (such as **HIV/AIDS** and malaria) are the leading causes of maternal deaths.

Note:

- Globally, 1,878 HIV-related indirect maternal deaths were recorded, of which 1,738 (around 92.5%) were in sub-Saharan Africa.

➤ Healthcare Gaps:

- Roughly a third of women do not have even **four of a recommended eight antenatal checks** or receive essential postnatal care, while some 270 million women lack access to modern family planning methods.

➤ Risks:

- Inequities related to income, education, race or ethnicity further increase **risks for marginalized pregnant women**, who have the least access to essential maternity care but are most likely to experience underlying health problems in pregnancy.

What are the Findings Related to India?

- India recorded the **second highest number of maternal deaths** in 2020, coming second at 24,000 to only Nigeria.
- However, there has been **an overall reduction of 73.5% in MMR in India**, between 2000 and 2020.
- In 2020, India's MMR stood at 103, a vast improvement from 384 at the turn of the century.
 - In comparison, other developing countries like Argentina (45 in 2020), Bhutan (60), Brazil (72), Kyrgyzstan (50) and Philippines (78) **have performed better than India.**

Genetic Information and Privacy

Why in News?

Recently, the **Supreme Court** has ruled that children have the right to protect their genetic information from being revealed in **Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Tests** without their consent.

- The judgment came in a petition filed by a man who questioned his second child's paternity while accusing his wife of an adulterous relationship.
- The apex court concluded on the facts of the case that no adverse inference could be drawn on the ground that the **mother declined to subject the child to a paternity test.**

What is the Judgement?

- Genetic information is personal and intimate. It sheds light on a person's very essence.
- It allows individuals to **make informed decisions about their health, privacy, and identity.**
- Children have the **right to protect their genetic information from DNA testing** in divorce proceedings, as it is part of their fundamental right to privacy.
 - This is guaranteed under **Article 21 of Indian Constitution.**
- It is imperative that children do not become the focal point of the battle between spouses.
- Rights of privacy, autonomy and identity are recognised under the **United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child.**
 - The Convention **acknowledges the control** that individuals, including children, have **over their own personal boundaries** and the means by which they define who they are in relation to other people.
 - Children are not to be deprived of this entitlement to influence and understand their sense of self simply by virtue of being children.

Impact of Covid-19 on Human Capital

Why in News?

Recently, the **World Bank** released a report titled- "**Collapse and Recovery: How COVID-19 Eroded Human Capital and What to Do**", stating that the **Covid-19** caused a **massive collapse in human capital**, primarily affecting children and young people.

- It **analyzed global data on the pandemic's impacts on young people** at key developmental stages: early childhood (0-5 years), school age (6-14 years) and youth (15-24 years).

Note:

- **Human capital** consists of the **knowledge, skills, and health** that people invest in and accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to **realize their potential as productive members of society.**

Note:

What are the Findings of the Report?

➤ Impact of Pandemic:

- The Covid-19 caused massive damage to human capital **at critical moments in the life cycle**, primarily affecting children and young people in **underdeveloped and developing countries**.
- The development of millions in **low- and middle-income countries has been derailed**.

➤ Impact on School Children:

- Preschool-age children in multiple countries have **lost more than 34% of learning in early language** and literacy and more than 29% of learning in mathematics compared to pre-pandemic cohorts.
- In many countries, even after schools had reopened, **preschool enrollment had not recovered by the end of 2021**; it was down by more than 10% in multiple countries.
- Children also faced greater **food insecurity** during the pandemic.

➤ Reductions in Healthcare:

- Millions of children faced reductions in health care—including missed critical vaccines.
- They also faced **more stress in their care environments**—orphanhood, domestic violence, suboptimal nutrition—which led to declines in school readiness and declines in social and emotional development.

➤ Youth Employment:

- Forty million people who would have had a job in the absence of the pandemic **did not have one at the end of 2021**, worsening youth unemployment trends. Youth earnings contracted by 15% in 2020 and 12% in 2021.
- New entrants with lower education will have 13% fewer earnings during their first decade in the labour market.
 - In Brazil, Ethiopia, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa, and Vietnam **25% of all young people were neither in education, employment, nor training in 2021**.

Mental Healthcare Act, 2017

Why in News?

