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A Weekly Current Affairs Initiative

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October 4th Week 2025

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INSTA ವಿದ್ಯಮಾನ**WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS****OCTOBER 4TH Week 2025****We Rise Initiatives****Syllabus: GS2/ Women Empowerment****In News**

- 'We Rise (Women Entrepreneurs Reimagining Inclusive and Sustainable Enterprises) initiative was launched recently.

We Rise Initiatives

- **Objective** - to empower women entrepreneurs to expand globally through trade facilitation, mentorship, and strategic partnerships.
- **Launched by** - by NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) under its Award to Reward (ATR) initiative

Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)

- Launched in NITI Aayog in 2018
- It serves as a national aggregator to strengthen India's women entrepreneurship

Award to Reward (ATR) initiative

- It was launched in 2023
- **Objective** - to institutionalize WEP's partnership framework by bringing together ecosystem stakeholders to address specific needs of women entrepreneurs while celebrating their success stories.

UPOV Convention**Syllabus: GS2/IR****Context**

- A new report by GRAIN warns of growing corporate control over seeds via free trade agreements.
- **Powerful economies** — including the US, EU, Japan and the UAE — are pushing harsh IP rules on plant varieties.

Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) Convention 1991

- **Mandate** - It is an international treaty that provides a framework for intellectual property rights for plant breeders.
- **Adoption and Enforcement**- The 1991 Act, which entered into force in 1998
- **Significance** - It strengthens breeders' rights compared to earlier versions of the convention and has significant implications for farmers and the seed industry.

Rotavirus Vaccine Effective Against Gastroenteritis in Children
Syllabus: GS2/ Health**Context**

- According to a recent study India's indigenous rotavirus vaccine, Rotavac, has significantly reduced rotavirus-related gastroenteritis cases among children since its introduction in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

Rotavac

- **Introduction:** India introduced Rotavac, an indigenous oral rotavirus vaccine, in 2016 under the Universal Immunisation Programme, administered at 6, 10, and 14 weeks of age.

Rotavirus

- **Responsible pathogen** - A highly contagious, double-stranded RNA virus from the Reoviridae family.
- **Target population:** Primarily affects infants and young children under the age of five. Adults can also be infected, but symptoms are typically mild.

- **Symptoms:** Fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, and severe, watery diarrhea. The biggest concern is severe dehydration, which can be life-threatening if untreated.
- **Transmission:** Occurs primarily through the fecal-oral route—by contact with contaminated hands, surfaces, or objects. It can also spread through contaminated food and water.

State Mining Readiness Index **Syllabus: GS3/ Economy**

Context

- The Ministry of Mines has released the State Mining Readiness Index (SMRI) and corresponding State rankings.

State Mining Readiness Index (SMRI)

- **Mandate** - This index is designed to benchmark State performance in facilitating and reforming the mining sector.
- The index aims to promote transparency, efficiency, and sustainable mining by encouraging competition among States.
- **Indicators-**
 1. Auction performance,
 2. Early mine operationalization,
 3. Thrust on exploration
 4. Sustainable mining pertaining
 5. Non-coal minerals.

Categorisation of States

- States have been divided into three categories based on their mineral endowment;
- The top three ranked States in **Category A (Mineral-rich States):** Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.
- The top three ranked States in **Category B (Moderately endowed States):** Uttar Pradesh, and Assam.

- The top three ranked States in **Category C (Lesser-endowed States):** Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Tripura.

State of Finance for Forests (SFF) Report **Syllabus :GS3/Environment**

In News

- The first State of Finance for Forests (SFF) report was recently released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

State of Finance for Forests (SFF)

- It provides a global overview of public and private forest finance in 2023,
- It compares current flows with the investments needed to realize forests' potential to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation.

Key Findings

- In 2023, global forest finance stood at US\$84 billion, far below the US\$300 billion needed annually by 2030 and US\$498 billion by 2050, leaving a US\$216 billion yearly gap.

REDD+ Programme **Syllabus: GS3/Environment**

Context

- According to a study, only a small number of tropical forests have achieved significant cuts in deforestation, with just 19% meeting their reported targets.
- These offset projects are a part of the REDD+ programme.

REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation Plus)

- It is a climate change initiative under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- It offers financial incentives for developing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

- The "plus" in REDD+ includes additional activities like the **conservation and sustainable management of forests** and the **enhancement of forest carbon stocks**.
- The goal is to **provide a financial value for forests** that encourages developing countries to protect them

BrahMos

Syllabus: GS3/Defence

Context

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath flagged off the first batch of BrahMos missiles manufactured at the BrahMos Aerospace unit in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

BrahMos Missile

- **Joint Venture:** Between **DRDO (India)** and **NPO Mashinostroyeniya (Russia)**.
- **Name Origin:** Derived from the **Brahmaputra (India)** and **Moskva (Russia)** rivers.
- **First Test:** Conducted on June 12, 2001.
- **Type:** "Fire and forget" **supersonic cruise missile — can be launched from land, sea, or air in all-weather conditions**, and is nearly impossible to intercept.
- **Combat Use:** Reportedly used for the first time during Operation Sindoor.

Speed:

- **Current:** Mach 2.8 (Supersonic)
- **Future:** Mach 5+ (Hypersonic version under development)

Range:

- **Initially** 290 km (under MTCR limit)
- **Extended** to 400 km, with a 600+ km variant under development.

Additional information - Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)

- **Objective** - The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is a group of 35 member

states that seeks **to limit the proliferation of missiles and missile technology**.

- **Established in** - The group was formed in 1987.
- **India became a member of the MTCR in 2016**

Commonwealth Games

Syllabus: Miscellaneous

Context

- Gujarat's largest city Ahmedabad has been recommended as the "proposed host" by the executive board of Commonwealth Sport.
- India last hosted the CWG in Delhi in 2010.

Commonwealth Games

- **Started in 1930** (inaugural event in Hamilton, Canada) as the British Empire Games.
- It is a **multi-sport international event, modeled on the Olympics**, involving athletes from the Commonwealth of Nations and their associated territories.
- The Commonwealth of Nations, or simply the Commonwealth, is a **voluntary association of 54 sovereign countries, most of which were former colonies of the British Empire**.
- Commonwealth Games is the **world's second-largest multi-sport event** from 71 nations and territories.

Sri Lankan PM's State Visit to India

Syllabus: GS2/IR

Context

- The Sri Lankan Prime Minister is on a state visit to India.

India and Sri Lanka Relations

- **Diplomatic Ties:** Diplomatic relations established in 1948 after Sri Lanka's independence.

- **Trade Relations: India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) in 2000** contributed significantly towards the expansion of trade between the two countries.
- **Maritime Security and Defence Cooperation: In 2011**, a decision was taken to establish the **Colombo Security Conclave** which aims to further promote maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **India and Sri Lanka conduct a joint Military exercise named 'Mitra Shakti', Trilateral Maritime Exercise "Dosti", and a Naval exercise named SLINEX.**
- **Multilateral Forum Collaboration: India and Sri Lanka are member nations of several regional and multilateral organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and BIMSTEC.**

Mass Surrender of Maoists
Syllabus: GS3/Internal Security

Context

- **210 Maoists surrendered in Dandakaranya region of Chhattisgarh, following a similar event in Maharashtra, as a part of a broader strategy by the Union and state governments to abandon violence and embrace rehabilitation.**

Maoism, or Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)

- It was rooted in **radical communist ideology**, advocating **armed struggle to overthrow the state** and establish a classless society.
- **Left-Wing Extremism** in India traces its roots to the **Naxalbari uprising of 1967 in West Bengal, inspired by Mao Zedong's revolutionary tactics.**
- The movement **gained momentum** through the formation of groups like the **Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)** and

later the **CPI (Maoist)**, which rejected electoral politics and embraced violent revolution.

Reasons for Maoism, or Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in India

- **Left-Wing Extremism: LWE** has historically thrived in regions marked by **poverty, illiteracy, and lack of basic services.**

Many tribal communities have faced:

1. **Land alienation due to mining and industrial projects;**
2. **Displacement without adequate rehabilitation;**
3. **Limited access to education, healthcare, and employment;**
4. **Governance Deficit:** Remote districts often suffer from weak administrative presence and poor delivery of public services.

This vacuum allowed Maoist groups to:

1. Establish parallel governance structures;
2. Exploit local grievances;
3. Gain legitimacy among disenfranchised populations;
4. **Tribal Discontent:** Tribal populations, especially in forested regions have long felt excluded from mainstream development.

Decline in Influence

- **Red Corridor** - Once widespread across the 'Red Corridor', Maoist influence has significantly declined due to sustained government action.

Government Strategy To Tackle LWE

- **The National Policy and Action Plan (2015) to address LWE outlines a holistic approach:**
 1. Enhancing security infrastructure and personnel;
 2. Promoting road connectivity and telecom access;

3. Ensuring rights and entitlements of tribal communities;
- **MHA has reaffirmed the government's resolve to eliminate LWE by March 31, 2026, urging Maoists to abandon violence and join the mainstream.**

Security Measures:

- **Deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and specialized anti-Naxal units.**

Development Initiatives:

1. Road connectivity projects in remote tribal areas to improve access and mobility.
 2. Expansion of telecom networks, electricity, and banking services.
 3. Focus on education, healthcare, and livelihood programs to address socio-economic grievances.
- **Transformation of 'Red Zones' into Growth Corridors** through targeted investment.
 - Seminars like '**Bharat Manthan 2025 - Naxal Mukt Bharat**' aim to build consensus and share best practices across states.

SC Forms Panel on Transgender Persons **Syllabus: GS1/Social Issues**

In News

- **The Supreme Court set up a committee under former Justice Asha Menon to formulate an equal opportunity policy for transgender individuals.**

Challenges Transgender Facing

1. Institutional gaps in implementing the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and Rules.**
2. **Lack of data and representation in policymaking.**
3. **Healthcare discrimination.**
4. **Workplace barriers.**
5. **Social stigma.**

Steps Taken To Improve the Lives of Transgender Persons

- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** - It is aimed at **protecting the rights of transgender individuals and their welfare.** The act prohibits **discrimination against** transgender people in areas like **education, employment, healthcare, and public services.**
- **NALSA (2014):** Recognized transgender persons as a third gender.
- **National Portal for Transgender Persons:** Enables **online applications for identity certificates.**
- **SMILE scheme:** It is aimed at **rehabilitation and support for transgender persons,** including livelihood and social security components.