The **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** has raised concern over the **Deplorable Condition** of many Mental Healthcare Institutions (MHIs) in India, violating **Mental Healthcare Act (MHA), 2017**.

- According to the NHRC, MHIs are “illegally” keeping **patients long after their recovery**, which not only violates **Article 21** but also highlights **failure of the Governments to discharge the obligation under various international Covenants** relating to **rights of persons with disabilities** which have been ratified by India.

What is the Background MHA, 2017?

- Before MHA 2017, the Mental Healthcare Act, 1987 existed, which **prioritized the institutionalization of mentally ill people** and did not afford any rights to the patient.
- The Act provided **disproportionate authority to judicial officers and mental health establishments** to authorize long-stay admissions, often against the **informed consent and wishes of the individual**.
- Consequently, several persons **continue to be admitted and languish in mental health establishments** against their will.
- It embodied **the ethos of the colonial-era Indian Lunacy Act of 1912**, which linked criminality and madness.
 - Asylums were places where “abnormal” and “unproductive” behaviour was studied as an individual phenomenon, isolating the individual from society. The intervention is meant to correct an inherent deficit or “abnormality”, thereby leading to “recovery”.
- In 2017, the MHA dismantled the **clinical heritage attached to asylums**.

What is MHA 2017?

➤ About:

- This Act **defined mental illness** as “a substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behaviour,

Note:

capacity to recognize reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life, mental conditions associated with the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

- It also provides the **right of patients to access facilities that include rehabilitation services in the hospital**, community, and home, sheltered and supported accommodation.
- It regulates the research on **PMI (Person with Mental Illness)** and the use of neurosurgical treatments.
- **Rights under MHA:**
 - Right to Make an Advance Directive (Patient can state on how to be treated or not to be treated for the illness during a mental health situation).
 - Right to Access to Healthcare Services.
 - Right to **free of cost healthcare** services.
 - Right to live in a community.
 - Right to **protection from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment**.
 - Right not to be treated **under prohibited treatment**.
 - Right to **equality and non-discrimination**.
 - Right to information.
 - Right to confidentiality.
 - Right to legal aid and complain.
- **Attempt to Commit Suicide not an Offence:**
 - A person who attempts to commit suicide will be presumed to be “suffering from severe stress” and shall not be subjected to any investigation or prosecution.
- The act envisages the establishment of **Central Mental Health Authority and State Mental Health Authority**.

What are the Initiatives Related to Mental Health?

- **Global Initiatives:**
 - **World Mental Health Day.**
 - **WHO's Comprehensive Mental Action Plan 2013-2020**
 - **Mental Health Atlas.**
 - **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3.4).**
- **Indian Initiatives:**
 - **National Mental Health Program.**
 - **Kiran Helpline**
 - **MANAS Mobile App**
 - **Manodarpan**

UN World Social Report 2023

Why in News?

According to the **United Nations (UN) World Social Report 2023: Leaving no one behind in an ageing world**, the **number of persons aged 65 years or older worldwide is expected to double over the next three decades**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- The elderly population will reach **1.6 billion in 2050**, accounting for more than **16% of the global population**.
- **North Africa, West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa** are expected to experience the fastest growth in the number of older people over the next three decades.
 - Also, **Europe and North America** combined now have the **highest share of older persons**.
 - This demographic shift brings into **question current arrangements of old-age support** in young and old countries.
- **Gender inequality** also persists into old age. Economically, **women's lower levels of formal labour market participation**, shorter working lives and **lower wages during working years** lead to **more economic insecurity in later life**.

What is Ageing of the Population?

- **About:**
 - It refers to the **process by which the proportion of older individuals** in a society increases over time.
 - This is typically measured by the **proportion of the population that is over a certain age**, such as **65 years or older**.
- **Status in India:**
 - According to the **National Commission on Population**, the share of the elderly in India's population, **close to 9% in 2011**, is growing fast and may reach **18% by 2036**.
 - **Life expectancy** in India has **more than doubled since Independence** from around 32 years in the late 1940s to 70 years or so today.

Note:

- **Problems Associated with the Ageing Population:**
 - **Healthcare Costs:** As people age, they are **more likely to experience chronic physical health conditions** and require more healthcare services.
 - This can lead to increased healthcare costs for **governments, insurers, and individuals.**
 - **Social Security Imbalance:** Ageing populations can put a strain on **social security** systems, as a **smaller proportion of the population is working and contributing to the system**, while a **larger proportion is retired and drawing benefits.**
 - This can lead to increased pressure to raise taxes or reduce benefits.
 - **Mental Health Issues:** According to a recent survey, **30% to 50% of elderly people had symptoms that make them depressed** due to feelings of powerlessness, loneliness.
 - A large majority of **elderly persons living alone are women**, especially widows.
 - **Other Problems:**
 - Negligence by kids towards their old parents, Disillusionment due to retirement, Feeling of powerlessness, loneliness, uselessness and isolation in elderly, Generational gap.
- **Current Schemes Related to Old Age Population:**
 - **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)**
 - **Integrated Program for Older Persons (IPOP)**
 - **SAMPANN Project**
 - **SACRED Portal for Elderly**
 - **Elder Line: Toll-Free Number for Elderly**
- **International Initiative:** The **World Health Organization** and the UN have designated **2021-2030 as the Decade of Healthy Aging**, building on the **Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing** is a good step for elderly empowerment.

Prison Reforms

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister suggested **prison reforms** to improve jail management and

recommended repealing obsolete criminal laws, at the 57th All-India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police, organised by the Intelligence Bureau (IB).

What are the Key Highlights of the Prime Minister's Address?

- He emphasised on the importance of **National Data Governance Framework** for the **smoothing of data exchange, across agencies.**
 - Also, making the police forces more sensitive and training them in emerging technologies.
- He talked about **leveraging technological solutions like biometrics etc.**, and the need to further strengthen traditional policing **mechanisms like foot patrols.**
- He also emphasised on **enhanced cooperation between the State Police and Central Agencies** to leverage capabilities and share best practices replicating the model of the **DGsP/IGsP Conference at the State/district levels**, for discussing emerging challenges and evolving best practices among their teams.

What is the Status of Prison Administration in India?

- **About:**
 - **Prison administration is an important component of the criminal justice system.** There is a paradigm shift in social viewpoint towards prisoners in the last century.
 - Earlier system of prison with a **punitive attitude** where inmates were forcibly confined and deprived a variety of freedom as a form of punishment has changed with a change in social perception towards **prison and prisoners.**
 - It is now treated as a **correction or improvement facility** which itself indicates that there is more emphasis on reformation of prisoners than to punish them.

Note:

- **Structure of the Criminal Justice System in India:**
 - The **Indian Criminal Justice System** is composed of government agencies that enforce the law, adjudicate crimes, and correct criminal behaviour.
 - It has four subsystems:
 - **Legislature (Parliament)**
 - **Enforcement (Police)**
 - **Adjudication (Courts)**
 - **Corrections (Prisons, Community Facilities)**
- **Issues Related to Prison in India:**
 - **Pendency of Cases:** As per the records of 2022, over **4.7 crore cases are pending in Indian courts across different levels of the judiciary.**
 - Also, according to **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)-Prison Statistics India**, 67.2% of total prison population in India comprises trial prisoners.
 - **Colonial Nature and Obsolete Laws:** Both substantive and procedural aspects of the Indian criminal justice system were designed with the **purpose of ruling the nation in British colonial times.**
 - In light of this, the relevance of these **19th century laws is debatable in the 21st century.**
 - **Inhumane Behaviour Behind Bars:** Over the years, critics have repeatedly complained about the **indifferent and even inhuman behaviour** of prison staff.
 - Also, there have been many **instances of custodial rapes and deaths** resulting in violation of prisoners' human rights.
 - **Overcrowding:** Many prisons in India are overcrowded, with facilities designed to hold a certain number of **inmates being filled well beyond capacity.**
 - For example, in **2020 it was reported that the Tihar Jail in Delhi**, which has a capacity of around 7,000 inmates, held more than 15,000 prisoners.

- **Inadequate Staff:** Many prisons in India are **understaffed**, which can lead to poor conditions and a **lack of security.**
 - For example, in 2020 it was reported that the **Puzhal Central Prison in Chennai, Tamil Nadu** had only one guard for every 100 prisoners.
 - Also, as per the **Prison Act, 1894** and **Prisoner Act, 1900**, there should be a welfare officer and a law officer in each jail but **recruitment of these officers remains pending.**

World Leprosy Day 2023

Why in News?