Henley Passport Index **Syllabus: GS2/ Miscellaneous**

In News

- **India's passport ranked 85th, granting visa-free access to 57 countries, a drop from 80th place in 2024. Singapore currently holds the top spot.**

Henley Passport Index

- **Mandate** - It is a popular ranking of global passports that measures passport strength by the number of destinations that holders can visit without a prior visa.
- The index ranks countries based on statistics provided by the **International Air Transport Association (IATA).**
- **Published by** - It started in 2006 Henley & Partners.

Key Highlights of Henley Passport Index 2025

- Globally, **Singapore leads the 2025 list** with visa-free access to 193 destinations, followed by **South Korea (190) and Japan (189).**

- The **United States has slipped out of the top 10 for the first time** in two decades, **ranking 12th this year** with access to 180 destinations
- **India's rank - 85th, granting visa-free access to 57 countries**

SC Allows Sale of Green Fireworks in Delhi **Syllabus: GS3/Environment**

In News

- The Supreme Court **relaxed its earlier blanket ban and permitted the sale and use of green firecrackers in the Delhi-NCR region**, subject to strict conditions.
- The court noted that blanket bans had led to smuggling and use of more harmful conventional fireworks, and cited its **2018 Arjun Gopal judgment, which introduced green firecrackers and showed reduced emissions.**

Green firecrackers

- They are **eco-friendly** alternatives to traditional fireworks, developed **to address air pollution concerns.**
- They emit **30–35% less particulate matter and harmful gases like SO₂, NO_x, and CO**, and **exclude toxic substances such as barium nitrate.**
- They are developed and approved by CSIR labs (NEERI and CEERI).
- They **comply with prescribed noise limits** and are identifiable by green logos and QR codes.

WTI Founder Menon Becomes First Asian to Chair Key IUCN Panel **Syllabus: GS3/Environment**

In News

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) elected Wildlife Trust of India's (WTI) founder Vivek Menon as the **new chair of the Species Survival Commission (SSC)**, making him the first Asian to hold the post.

Species Survival Commission (SSC)

- The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a **science-based network of more than 10,500 volunteer experts from almost every country of the world.**
- **It is one of the six expert commissions** under the global body that **advises the IUCN secretariat on matters concerning biodiversity and species conservation.**
- The commission and its specialist groups play a **key role in preparing the IUCN's red list of threatened species.**

Additional Information - International Union of Conservation of Nature

- **Establishment - 1948.**
- **Set up in - Gland, Switzerland.**
- **Objective - To promote international cooperation and to provide scientific knowledge and tools to aid conservation action.**
- **IUCN Red List - It established the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in 1964.**

IUCN Red List

- It is a list compiled by the IUCN, which **contains the world's most comprehensive information on the conservation status of plants, animals, and fungus species.**
- **Species in the IUCN Red List - There are 143000 species on the Red List.**
- **India's membership in IUCN - India became a member in 1969**
- **The IUCN classification - The IUCN classification of species is based on their extinction/conservation status.**

They are as follows

- **Extinct (EX)**
- **Extinct in the Wild (EW)**
- **Critically Endangered (CR)**
- **Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU)**
- **Near Threatened (NT)**
- **Least Concern (LC)**

- Data Deficient (DD)
- Not Evaluated (NE)

Seventh National Security Guard (NSG) Hub to Come up in Ayodhya

Syllabus :GS3/Security Forces

In News

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced that a new NSG hub will be set up in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.
- This will be the seventh NSG hub, joining existing ones in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Jammu.

National Security Guard (NSG)

- **Elite Counter-Terrorism Force:** The NSG is a specialized force trained to **combat terrorism and handle critical security situations.**
- **Establishment:** In 1984, following **Operation Blue Star.** Created under the b
- **Administrative and operational control:** Union Ministry of Home Affairs
- **Motto:** “Sarvatra Sarvottam Suraksha” (Everywhere, Supreme Security)
- **Key Roles:** Counter-terrorism operations, Hijacking situations, Bomb disposal and post-blast investigations, VIP security.

Exercise Samudra Shakti 2025

Syllabus: GS3/ Defence

Context

- The Indian Navy is hosting the fifth edition of the Indo-Indonesian Joint Bilateral Maritime Exercise, ‘Samudra Shakti - 2025’ at Visakhapatnam.

Exercise Samudra Shakti 2025

- Place - Visakhapatnam
- Participating countries - India and Indonesia
- Type - Bilateral Maritime Exercise

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

Syllabus: Miscellaneous

Context

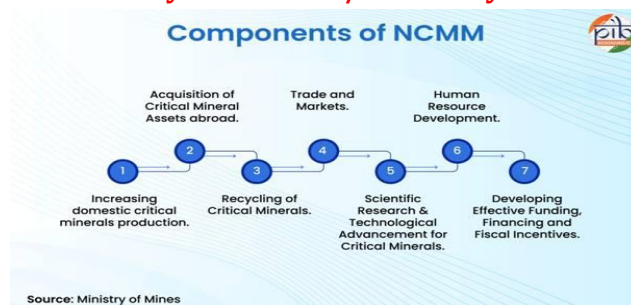
- Birth anniversary of former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (1931–2015) was observed recently.

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

- **Born on 15 October in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu,**
- He was a renowned aeronautical engineer and scientist, **widely known as the “Missile Man of India.”**
- As Project Director at ISRO, he led the **development of India’s first Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III), successfully launching the Rohini satellite in 1980.**
- Later, at DRDO, he spearheaded the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP),** overseeing the development of the **AGNI and PRITHVI missiles and India’s nuclear capabilities, including the Pokhran-II nuclear tests.**
- He served as the **11th President of India (2002–2007)** and is fondly remembered as the **‘People’s President.’**
- His literary works include **Wings of Fire, India 2020, My Journey, and Ignited Minds.**
- He was awarded the **Padma Bhushan (1981), Padma Vibhushan (1990), and the highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna (1997).**

The ‘Critical Factor’ in India’s Clean Energy Ambitions

Syllabus: GS3/ Economy



Context

- **As India targets 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2070**, securing access to critical minerals has become a national priority.

Critical Minerals

- These are minerals that are **essential for economic development and national security**.
- The lack of availability of these minerals could potentially lead to “supply chain vulnerabilities and even disruption of supplies”.

List of Critical Minerals

- **A total of 30 minerals were found to be most critical for India** : Antimony, Beryllium, Bismuth, Cobalt, Copper, Gallium, Germanium, Graphite, Hafnium, Indium, Lithium, Molybdenum, Niobium, Nickel, PGE, Phosphorous, Potash, Rare Earth Elements (REEs), Rhenium, Silicon, Strontium, Tantalum, Tellurium, Tin, Titanium, Tungsten, Vanadium, Zirconium, Selenium and Cadmium.

India's Policy Push for Mineral Exploration

- **Domestic Reserves:** India has vast untapped mineral potential, with **lithium in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Rajasthan**, and REEs in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Policy Initiatives:** **National Mineral Exploration Policy (NMEP), 2016 and Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 2021** have accelerated exploration through private participation and advanced surveys.
- **KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd)** is **acquiring overseas mineral assets to ensure supply security**.

- **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** - It aims to strengthen the value chain from exploration to recovery.

SAIME model (Aquaculture model) of Sundarbans wins FAO recognition **Syllabus: GS3/Environment/Economy**

In News

- **The Sustainable Aquaculture in Mangrove Ecosystems (SAIME) model received Global Technical Recognition from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).**

Sustainable Aquaculture in Mangrove Ecosystems (SAIME) model

- **Developed by - Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS)** in West Bengal's Sundarbans.
- **Objective** - It is a **community-based initiative that integrates sustainable aquaculture practices with mangrove conservation and restoration**
- **Significance** - It enhances **coastal resilience, supports sustainable livelihoods, promotes chemical-free shrimp farming, and aids carbon sequestration and climate action.**

Sundarbans in West Bengal

Geographical location

- It is a vast contiguous mangrove forest ecosystem present in the **coastal region of Bay of Bengal**
- It spread over **India and Bangladesh** on the **Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna delta.**

Conservation efforts

- **UNESCO World Heritage site** - Sundarbans National Park was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987.
- **Biosphere Reserve** - Sunderbans was designated as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2001.

- **Wetland of International Importance** - Sundarban Wetland, India was recognised as the 'Wetland of International Importance' under the Ramsar Convention in January 2019.
- **Flora and Fauna** - Sunderban National Park is known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species and is **home to the Royal Bengal tiger, Gangetic dolphins and Estuarine crocodile**

Indian wolf

Syllabus: GS3/Species in News

News

- **The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has for the first time evaluated the Indian wolf (Canis lupus pallipes)**

Indian wolf (Canis lupus pallipes)

- **Distribution** - The Indian Wolf is primarily found in **India and Pakistan, with its historic range confined south of the Himalayas**.
- It is mainly found in sixteen states with major populations in **Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Karnataka**.
- **Threats : Habitat loss**

Draft Shram Shakti Niti, 2025 Unveiled

Syllabus: GS2/Government Policy & Intervention

Context

- Recently, the Union Ministry of Labour & Employment has unveiled the Draft National Labour and Employment Policy, titled as Shram Shakti Niti 2025, aimed at reshaping India's labour landscape.

Shram Shakti Niti 2025 or National Labour and Employment Policy

- **Objective** - It aims to build a **labour ecosystem that is inclusive, equitable, and resilient, ensuring dignity,**

protection, and opportunity for every worker.

Key Features of the Policy

- **Universal and Portable Social Security:** Policy aims to establish **universal and portable social security for all workers**.
- It envisions the creation of a **Universal Social Security Account (USSA)** by **integrating key welfare and insurance systems** such as:
 1. Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO);
 2. Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC);
 3. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY);
 4. e-SHRAM portal
 5. State welfare boards.
- **Skilling & Employment:** The policy envisions a **skill-employment creation** with the help of programs like **Skill India, the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana**.
- These will be supported by a digitally enhanced **National Career Service-Digital Public Infrastructure (NCS-DPI)**, designed to **connect talent with opportunity across India's towns, cities, and MSME clusters**.
- **Nodal ministry** - The **Ministry of Labour & Employment** aims to act as National Employment Facilitator and regulator enabling convergence among workers, employers, and training institutions.