Every year **last Sunday in January** is observed as Leprosy Day. This year, it falls on 29th January. Leprosy is also known as **Hansen's disease**.

- The day is observed to provide an opportunity to lift up the voices of people affected by leprosy across the world.

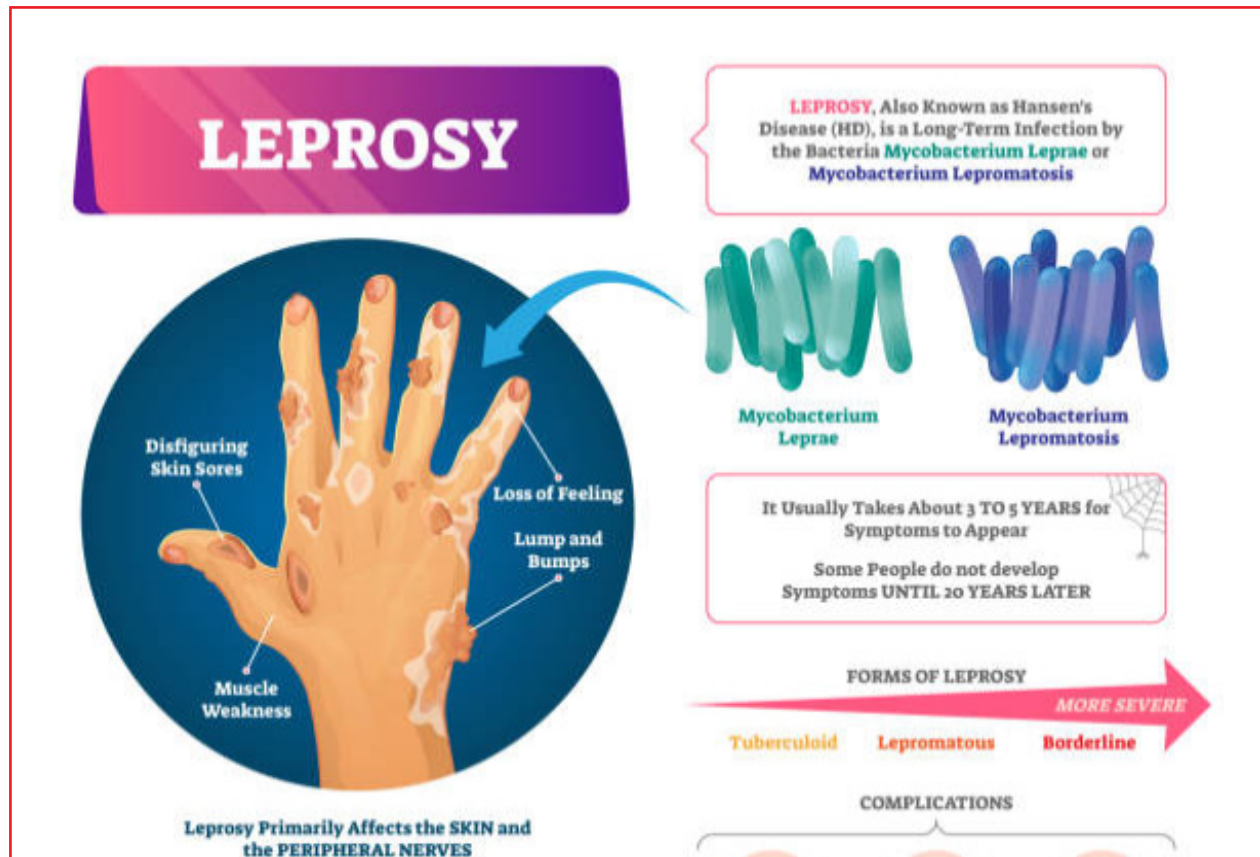
What are the Key Points of the Day?

- **Theme 2023:** Act Now, End Leprosy.
- **History:** World Leprosy Day was established in 1954 by **French philanthropist Raoul Follereau**.
- **Objective:** The main objective was to raise awareness about **leprosy disease and to teach people about this ancient disease** that is now easily curable.
 - Various people across the world are not aware of the disease, lack of access to basic medical care, and continued stigma surrounding the illness.

What is Leprosy?

- **About:**
 - Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease **which is caused by a type of bacteria called *Mycobacterium leprae*.**
 - Leprosy is a **Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)** which still occurs in more than 120 countries, with more than 200,000 new cases reported every year.

Note:



➤ Symptoms:

- The disease mainly **affects the skin**, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract and eyes.

➤ Transmission:

- Leprosy is transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contact with untreated cases.

➤ Treatment:

- Leprosy is curable **with MDT (multi drug therapy)** and treatment in the early stages can prevent disability. The disease is not hereditary, leprosy does not transmit from parents to children.

➤ Scenario:

- In 2021, as many as **1,40,000 new leprosy cases were reported**, with 95% of new cases coming from the 23 global priority countries. Of these, 6% were diagnosed with visible deformities or grade-2 disabilities (G2D).
- Although leprosy affects both sexes, in most parts of the world **males are affected more frequently than females**, often in the ratio of 2:1, according to WHO's Global Leprosy Report.

- Over 6% of the new cases **were children under the age of 15**.

- Despite a 10% increase in new cases from 2020 to 2021, the **reported cases were 30% lower in 2021 than in 2019**.

- This is not **due to a decrease in transmission**, but because the leprosy cases remained undetected due to Covid-19-related disruptions.

➤ Indian Efforts:

- In 2017, the government launched nationwide **Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign (SLAC)** which aims at communicating the importance of early detection and treatment of leprosy.
- **National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP)** focuses on both prevention and cure, especially in endemic regions. A Leprosy Case Detection Campaign was launched in March 2016, involving house-to-house screening and referral of patients for diagnosis.
- Introduction of an indigenously developed vaccine for leprosy into the NLEP. **The vaccine, known as Mycobacterium indicus pranii (MIP)**, has

Note:

been developed by National Institute of Immunology. This vaccine will be administered as a preventive measure to those staying in close contact with leprosy patients.

- Indian research contributed to the development of Multi-Drug Therapy or MDT, now recommended by WHO, which led to the shortening of treatment and higher cure rates.
- The fight against leprosy has to be measured against sensitivity displayed by society. **Removal of the stigma is vital.** More than laws, our attitude to leprosy has to change, doing away with discrimination.

Measles and Rubella

Why in News?

India had set a target to eliminate **Measles and Rubella (MR)** by 2023, having missed the earlier deadline of 2020, due to a variety of reasons, exacerbated by disruptions due to the pandemic.

- In 2019, India adopted the **goal of measles and rubella elimination by 2023**, anticipating that the 2020 goal could not be reached.

What are Measles and Rubella?

➤ Measles:

- It is a **highly contagious viral disease** and is a cause of death among young children globally.
- It is caused by a **single-stranded, enveloped RNA virus with 1 serotype**. It is classified as a member of the **genus Morbillivirus in the Paramyxoviridae family**.
- It is particularly **dangerous for children from the economically weaker background**, as it attacks malnourished children and those with reduced immunity.
- It can cause serious complications, including **blindness, encephalitis, severe diarrhoea, ear infection and pneumonia**.

➤ Rubella:

- It is also called **German Measles**.
- Rubella is a **contagious, generally mild viral infection that occurs most often in children and young adults**.
- It is caused by the **rubella virus which is an enveloped single-stranded RNA virus**.
- Rubella infection in pregnant women may cause death or congenital defects known as **Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS)** which causes irreversible birth defects.
 - **Rubella isn't the same as measles**, but the two illnesses share some signs and symptoms, such as the red rash.
 - Rubella is caused by a **different virus than measles, and rubella isn't as infectious or as severe as measles**.

What is the Global and Indian Scenario of Measles and Rubella?

- The measles virus is one of the **world's most contagious human viruses** that kills more than 1,00,000 children every year globally, and **rubella is a leading vaccine-preventable cause of birth defects**, according to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
- Over the past two decades, the **measles vaccine is estimated to have averted more than 30 million deaths globally**, as per the WHO's statistics.
- During 2010–2013, India conducted a phased measles catch-up immunisation for children aged 9 months–10 years in 14 States, **vaccinating approximately 119 million children**.
- **Mission Indradhanush** was **launched in 2014 to ramp up vaccinating** the unvaccinated population.
- During 2017–2021, India adopted a national strategic plan for measles and rubella elimination.
 - During the same period, the Government introduced rubella-containing vaccine (RCV) into the routine immunisation programme.