Invasive Alien Species

Syllabus: GS3/Environment

In News

- Conservation scientists warn that **invasive alien species are destroying local biodiversity and habitats in India**.

Invasive alien species

- **Definition:** They are **non-native organisms introduced accidentally or intentionally** (e.g., ornamental fish, decorative plants, or for land restoration).
- They often **spread rapidly, outcompeting native species, harming biodiversity** and damaging habitats.

Common Examples in India

- **Lantana camara:** Invades forests, outcompetes native plants, and hinders regeneration.
- **Parthenium hysterophorus (Congress grass):** Spreads over farmland and causes allergic reactions.
- **Eichhornia crassipes (Water hyacinth):** Chokes lakes and rivers, depleting oxygen and affecting fisheries.
- **African Catfish (Clarias gariepinus):** Outcompetes native fish species, threatening aquatic biodiversity.

Control and Management Measures

- Stricter quarantine checks on imports, trade, and shipping.
- Ballast water management in ships to prevent marine invasions.
- Mechanical Control: Manual removal, cutting, dredging, or uprooting.
- Chemical Control: Use of herbicides or pesticides — applied cautiously to avoid ecological harm.

Biometric, Wearable Glass Authentication for UPI Payments

Syllabus: GS3/Economy

Context

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and the Reserve Bank of India launched biometric and wearable glass recognition-based authentication for UPI transactions at the Global Fintech Fest 2025.

About

- **Face & Biometric Authentication:** Users can authenticate UPI payments using face recognition or biometrics stored in Aadhaar.
- **Authentication occurs entirely on the user's device, ensuring data privacy and security.**

Hands-Free Payments via Smart Glasses:

- Wearable smart glasses enable small-value transactions using voice commands.
- Users can scan a QR code and complete payments without using a phone, PIN, or touch.
- Multi-Signatory UPI Accounts: Allows joint account holders to authorize payments collectively.
- **Enhances convenience, transparency, and control for family or business accounts.**

Additional Information - National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- **Established in** - It serves as an umbrella body for the operation of retail payments in India.
- **Established by** - Reserve Bank of India along with the Indian Bank's Association.
- **Established under** - It was set up under the provisions of the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.**

Products of NPCI

1. RuPay
2. National Common Mobility Card
3. Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM)
4. Unified Payments Interface (UPI)
5. Bharat Bill Payment System

Central, State co-op Banks Brought under Ambit of RBI's Ombudsman scheme **Syllabus: GS3/Economy**

Context

- State co-operative banks and central co-operative banks will come under the

ambit of the Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021.

Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS)

- It was launched in 2021,
- **Objective-** to provide customers a speedy, cost-effective, and expeditious grievance redress mechanism.
- **Coverage:** All commercial banks, regional rural banks (RRBs), state co-operative banks, central co-operative banks, and scheduled/non-scheduled primary (urban) co-operative banks with a deposit size of ₹50 crore or more.
- All Non-Banking Financial Companies (excluding housing finance companies) with asset size of ₹100 crore or more that accept deposits or have a customer interface.

Significance:

- Strengthens consumer protection in the financial sector.
- Enhances trust and accountability in banks and NBFCs

PM-KUSUM Programme Syllabus:GS3/Environment

In News

- The Union government is planning to promote the PM-KUSUM in African and island nations through the International Solar Alliance.

PM-KUSUM Scheme

- **Launched in - 2019**
- **Implementation - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.**
- **Aim:** To provide financial support to farmers for installing solar-powered irrigation systems like solar pumps and grid-connected solar plants.
- **Significance-** To deliver **affordable and reliable solar energy** to the agricultural

sector, reducing irrigation costs and cutting pollution caused by diesel use.

- **Target:** The scheme aims to add about 34,800 MW of solar capacity by March 2026.

93rd Air Force Day Syllabus: GS3/Defence

Context

- **The Indian Air Force (IAF) celebrated its 93rd anniversary with a ceremonial parade at Air Force Station Hindon.**

Indian Air Force (IAF)

- **Establishment** - It is the air arm of the Indian Armed Forces, officially established on **October 8, 1932.**
- **Mission** - to safeguard Indian airspace and conduct aerial warfare.
- **Uniqueness** - it is the fourth largest air force in the world,
- **Motto** - "Touch the sky with glory," is inspired by the Bhagavad Gita.
- **Theme: The 2025 theme is focused on the IAF's contribution to Operation Sindoor.**

Supreme Court on Retrospective Application of Surrogacy Act Syllabus: GS2/ Health

In News

- **In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that the age restrictions under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, cannot be applied retrospectively to couples who had frozen embryos and initiated the surrogacy process before the Act came into force.**

Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021

- **Definition of Surrogacy** - The Act defines surrogacy as a practice where a **woman gives birth to a child for an intending couple with the intention to hand it over to them after the birth.**

- It is permitted **only for altruistic purposes** or for couples who suffer proven infertility or disease.
- Surrogacy is **prohibited for commercial purposes** including for sale, prostitution or any other forms of exploitation.
- **Abortion:** Abortion of such a fetus is **allowed only with the consent of the surrogate mother and the authorities and must adhere to the provisions of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.**
- **Eligibility and Conditions for Couples:** A couple should procure certificates of eligibility and essentiality in order to have a child via surrogacy.
 - The couple is deemed 'eligible' if they have been **married for five years, the wife is aged between 23-50 years and the husband is between 26-55 years.**
 - The couple must **not have any living child** (biological, adopted or surrogate.)
 - **A child with mental or physical disabilities, or one suffering from a life-threatening disorder has been exempted** from the above criterion.
 - The couple can get an '**essential**' certificate if suffering from proven infertility of either partner certified by a District Medical Board.
 - **They must also have insurance coverage for 16 months for the surrogate mother,** covering any postpartum complications.
- **Eligibility to be a surrogate** - A surrogate mother has to be a **close relative of the couple, a married woman with a child of her own, aged between 25-35 years, who has been a surrogate only once in her life.**
- She must also possess a certificate of **medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy.**

- **Regulation:** The Centre and State governments will constitute a **National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and State Surrogacy Boards (SSB) respectively.**
- **Offences:** Offences under the Act include **commercial surrogacy, selling of embryos, exploiting, abandoning a surrogate child etc.**
- These may invite up to **10 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs. 10 lakh.**
- **Importance :** The Act expands access to reproductive options for individuals and couples who are unable to conceive or carry a pregnancy due to medical reasons.

World Mental Health Day **Syllabus: GS2/Health**

Context

- **On October 10, every year, World Mental Health Day highlights the extent of mental illness in the world.**
- **Global Mental Health Issue (as per WHO): More than a billion people are living with mental health disorders.**

World Mental Health Day

Most Common Mental Health Disorders: Anxiety and depressive disorders together accounted for more than **two-thirds of all mental health conditions** in 2021.

Mental Health in India: India has a 13.7% lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in the country.

According to the latest NCRB data, 1,71,418 suicides were reported in India in 2023, a 0.3% increase from 2022, with **Maharashtra recording the highest number.**

Even more alarming, **student suicides reached 13,892,** a 64.9% rise over the past decade.

Rise in Mental Health Issues Among Youth

- **Excessive internet & social media use:** Leads to anxiety, sleep disorders, and attention issues.

- **Lack of family engagement:** Weak social support systems negatively impact emotional well-being.
- **Hostile workplaces & long working hours:** Cause burnout, stress, and reduced productivity.
- **Unhealthy lifestyle choices:** Ultra-processed foods and lack of physical activity worsen mental and physical health.

Understanding Mental Wellbeing

The India's National Mental Health Survey defines mental well-being as a multidimensional concept that includes:

1. Emotional health: Managing stress and emotions effectively.
2. Social health: Building healthy relationships and a supportive community.
3. Cognitive health: Enhancing focus, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities.
4. Physical health: Maintaining overall fitness through a healthy lifestyle.

Key Initiatives by the Government of India

- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** The act **decriminalised suicide attempts in India** and also included WHO guidelines in the categorisation of mental illnesses.
- The most significant provision in the act was "advance directives", which allowed individuals with mental illnesses to decide the course of their treatment.
- It also **restricted the use of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) and banned its use on minors**, finally introducing measures to tackle stigma in Indian society.
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017:** The Act acknowledges **mental illness as a disability** and seeks to enhance the **Rights and Entitlements of the Disabled**.
- In **Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh**, the Supreme Court of India **reinforced mental health as a fundamental right under Article 21**.

- **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP):** Delivered in 767 districts, offering services like **suicide prevention, stress management, and counseling**.
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme (NTMHP):** Launched in 2022 to provide access to mental health services through **53 Tele MANAS Cells across 36 states/UTs**.

Atacama Desert

Syllabus: GS1/ Geography

In News

- **A rare burst of winter rains has triggered in Chile's Atacama Desert**

Atacama Desert

- **Location:** It is the **driest desert in the world, located in northern Chile**.
- It is nestled between the **Andes Mountains on the east and the Pacific Ocean on the west**.
- It forms a continuous strip for nearly 1,000 km along the narrow coast of the northern third of Chile.
- **Bordered by:** It is bordered by Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia
- It also hosts 12 volcanoes, mainly located in the western outliers of the Andes.
- **Rainfall:** Average rainfall in this region is about 1 mm per year. Some locations within the desert have never had any rainfall whatsoever.
- **Temperature:** Temperatures are comparatively mild throughout the year. The average temperature in the desert is about 63 degrees F (18 degrees C).
- **Natural Resources:** This region has the largest natural supply of **Sodium Nitrate, which can be used for producing fertilizers and explosives**, amongst other things.
- **Chinchorro Mummies:** The oldest artificially mummified human remains have been found in the Atacama Desert.

Africa's Great Green Wall project

Syllabus: GS2/IR

Context

- **Despite ambitious goals to restore 100 million hectares of land across Africa, the Great Green Wall project faces significant challenges in Senegal.**

Africa's Great Green Wall project

- **Launched by - African Union in 2007,**
- **Objective - It aims to combat desertification and land degradation across the Sahel region by creating a mosaic of green and productive landscapes.**

Key aspects of the Great Green Wall

- **Location:** The project focuses on the Sahel region, a semi-arid zone that stretches across Africa, forming a transition between the Sahara Desert to the north and the savannas to the south.
- **Countries involved:** Originally involving 11 countries, the initiative now includes over 20 nations across Africa's width, from Senegal in the west to Djibouti in the east. Core participating countries include Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan.

Objectives

- **Land restoration: To restore 100 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.**
- **Climate change mitigation: To sequester 250 million tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere.**
- **Livelihood improvement: To create 10 million green jobs for local communities, enhancing food security and reducing poverty.**

Additional Information - African Union

- The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that

make up the countries of the African Continent.

- It was officially **launched in 2002** as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).
- **Aim:** integration of African states to drive Africa's growth and economic development.

UN to Cut 25% of its Global Peacekeeping Force

Syllabus:GS2/IR

In News

- **The United Nations is going to reduce its global peacekeeping operations by 25%, with 13,000-14,000 personnel expected to withdraw from nine missions due to significant U.S. funding cuts.**

United Nations peacekeepers

- **The United Nations (UN) Peacekeepers, commonly known as the 'Blue Helmets'**
- They are **military, police, and civilian personnel deployed by the United Nations.**
- **Objective - to help countries transition from conflict to peace.**
- **Duties - It includes protecting civilians, preventing conflict, strengthening security, and supporting peace processes.**
- Peacekeeping operations are authorized by the UN Security Council and supported by member states, with personnel drawn from many countries around the world.

Saksham

Syllabus:GS3/Defence

In News

- The Indian Army has initiated the **procurement of SAKSHAM (Situational Awareness for Kinetic Soft and Hard Kill Assets Management).**

Saksham

- It is an **indigenously developed Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) Grid**

System, to bolster operational readiness against emerging drone threats.

- It is a modular Command and Control (C2) system that **integrates real-time sensor data, AI-driven analytics, and counter-drone capabilities to secure the Tactical Battlefield Space (TBS).**
- It was developed in collaboration with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).**

Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Visited India **Syllabus: GS2/IR**

Context

- **Afghanistan's Taliban foreign minister met external affairs minister S. Jaishankar in New Delhi.**

India-Taliban Diplomatic Engagement

- **Assurance for Terror Concerns:** Afghanistan reassured India that it would not allow any group to use its territory against another country
- **India's Embassy Reopening:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar announced that India would reopen its full embassy in Kabul.
- **Diplomatic Context:** Around a dozen countries — including China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey — already operate embassies in Kabul.
- **Strategic Balance:** The move reflects India's pragmatic approach to maintain influence in Afghanistan amid Pakistan and China's growing presence.
- **Counterterrorism Focus:** India's emphasis on Afghan soil not being used for terrorism directly addresses concerns about groups like LeT and JeM.

National Red List Roadmap and Vision 2025-2030

Syllabus:GS3/Environment

In News

- **India has officially launched its National Red List Roadmap and Vision 2025-2030**

at the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025.

- **It marks a transformative step in species assessment and conservation planning.**

National Red List Roadmap and Vision 2025-2030

- **Mandate -** It envisions publishing **Red Data Books for both flora and fauna**, providing authoritative documentation of threatened species.
- It is developed by the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Botanical Survey of India (BSI), IUCN India, and the Centre for Species Survival.**
- India aims to publish National Red Data Books for both flora and fauna by 2030.

Key Features

- It will assess nearly **11,000 species of plants and animals by 2030**, including terrestrial and marine biodiversity
- It adheres to **IUCN Red List protocols and supports India's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.**
- It includes a centralized digital platform for data collection, monitoring, and public access to conservation status.

Relevance for India

- India, **one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries**, is home to **four of the 36 global biodiversity hotspots**, the Himalayas, Western Ghats, Indo-Burma, and Sundaland.
- It occupies just **2.4% of the world's land area** and it harbours nearly **8% of global flora and 7.5% of global fauna**, with over **28% of plants and 30% of animals being endemic.**

Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project

Syllabus: GS1/Geography

In News

- Recently, an apex committee of the Environment Ministry has accorded a fresh environmental clearance to the Sawalkote hydroelectric project.

Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project

- **Origin:** First proposed 1984,
- **Location** - It is a run-of-the-river hydroelectric initiative **located on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir.**
- **Developed by** - National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).
- **Energy capacity** - It is one of India's largest hydroelectric projects in the Indus basin, with a **proposed capacity of 1,856 MW.**

Additional Information - Chenab river

Bharat Taxi

Syllabus: GS2/ Governance

In News

- A new cooperative ride-hailing platform called "Bharat Taxi" is set to launch in December 2025.

Bharat Taxi

- **Launched by** - The platform is being built with support from the National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and will integrate with national digital platforms like DigiLocker and UMANG.
- **Promotion:** The initiative is jointly promoted by a number of major cooperative and financial institutions, including NCDC, IFFCO, Amul, KRIBHCO, NAFED, NABARD, NDDB, and NCEL.
- **Mission:** It aims to create a driver-owned platform that provides higher earnings for drivers, transparent fares for riders, and an inclusive mobility ecosystem.

- **Significance** - The service is designed to **compete with private ride-hailing services like Ola and Uber**, without surge pricing, by leveraging a cooperative pricing model.

CCRAS Launches SPARK 4.0

Syllabus: GS2/ Governance

In News

- The **Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)**, under the **Ministry of Ayush**, announced the fourth edition of its **flagship Studentship Program for Ayurveda Research Ken (SPARK) for 2025-26.**

Studentship Program for Ayurveda Research Ken (SPARK)

- **Objective** - It aims to **promote scientific curiosity and research skills among undergraduate Ayurveda students** across the country.

Features -

- Under SPARK-4.0, **300 Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) students** from colleges recognised by the **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM)** would be receiving a **studentship of ₹50,000**, disbursed as **₹25,000 per month over two months.**
- The student would get **short-term independent research projects** and a **certificate on completion.**
- **Significance** - to **strengthen Ayurveda's research ecosystem.**

Three Major Ports Recognised as Green Hydrogen Hubs Under The National Green Hydrogen Mission

Syllabus:GS3/Environment

In News

- The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has designated **Deendayal, V.O. Chidambaranar, and Paradip ports** as

Green Hydrogen Hubs under the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Green Hydrogen

- **Green Hydrogen:** It is produced using electrolysis of water with electricity generated by renewable energy.
- **Benefit:** It is a clean burning element that can decarbonise a range of sectors including iron and steel, chemicals, and transportation.
- Hydrogen can be stored for long periods of time which can be used to produce electricity using fuel cells.

National Green Hydrogen Mission

- **Aim:** To make India a global hub for the production of green hydrogen.
- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of New and Renewable Energy(MNRE)

Additional Information - Hydrogen

- **Symbol and Atomic number** - Hydrogen is the chemical element with the **symbol H and atomic number 1**.
- Hydrogen is the **lightest element and the most abundant chemical substance in the universe**, constituting roughly 75% of all normal matter.
- It is **colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-toxic, and highly combustible gas**.

Biomedical Research Career Programme Syllabus: GS3/Science and Technology

Context

- **The Union Cabinet has approved Phase III of the Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP).**

Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP)

- It is a strategic investment in **India's health and innovation landscape, supported by a ₹1,500 crore Indo-UK partnership** that

aligns global expertise with national priorities.

- **Aim:** To build a world-class research ecosystem in biomedical sciences, clinical, and public health research
- **Expected Outcomes:** The initiative targets training 2,000+ researchers, high-impact publications, patentable discoveries, and peer recognition.

THE World University Rankings 2026 Syllabus: Miscellaneous

Context

- **Oxford University has maintained its global number one ranking for the tenth consecutive year, according to the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2026.**

THE World University Rankings 2026

- Published by - **Times Higher Education**
- **Objective** - It evaluates 2,191 universities from 115 countries and territories across 18 performance indicators in five areas: **teaching, research environment, research quality, international outlook, and industry impact.**
- Beyond the top 100, universities are assigned "rank bands" instead of specific positions.

University rankings 2026: Highlights

- **India:** Ranked as the **second most-represented country, behind only the U.S., with a record 128 institutions** — up from 107 last year and just 19 in 2016.
- **The Indian Institute of Science is placed in the 201–250 rank band, followed by Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences at 351–400.**
- **China:** Five universities are in the top 40, up from three last year. **Tsinghua University, ranked 12th, remains Asia's top university.**

- **United States: Seven of the top 10 positions are occupied by the US.**

Official Visit of the UK Prime Minister to India **Syllabus: GS2/IR**

In News

- **The Prime Ministers of India and the UK have reaffirmed the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the recent official UK PM visit to India.**

Key Outcomes

- **Economic & Trade:** Strengthening of the **UK-India Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)**, expected to **boost market access, reduce tariffs, and generate jobs.**
- **Climate & Energy:** Establishment of advanced R&D centres in AI and climate change, and launch of **Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory, including a new campus at IIT-ISM Dhanbad.**
- Agreed to cooperate on Offshore Wind and through the **Global Clean Power Alliance (GCPA).**
- **Launched the India-UK Climate Finance Initiative.**
- **Defence and Security:** Enhanced cooperation on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, including establishing a **Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence (RMSCE)** under India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.
- **India-UK Connectivity and Innovation Centre**

Appointment of District Judges **Syllabus: GS2/Polity and Governance**

Context

- The Supreme Court unanimously held that judicial officers who have completed seven

years of practice as advocates before joining the service will be eligible for direct recruitment as District Judges under Article 233.

Eligibility Expansion for District Judges

- Previously, only practising lawyers with seven years' experience could be directly appointed; in-service judicial officers were excluded.
- The Court held that Article 233(2) provides for qualification for advocates but does not specify any separate qualification for in-service candidates.

Appointment of District Judges

- **Authority of Appointment:** District judges are appointed by the Governor of the State, but only after consulting the High Court of that state.
- This ensures judicial independence, giving the High Court a significant role in selection.
- **Eligibility:** Traditionally, appointments were made from:
 - Members of the State Judicial Service (subordinate judicial officers), or practising advocates with a minimum of 7 years' experience.
 - Recent judicial interpretations have clarified that judicial officers with 7 years of prior Bar experience before joining the judicial service are also eligible for elevation to District Judge.



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