Note:

- As of December 2021, **five countries have been verified and have sustained measles elimination** - Bhutan, DPR Korea, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste. In addition, Maldives and Sri Lanka have sustained their rubella elimination status in 2021.

What are Measures to Curb MR?

- **Measles-Rubella Vaccination:** The MR campaign targets around 41 crore children across the country, the largest ever in any campaign.
 - All children aged between 9 months and less than 15 years are given a single shot of MR vaccination irrespective of their previous measles/rubella vaccination status or measles/rubella disease status.
- Other Initiatives include **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), Mission Indradhanush and Intensified Mission Indradhanush.**
- The vaccines for the diseases are provided in the form of measles-rubella (MR), measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) or measles-mumps-rubella-varicella (MMRV) combination.

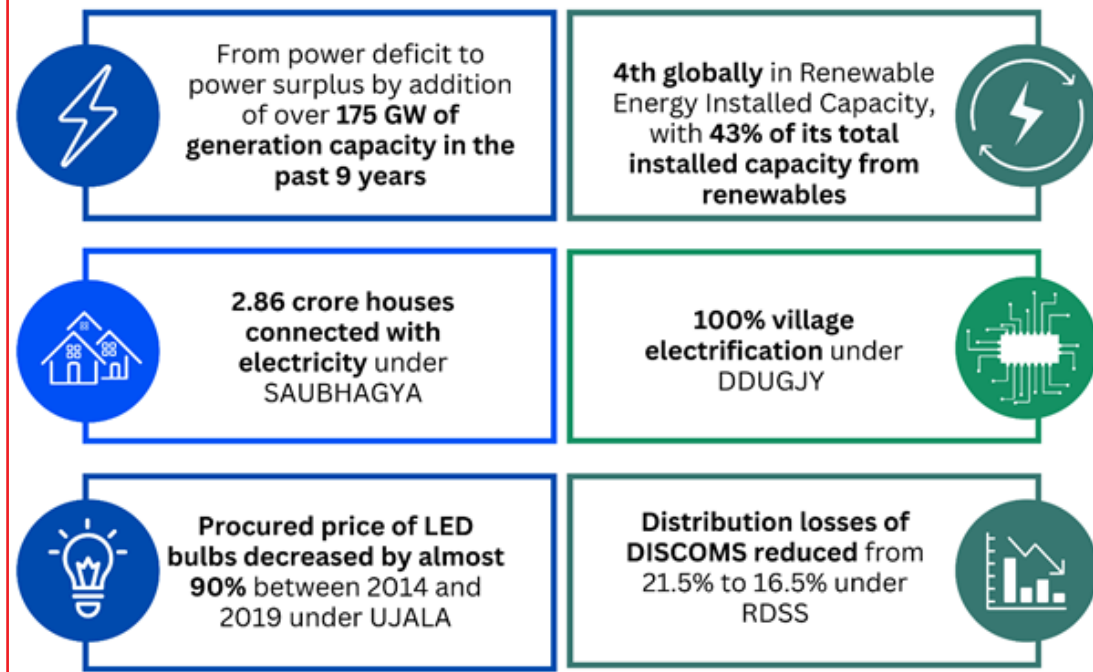
Lineman Diwas

Source: PIB

The **Central Electricity Authority (CEA)**, Ministry of Power, pays tribute to the nation's power sector frontline workers on the **fourth edition of Lineman Diwas (4th March 2024)** in New Delhi.

- Lineman Diwas celebrates the dedication and service of **linemen and ground maintenance staff** who ensure uninterrupted electricity distribution nationwide.
 - The theme for Lineman Diwas '**Seva, Suraksha, Swabhiman**' underscores the linemen's commitment, sacrifice, and contribution to society.
 - The event facilitated the exchange of safety best practices, showcasing safety equipment and tools, and screening videos to reinforce workplace safety protocols.
- The CEA is constituted under the repealed **Electricity (Supply) Act, of 1948**, which has since been substituted by **Section 70 of the Electricity Act, 2003**.
 - The primary functions of the Central Electricity Authority include providing **advice on policy matters and plans for the development and regulation** of the electricity systems.

Transforming the Power Sector in India



Read more: [India's Power Sector in 2030](#)

Note:

