

# Factly Weekly

**Compilation**

2023

**For UPSC CSE Prelims  
Exam**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Week  
December 2023**

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## Subject: Polity and Nation

### Post Office Bill 2023

#### Why in the News?

Recently the Post Office Bill, 2023 has been introduced into the parliament seeking to repeal the Indian Post Office Act of 1898.

#### What are the Key Provisions of the Bill?

1. **Aim-** The Bill aims to “**consolidate and amend the law** relating to Post Office in India,” which today provides many services beyond simply mail delivery.
2. **Interception of Shipments- Section 9** grants the Centre the authority, via notification, to empower officers for the interception, opening, or detention of items in the interest of state security, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergencies, public safety, or compliance of other laws.
3. **It also permits post officers to transfer postal items to customs authorities** in cases where they are suspected of containing prohibited items or if such items are subject to duty.
4. **Exemptions from Liability- Section 10** exempts the Post Office and its officers from “any liability for loss, mis-delivery, delay, or damage during services, except as prescribed.
5. **Offences and Penalties-** The majority of offenses and penalties stipulated in the Post Office Act of 1898 have been **eliminated**, with the **exception of non-payment cases, which are recoverable as arrears of land revenue.**
6. **Exclusive Privileges-**The current Bill has **eliminated Section 4 of the 1898 Act, which granted the Centre the exclusive privilege** of transporting all letters from one location to another by post.
7. The 2023 Bill, for the first time, **regulates private courier services** by bringing it under its ambit.
8. It **extends the powers of the Director General of Postal Services beyond postal operations**, granting them the authority to oversee activities related to extra services specified by the central government and establish fees without the need for parliamentary approval.

### Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Terms of Office) Bill, 2023

#### Why in the News?

Rajya Sabha has passed The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Office and Terms of Office) Bill, 2023.

#### How is the Election Commission currently appointed under the Constitution?

1. **Article 324** provides for the composition of the Election Commission of India (ECI). It consists of the CEC and two other ECs.
2. The Constitution provides that the appointment of the CEC and EC, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, be made by the President.
3. The existing parliamentary law provides for their conditions of service but is silent with respect to appointments, thereby raising concerns for independence of ECI.
4. The appointments till date are made by the President, that is the Central Government and there is no mechanism for ensuring independence during the appointment process.

### What did the Supreme Court rule on appointment of EC and CECs?

**Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India Case:** The Supreme Court laid down that the CEC and ECs shall be appointed by a committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the CJI and the Leader of the Opposition or the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

– It said that this mechanism shall be in place till Parliament enacts a law on this matter.

### What are the Key Provisions of the CEC and EC Bill, 2023?

**Replaces:** The Bill replaces the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.

**Purpose:** To provide for the appointment, salary and removal of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs).

#### Key Provisions of the bill:

1. The CEC and other ECs shall be appointed from persons who are holding or have held a post equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.
2. A search committee, led by the Law and Justice Minister, will suggest five candidates to the selection committee composed of the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a nominated Union Cabinet Minister.

**Note:** The bill removes the CJI from the selection process that was laid down in the Anoop Baranwal case.

3. Based on the recommendation from the selection committee, the President will then appoint the CEC and ECs.

## The Telecommunications Bill 2023

### Why in the News?

The Telecommunications Bill, 2023 seeks to **substitute** the Indian Telegraph Act 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933, and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950. It also **amends** the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act, 1997.

### What are the key provisions of the Telecommunications bill 2023?

1. **Objective** – The Bill revises regulations related to the development, operation, and expansion of telecommunication services, networks, spectrum assignment, etc.
2. **Authorisation for telecom-related activities** – Obtaining **prior approval from the central government** is mandatory for (i) providing telecom services, (ii) establishing, operating, or expanding telecom networks, or (iii) possessing radio equipment.
3. **Assignment of spectrum: Spectrum will be assigned by auction**, except for specified uses. In some specific use cases, it will be allocated on an administrative basis (by the Government). These include: (i) national security and defence, (ii) disaster management, (iii) weather forecasting, (iv) transport, (v) satellite services such as DTH and satellite telephony, and (vi) BSNL, MTNL, and public broadcasting services. The Central government may re-purpose or re-assign any frequency range and permit the sharing, leasing, and surrender of spectrum.

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4. **Powers of interception and search** – Government can suspend, assume control of, or oversee any telecom service in case of **public emergency or national security concerns**. A government authorized officer may search premises or vehicles for unauthorized telecom equipment.
5. **Digital Bharat Nidhi**: An earlier fund to provide telecom services in underserved areas has been renamed as Digital Bharat Nidhi, expanding its usage to include R&D.
6. **Exclusion of OTT Apps and Communication Platforms**- The bill excludes Over-the-Top (OTT) apps and communication platforms like WhatsApp from being classified as telecom services.

### Rules for Suspension of MPs – 141 Opposition MPs suspended

#### Why in the News?

141 Opposition MPs from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have been suspended for disrupting Parliamentary proceedings.

#### What are the rules on the suspension of MPs?

The Presiding Officers — the Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha plays the major role in suspensions of Members of Parliament (MPs).

**In Lok Sabha**, the Speaker acts in accordance with Rules 373, 374, and 374A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business. **In Rajya Sabha**, the Chairman acts as per Rules 255 and 256 of the Rules.

1. **Rule 373 and Rule 255**: The presiding officers can direct an MP to withdraw from the House for any disorderly conduct.
2. **Rule 374 and Rule 256**: The presiding officer can “name” the legislator if the MP continues to disrupt the House proceedings, after that, the House can move a motion to suspend the MP until the end of the session.
3. **Rule 374A**: It was incorporated in the Rule Book of Lok Sabha in 2001. It empowers the Speaker to deal with grave and disorderly conduct. As per this rule, an MP “named” by the Speaker shall automatically stand suspended for a period of five days or the remaining part of the session. This rule removes the need for the House to pass a motion for suspension.

– **Note**: Rajya Sabha has not incorporated this provision in its procedures.

#### How long can MPs be suspended for?

Maximum for the remaining part of the session only.

But the House at any point of time can reinstate a suspended member by passing a motion.

#### Can courts intervene in the matter of the suspension of MPs?

Article 122 of the Constitution says parliamentary proceedings cannot be questioned before a court. However, in some cases, courts have intervened in the procedural functioning of legislatures.

## Shakti Sadan: Rehabilitation of Trafficking Survivors

### Why in the News?

The erstwhile 'SwadharGreh' and 'Ujjawala Homes', under 'Mission Shakti', have been merged and will now be known as 'Shakti Sadan'. It is aimed at rehabilitation of women trafficking survivors.

### What is Shakti Sadan?

1. Shakti Sadan is part of Mission Shakti of Ministry of Women and Child Development.
2. It serves as an **Integrated Relief and Rehabilitation Home for women in distress** situations and difficult circumstances.
3. Shakti Sadan residents will receive shelter, food, clothing, counseling, primary health care, and other essential needs.
4. Residents will also be given vocational training, help with bank account openings, and access social security benefits through relevant departmental schemes.
5. So far, 445 Shakti Sadans are functional, benefitting about 10955 women.

## Criteria for SC status in India

### Why in the News?

National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) directs States to grant Scheduled Caste status to the Namashudra, Paundra and Rajvanshi sub-castes of rehabilitated Bengali society.

### What is the Status of these Sub-Castes of Rehabilitated Bengali people in India?

1. The people who came from East Pakistan in 1947 were rehabilitated in 18 States by the Government of India since 1960.
2. In 8 states, Namashudra, Paundra and Rajvanshi sub-castes of Bengali society have been given the status of Scheduled Caste.
3. However, in the remaining 10 states i.e Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Karnataka, they remain without Scheduled Caste status.
4. NCSC will take action under **Article 338** of the Constitution of India to grant them Scheduled Caste status.

**Note-** Under Article 338, the NCSC monitor safeguards for these groups as per the Constitution and other laws.

### What is the Criteria for SC Status in India?

1. **Article 341(1)** of the Indian Constitution empowers the **president to designate castes** in the country and specific states as Scheduled Castes.
2. Inclusion in the SC list is based on significant social, educational, and economic backwardness resulting from **historical untouchability**, though not explicitly mentioned in the constitution.
3. The concerned State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations make proposal for inclusion in the SC list. Such a proposal must be **approved by the Registrar General of India (RGI)** and the **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)**.
4. As per Article 341(2), **Parliament may by law make further amendments** to the list of Scheduled Castes as notified by the President.

## **Gyanvapi Mosque: Religious character of a place of worship can be decided only in a trial, says Allahabad HC**

### **Why in the News?**

The Allahabad High Court has ruled that the Places of Worship Act, 1991 does not prevent lawsuits seeking to determine the religious character of a place of worship or to reclaim a place of worship.

### **What is the case about?**

1. A petition was filed in 1991 seeking the restoration of a temple where the Gyanvapi mosque now exists (in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh).
2. Against this, several petitions were filed in the Allahabad High Court by the Gyanvapi Mosque Committee and the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board.
3. The petitioners argued that the 1991 lawsuit was not maintainable as it was barred by The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

### **What did the High Court rule on this?**

1. **Lawsuit maintainable:** The Court dismissed the petition and ruled that the lawsuit is not barred by the Places of Religious Worship Act, 1991
2. **1991 Act not an absolute bar:** The Court ruled that the Act isn't an absolute barrier to seeking legal recourse regarding the religious character of a place of worship.
3. **Religious character undefined:** The Act does not define "religious character," leaving it to the courts to determine on a case-by-case basis through evidence.
4. **Challenging conversions that took place before the Act:** The court also held that if the "conversion" of a religious place had taken place "much before" the commencement of the Act, relevant party could still move the court.

- In the Gyanvapi case, the Hindu petitioners said that the temple was brought down by the "Farman of Emperor Aurangzeb in the year 1669" which is much before the commencement of the 1991 Act.

## **People with blood disorders not eligible for reservation in jobs**

### **Why in the News?**

According to the Ministry of Social Justice, people with blood disorders like thalassemia, haemophilia, and sickle cell disease are not eligible for job reservations in government roles under the Persons with Disabilities category.

### **What is the Issue?**

1. The **Right to Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD), 2016** provides for **reservation of 4% of government jobs for people with specific disabilities**, such as total loss of vision, low vision, complete loss of hearing etc.
2. While the three diseases were **included in the list of disabilities** under the RPwD Act, 2016, the government held that as per Section 34 of the Act, persons with blood disorders including Thalassemia are **not eligible for reservation in government jobs**.



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**Note-** Under Section 34 of RPwD, 2016, each government establishment is required to set aside 1% of total vacancies for individuals with benchmark disabilities arising of autism, intellectual disability, specific learning disability, and mental illnesses.

3. There are concerns that the exclusion of these blood disorders from job reservations undermines the intended purpose of the legislation.

### What are these blood disorders?

Specifications	Details
<b>Thalassemia</b>	It is a genetic blood disorder causing abnormal hemoglobin production and anemia
<b>Haemophilia</b>	It is a genetic bleeding disorder that <b>hinders the blood's clotting ability</b> .
<b>Sickle cell disease</b>	It is a genetic blood disorder involving <b>abnormal hemoglobin</b> , causing misshapen red blood cells.

## Lok Sabha passes Bills to replace British-era criminal laws

### Why in the News?

Lok Sabha has passed 3 bills to replace British-era criminal laws. These includes Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill (BNS), Bharatiya Sakshya Bill (BS) and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill (BNSS).

### What is Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill (BNS)?

**Replaces:** Indian Penal Code, 1860

#### Key Provisions of the bill:

1. The Bill retains most offences from the IPC. It **adds community service** as a form of punishment.
2. **Sedition is no longer an offence**. Instead, there is a new offence for acts endangering the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.
3. The bill, for the first time, **defines terrorism and adds it as a separate offence in general criminal law**. It is defined as an act that intends to threaten the unity, integrity, security or economic security of the country, or strike terror in the people.
4. For the first time, **capital punishment has been introduced for the offence of mob lynching**

### What is Bharatiya Sakshya Bill (BS)?

**Replaces:** Indian Evidence Act, 1872

#### Key Provisions of the bill:

1. Indian Evidence Act (IEA), 1872 provides for **two kinds of evidence** – documentary and oral. Documentary evidence includes primary (original documents) and secondary (that proves the contents of the original). The Bill retains this distinction.
2. The bill classifies **electronic records as primary evidence**. It expands such records to include information stored in semiconductor memory or any communication devices (smartphones, laptops).

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3. The bill **expands secondary evidence** to include: (i) oral and written admissions, and (ii) the testimony of a person who has examined the document and is skilled in the examination of documents.

### What is Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill (BNSS)?

**Replaces:** Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CrPC)

#### Key Provisions of the bill:

1. The bill mandates **forensic investigation** for offences punishable with seven years of imprisonment or more.
2. All **trials, inquiries and proceedings may be held in electronic mode**. Production of electronic communication devices, likely to contain digital evidence will be allowed for investigation, inquiry, or trial.
3. If a proclaimed **offender has absconded to evade trial** and there is no immediate prospect of arresting him, the trial can be conducted and **judgment pronounced in his absence**.
4. The bill permits **police custody of up to 90 days** as against the 15-day custody allowed till now.

## Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill passed by Lok Sabha

### Why in the News?

The Lok Sabha has passed the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023. Rajya Sabha had already passed this bill in the previous session.

### What is the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023?

**Replaces:** Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867.

#### Key Provisions of the bill:

1. **Grant of title allotment and Certificate of Registration Periodicals:** The Bill provides for an online mechanism to apply for title verification and grant of certificate of registration from the Press Registrar General.
2. **Limited Role of District magistrate/ local authority:** The publishers would no longer be required to file a declaration. Furthermore, printing presses would also not be required to furnish any such declaration; instead, only intimation would be sufficient.
3. **Facsimile edition of a foreign periodical** can be printed in India with prior approval of the Central Government and its registration with the Press Registrar General.
4. **Books which were part of the Act** have been taken away from the purview of the bill as books as a subject are administered by the Ministry of Education.
5. **Substantially decriminalized:** Now, the maximum jail term of six months applies only in extreme situations. For example, if a publication continues printing without a registration certificate despite a six-month warning from the Press Registrar General. Moreover, for certain violations, financial penalties have been proposed instead of conviction as earlier.
6. **Restrictions on who can bring out periodical:** A person who has been convicted by any court for an offence involving terrorist act or unlawful activity or having done anything against the security of the State shall not be permitted to bring out a periodical.
7. **Cancellation of registration:** In the 1867 Act, only the DM could cancel the declaration of a periodical. The Bill empowers the Press Registrar General to suspend/cancel the Certificate of Registration.

8) **Press and Registration Appellate Board:** It is headed by Chairperson, Press Council of India. It will deal with issues related to registration.

## Subject: International Relations

### INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM (IONS) 2023

#### Why in the News?

Recently the 8th edition of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs (CoC) held in Bangkok, Thailand.

#### What is Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)?

1. It is a **biennial forum** conceived by the Indian Navy in 2008.
2. **Purpose-** It is a voluntary initiative that seeks to **increase maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region**. It provides an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues.
3. The inaugural edition of IONS was held in Feb 2008 at New Delhi, with Indian Navy as the Chair for two years (2008 – 2010)
4. IONS strength is 34 (**25 members and 9 observer states**).

#### What are the Highlights of the IONS 2023 Conclave of Chiefs?

1. Conducted by Royal Thai Navy at Bangkok, Thailand.
2. **Thailand took over as the IONS Chair.**
3. The **flag designed by India was chosen as the official IONS Flag.**
4. India assumed the co-Chair position for IONS Working Groups on Maritime Security and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) for the upcoming cycle.
5. **The Republic of Korea Navy was added as the latest observer.**

**Note-** India is set to assume the role of Chair for IONS (2025-27) during the 9th CoC, scheduled to be held in India at the end of 2025.

## Subject: Indian Economy

### States can borrow an extra ₹2 lakh crore this fiscal year

#### Why in the News?

The Finance Ministry has allowed states to access approximately ₹2.04 lakh crore overall as additional borrowings beyond their net borrowing limits for the current fiscal year.

#### What is the recent decision taken by the Centre?

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1. The Centre has allowed extra borrowing of Rs 60,876.80 crore to States, on top of their net borrowing ceilings of 3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).
2. 22 states have been granted this additional borrowing for meeting pension liabilities under the National Pension System (NPS).

**Note-** The NPS has been overseeing government employee retirement savings since 2004.

### What are the borrowing ceiling for States?

1. The normal net borrowing ceiling for states is fixed at 3 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).
  - For FY24, this is equivalent to Rs 8,59,988 crore as recommended by the Fifteenth Finance Commission.
2. States are allocated an **extra 0.5 per cent of GSDP** in borrowing capacity as a performance-based incentive for power sector reforms.
  - According to this, States are eligible to borrow Rs 1.43 lakh crore on the recommendation of the power ministry for FY24.

### What are the Related Constitutional provisions?

**Article 293(3)** -A State may not without the consent of the Government of India raise any loan if there is still outstanding any part of a loan which has been made to the State by the Government of India or by its predecessor Government

- In Practice, the Centre has been utilizing this authority following the guidance provided by the Finance Commission.

## RAMP Programme: Union Minister launches three sub-schemes under it

### Why in the News?

Union Minister for MSME has launched three sub-schemes under the aegis of the RAMP programme.

### What are the three sub schemes launched under the RAMP Programme?

1. **MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme (MSE GIFT Scheme):** It aims to help MSMEs adopt green technology with interest subvention and credit guarantee support.
2. **MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme):** It aims to support circular economy projects through credit subsidy. This will lead to realizing the dream of MSME sector towards zero emissions by 2070.
3. **MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments:** It aims to synergise legal support with modern IT tools and Artificial Intelligence to address the incidences of delayed payments for Micro and Small Enterprises.

### What is the RAMP Programme?

- 1) RAMP is a **World Bank assisted Central Sector Scheme**.
- 2) **Aim-** To provide support to the MSMEs by:
  - a. Improving access to market and credit
  - b. Strengthening institutions and governance at the Centre and State

- c. Improving Centre-State linkages and partnerships
- d. Addressing issues of delayed payments and greening MSMEs.

3) **Nodal Ministry**- Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)

## Subject: Science & Technology

### Cyberthreats: Centre sets up secure e-mail network for staff of critical departments

#### Why in the News?

In response to cyber-attacks, the Centre has implemented a secure email system for 10,000 users across critical ministries and departments.

#### How will it work?

1. **Designed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC)**, the email system is **based on Zero Trust Authentication (ZTA)**
  - A zero trust architecture is a security approach that treats all systems, networks, and users as untrusted, necessitating ongoing authentication for devices, users, and applications.
2. It **incorporates a two-factor authentication system that requires facial recognition or biometrics** in addition to passwords.
3. Additionally, it also **records log-in and log-out times for enhanced security**.

#### What are the other measures taken by the government to enhance Cyber Security?

1. **Digital India Corporation (DIC)** invited **bids from private players to select cloud service provider** to operate, manage and migrate existing projects as well as future projects.

- The DIC is currently working on various national importance projects which run on cloud services provided by Amazon Web Services. For example, Digilocker, Poshan Tracker, MyScheme, Umang, APISetu, NCW, Kisan Sarathi, Academic Bank of Credits etc.

**Note-** DIC is a **not-for-profit company set up by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**. It is working towards the mission of Digital India by way of Capacity Building for e-Governance projects, promoting best practices, encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), nurturing innovation and technology in various domains.

2. The scope of the bid also included migrating the e-mail services of government employees to a private player, currently handled by the NIC.

#### What is the National Informatics Centre (NIC)?

1. Operating under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, it serves as the **technology partner** for the Government of India.
2. It was established in 1976.
3. Its primary objective is to **deliver technology-driven solutions to both Central and State Governments**.

## **Kakrapar-4 nuclear reactor attains criticality**

### **Why in the News?**

The Fourth unit of the Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP-4) in Gujarat has achieved criticality.

### **What is Criticality?**

Criticality refers to the state where the chain reaction of nuclear fission in a nuclear reactor is self-sustaining. This means that each fission event produces enough neutrons to cause further fissions, maintaining a constant rate of fission and energy release. It's the first step in nuclear energy generation.

### **What is the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS)?**

1. Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS) is a nuclear power plant located in Surat, Gujarat.
2. It is operated by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).
3. The plant uses Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) which use natural uranium as fuel and heavy water as coolant and moderator.
4. The plant has four reactors: two 220 MW units and two 700 MW units with a total capacity of 1,840 MW.
5. **Note-** The 700 MWe units are the largest indigenous nuclear power reactors to be built by NPCIL.
6. **Safety Features:** The Unit-3 and Unit-4 of KAPS have steel-lined inner containment systems that prevent any radioactive material from escaping in case of an accident.

- They also have passive decay heat removal systems which safely cool down the reactor even when it is shut down.

### **What is the state of Nuclear Energy in India?**

- 1) In 2022-23, nuclear energy formed around 2.8 percent of India's total energy production.
- 2) NPCIL presently operates 23 reactors with a total capacity of 7,480 MW.
- 3) With more projects under construction and accorded sanction, the existing nuclear power capacity is going to be increased to 22,480 MW by the year 2031.

## **Emerging Threat: JN.1 Subvariant of COVID-19 Discovered in Kerala**

### **Why in the News?**

Recently a case of the JN.1 subvariant of COVID-19 has been identified in Kerala during the continuous routine surveillance conducted by INSACOG.

### **What is JN.1?**

1. This virus is a **novel variant of Omicron subvariant BA.2.86 (also known as Pirola) with an additional spike protein mutation.**
2. The variant has the **capability to spread rapidly and evade immunity**, highlighting the need for continued monitoring and caution.
3. **Symptoms-** Reported symptoms include fever, runny nose, sore throat, headache, and mild gastrointestinal symptoms.

### What is INSACOG?

1. INSACOG, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium, is a network of genomic laboratories dedicated to monitoring COVID-19 in India from a genomic perspective.
2. The ICMR is a participant in this consortium.

### Noma added to WHO's list of Neglected Tropical Disease

#### Why in the News?

World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently added 'Noma' to its official list of neglected tropical diseases (NTD).

#### What is Noma?

1. It is a severe gangrenous (decaying because the blood has stopped flowing there) **disease affecting the mouth and face**. Noma eats away facial tissue and bones if not treated early.
2. It is caused by the **bacteria spirochete Borrelia vincenti**, commonly found in the mouth.
3. It typically begins as inflammation of gums but progresses rapidly, leading to extensive tissue destruction and eventually exposing facial bones.
4. It is also called cancrum oris or gangrenous stomatitis.
5. It has a **mortality rate of around 90%**.
6. It primarily **affects children aged 2 to 6 years old** who are malnourished, infected with infectious diseases, living in extreme poverty with poor oral health, or who have weakened immune systems.
7. **Treatment-** Immediate action with antibiotics, rehydration, correcting electrolyte imbalances, and providing nutritional supplements can halt the disease's progression.
8. **Preventive measures-** Enhancing living conditions and healthcare access for vulnerable populations, ensuring proper nutrition, immunization, oral hygiene, and sanitation practices.
9. The illness's neglected nature is most likely due to the fact that it affects the world's most marginalised children.

### Hydrogen cyanide found in Saturn's icy moon Enceladus

#### Why in the News?

Based on data from NASA's Cassini spacecraft, scientists have found Hydrogen Cyanide in the oceans of Saturn's moon Enceladus.

#### What have the scientists found on Saturn's moon Enceladus?

1. Researchers have re-analysed data from the Cassini spacecraft which orbited Saturn from 2004 to 2017.
2. They detected hydrogen cyanide along with methanol, ethane, and oxygen in the plumes of water vapour erupting from the surface of Enceladus.
3. This suggests that Enceladus subsurface oceans may possess more chemical energy than previously thought, potentially supporting the creation and persistence of complex organic compounds.
4. These findings also strengthen the case for the Enceladus habitability, indicating that it may contain essential molecules for life and provide insights into the formation of complex biomolecules.

### What is Enceladus?

1. Enceladus is one of Saturn's 146 moons. It has a white, icy surface made of water ice covering a warmer, salty ocean underneath.
2. It's about 500 km wide and has a freezing surface temperature of -200°C.
3. Enceladus is also an active source of water volcanism, ejecting plumes of water, ice, dust and gases into space. These materials contribute to Saturn's rings.

### What is Hydrogen cyanide (HCN)?

1. Hydrogen cyanide (HCN) is a colourless chemical compound composed of hydrogen, carbon, and nitrogen atoms.
2. It is highly toxic as it interferes with the body's use of oxygen and may cause harm to the brain, heart, blood vessels and lungs.
3. It is used commercially for fumigation, electroplating, mining, chemical synthesis, and the production of synthetic fibres, plastics, dyes and pesticides.

## China bans export of rare earths processing tech over national security

### Why in the News?

China expanded its export ban by including technology for manufacturing rare earth magnets, in addition to the existing prohibition on technology for extracting and separating these critical materials.

### What is the Decision by China to ban export of Rare Earth Processing Technology?

1. China has added this technology to its "**Catalogue of Technologies Prohibited and Restricted from Export**". The list aims to restrict exports of certain technologies in order to protect national security and public interest.
2. The list also includes a **ban on technology for producing rare-earth calcium oxyborate and rare earth metals**, in addition to the previous prohibition on the production of rare earth alloy materials
3. Earlier in August 2023, it also implemented export permits for **chipmaking materials like gallium and germanium** and later similar requirements were extended to various types of graphite.
4. Such restrictions by China, the world's top processor of rare earths, raises concerns over **supply chain disruptions** in the availability of these critical minerals.

### What are the rare earth magnets?

1. Rare earth magnets are powerful permanent magnets made from alloys of rare earth elements.
2. These magnets, particularly **neodymium magnets and samarium cobalt magnets**, are known for their **exceptional strength and magnetic properties**.

### What are Rare Earths?

Rare earths consist of **17 metals** employed in creating magnets that convert power into motion, essential for applications in electric vehicles, wind turbines, and electronics.



## National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) Portal

### Why in the News?

The Ministry of Mines has launched the National Geoscience Data Repository Portal (NGDR).

### What is the National Geoscience Data Repository Portal (NGDR)?

Specifications	Details
What is it	It is a comprehensive online platform for accessing, sharing and analyzing geospatial information.
Developed by	Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N)
Conceptualized by	Ministry of Mines (MoM) as part of the National Mineral Exploration Policy (NMEP) 2016.
Key Features	1) <b>Centralized Access:</b> Provides a centralized repository of diverse geoscience datasets, including geological maps, mineral resources, seismic data and environmental information. 2) <b>Open Access:</b> The data on the portal is available in a public domain.
Significance	1) The portal is a significant step towards democratizing critical geoscience data in India. 2) It has the potential to revolutionize mineral exploration, empower various stakeholders and drive innovation across diverse fields.

### What is Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N)?

1. It is an autonomous scientific society under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY).
2. **Purpose-** To provide services and solutions in implementing map-based GeoSpatial Information Systems.
3. **Main areas of focus-** Satellite Communication, Geo-informatics and Geo-spatial technology.
4. **Located in-** Gandhinagar, Gujarat

## Subject: Environment

### India achieves two targets of Nationally Determined Contribution well ahead of the time

### Why in the News?

India has achieved its two initial Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Targets well ahead of time.

### What is a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)?

1. NDC or Nationally Determined Contribution is a climate action plan to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts.
2. Each Party to the Paris Agreement is required to provide its NDC and update it every five years.

### Which are the two initial NDC Targets achieved by India?

## Factly Compilation for the Month of December (Third Week) 2023

India had submitted its first NDCs in the year 2015 comprising following two targets:

1. To **reduce the emissions' intensity** of its GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 from 2005 level.
2. To achieve about 40 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from **non-fossil fuel-based energy** resources by 2030.

These two targets have been achieved well ahead of the time. By October 2023, Non-fossil fuel power capacity has reached 43.81%.

### What are the updated NDC Targets?

In August 2022, India updated its NDC according to which target is to:

1. Reduce the emission intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030, compared to the 2005 level.
2. To meet 50% of cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

## Provisions for Conservation of Marine Species

### Why in the News?

The Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has informed Lok Sabha about the measures taken for the conservation of marine species.

### What are the steps taken by the government for the conservation of marine species?

1. **Protected Areas:** India has designated 130 Marine Protected Areas and identified 106 Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas (ICMBAs) to safeguard marine species.
2. Many threatened marine species have been listed as **Scheduled animals in Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972**.
3. **Under the scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat (IDWH)**, threatened species like marine turtles, humpback whales and Dugongs are prioritized for assessment and monitoring of their populations.
4. **Dugong Conservation Reserve** has been established in Palk Bay for conservation of Dugongs and seagrass associated marine species.
5. **National Marine Turtle Action Plan** has been released with the aim to conserve marine turtles and their habitats in India.
6. **Project Dolphin** is the Government initiative to conserve both oceanic and riverine dolphin species launched in 2021.
7. **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2019:** It was promulgated under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986. It has specific focus on conservation and management plans of Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) like Mangroves, Seagrasses, Sand dunes, Corals and Coral reefs, Turtle nesting grounds among others.
8. **Biological Diversity Act 2002** and associated rules ensure protection, conservation, and sustainable use of marine species.
9. **Financial Assistance:** MoEFCC is granting funds under the centrally sponsored schemes to maritime States for the conservation of Corals and Mangroves. For instance, CAMPA funds are being provided for Dugong conservation.

10. **Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE):** It is an attached office under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). It is mandated with the management strategies development for marine living resources through ecosystem monitoring and modelling activities.
11. **Marine Megafauna Stranding Management Guidelines,2021:** It has been released for actions to be taken during stranding and entanglement events as well as to improve coordination between various stakeholders.

## 2024 is the International Year of Camelids

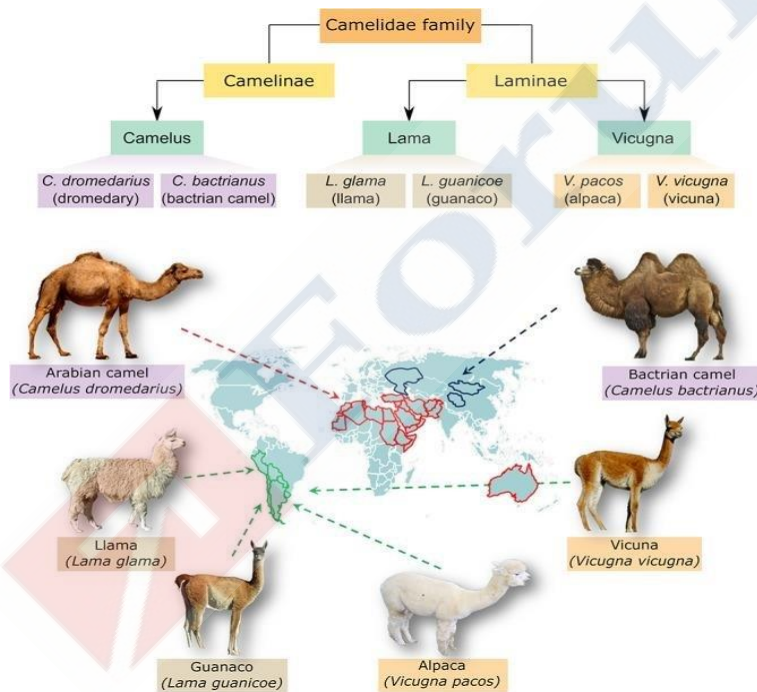
### Why in the News?

The United Nations has named 2024 the International Year of Camelids to emphasize their vital role in the lives of global communities.

### What is the objective of The International Year of Camelids 2024?

- 1) To raise awareness about the untapped potential of camelids and advocate for increased investment in the camelid sector.
- 2) Promote research and capacity development as well as the adoption of innovative practices and technologies.

### What are Camelids?



Source- ResearchGate

Aspect	Details
What is it?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Camelids are a <b>family of mammals</b> belonging to the Camelidae family.</li> <li>2) This family <b>includes various species</b>, notably Bactrian camels, dromedaries, llamas, alpacas, vicuñas, and guanacos.</li> </ol>

<b>Characteristics</b>	<p>1) They are large animals with <b>long necks, slender legs</b>, and in some cases, a hump on their back.</p> <p>2) They are <b>strictly herbivores</b>, feeding on vegetation.</p> <p>3) They have a <b>three-chambered stomach</b>, split upper lips allowing separate mobility, and elliptical red blood cells, setting them apart from other mammals.</p> <p>4) They are usually found in herds.</p>
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### What is the Importance of Camelids?

1. They help ensuring food security, nutrition and economic growth in more than 90 countries, particularly benefiting indigenous peoples and local communities.
2. They are instrumental in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by supplying milk and meat for fighting hunger as well as fiber for clothing and shelter.
3. People use them for transportation and also benefit from the organic fertilizer they provide for agriculture.
4. They are **known to survive in harsh conditions**. Inhabitants rely significantly on camelids for their livelihoods in the Andes Mountain ranges, as well as in arid and semi-arid lands across Africa and Asia.
5. Camelids represent strength in adversity thus can be **ambassadors to raise awareness about climate change**.

### Protection of Black Tiger

#### Why in the News?

Recently the Union Minister of State for Environment filed a reply in the parliament regarding the conservation efforts of the Black tigers.

#### What are Black Tigers?



Source- The Indian Express

Aspect	Details
<b>What is it?</b>	<p>1) Black Tigers are a rare colour variant of the Bengal tiger and are not a distinct species or geographic subspecies.</p> <p>2) Also <b>known as Melanistic Royal Bengal Tiger</b>.</p>
<b>IUCN status</b>	Endangered
<b>Population in India</b>	<p>1) Recorded <b>only in the Similipal Tiger Reserve</b> in Odisha.</p> <p>2) In the 2022 All India Tiger Estimation, Similipal Tiger Reserve reported 16 tigers, with 10 being melanistic.</p>
<b>What causes the</b>	1) The broadened or spread black stripes in these tigers is caused by a <b>single</b>

<b>black colour?</b>	<b>mutation</b> in the <b>Transmembrane Aminopeptidase Q (Taqpep) gene</b> . 2) As the phenomenon is related to mutation and not the high deposition of melanin, it is considered <b>pseudo-melanism</b> . 3) Since this mutation is caused by a recessive gene, it is rare. But the <b>geographical isolation</b> of these tigers in Simlipal Tiger Reserve has <b>led to inbreeding</b> , offering the recessive gene frequent chances to show up.
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### What are the Conservation Efforts taken by the Government for Black Tigers?

- 1) The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** issued a **Standard Operating Procedure** for active management of tiger rehabilitation in source areas.
- 2) Recognized as a unique genetic cluster, Simlipal Tiger Reserve obtains **funding through Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH)** for conservation of tigers, raising awareness on tiger & other wildlife conservation, habitat management, etc under the Tiger Conservation Plan.

### What is Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH)?

- 1) It's a centrally sponsored scheme to **provide technical and financial states to states for protection of wildlife habitat**.
- 2) The scheme has the following **three components**:
  - a. Support to Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves).
  - b. Protection of Wildlife Outside Protected Areas.
  - c. Recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats.

## Valmiki Tiger Reserve

### Why in the News?

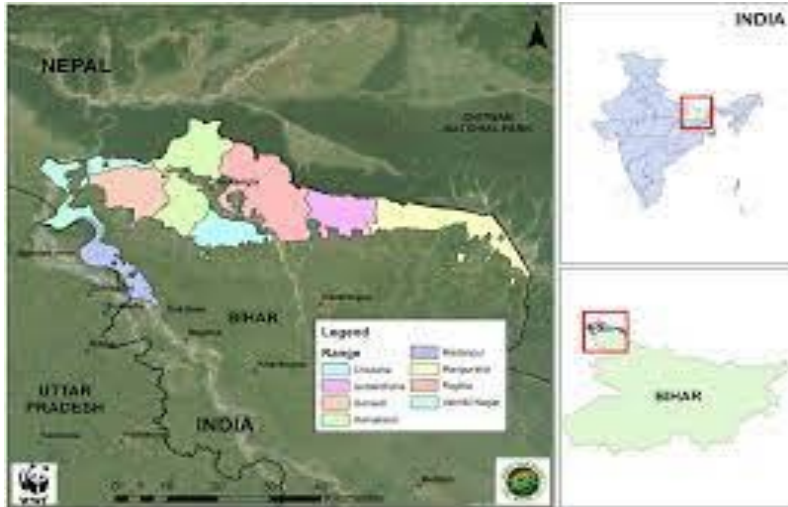
The increase in tiger numbers in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar was facilitated by diminished human activity, including bans on mining.

### What is the status of Tiger Conservation in VTR?

1. A complete **prohibition of sand and stone mining** within VTR, coupled with stringent restrictions on mining in its **eco-sensitive zone**, helped increase grassland cover.
2. As a result, tiger numbers in the protected area rose to **54 in 2023**, up from 31 in 2018 and 28 in 2014.
3. The Reserve received **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** acclaim for the **75% rise in tiger numbers**, also earning a 'Very Good' categorization.

**Note**– Bihar aims to establish its second tiger reserve in the Kaimur district by 2024.

### What are the Key Features of Valmiki Tiger Reserve?



Source- ResearchGate

Specifications	Details
<b>Location</b>	1) Located at the India-Nepal border in the <b>West Champaran district of Bihar</b> . 2) It is situated <b>on the bank of the river Gandak</b> , in the Gangetic Plains. 3) It is surrounded by the Royal Chitwan National Park of Nepal in the north. 4) It is the <b>sole tiger reserve in Bihar</b> .
<b>Rivers</b>	Gandak, Pandai, Manor, Harha, Masan, and Bhapsa flow through various parts of the reserve.
<b>Vegetation</b>	<b>Moist mixed deciduous</b> , open-land vegetation, sub-mountainous semi-evergreen formations, freshwater swamps, riparian fringes, alluvial grasslands, high hill savannah, and wetlands.
<b>Flora</b>	Sal, Karam, Asan, Bahera, Asidh, Simal, Jamun, Gular, Satsal, etc.
<b>Fauna</b>	1) <b>Large Animals</b> - Bengal tigers, Indian rhinoceros, Asiatic elephants, Asiatic black bears, Indian sloth bears, otters, Indian leopards, wild dogs, wild water buffalo, Indian bison (Gaur), Nilgai etc. 2) Currently, VTR <b>hosts 241 bird species</b> , notable birds include the Nepal kalij pheasant, three-toed quail, and paradise flycatcher.

## Subject: Schemes & Programmes

### Khelo India Para Games

#### Why in the News?

The inaugural edition of Khelo India Para Games has concluded recently. **Haryana claimed top** honors in the competition, while Uttar Pradesh finished second.

#### What are Khelo India Para games 2023?

Aspect	Details
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## Factly Compilation for the Month of December (Third Week) 2023

<b>About</b>	1) The Khelo India Para Games (KIPG) aims to <b>empower para-athletes</b> in the country. 2) This is the <b>first edition of KIPG</b> . 3) It is part of the <b>Khelo India Initiative</b> , which also includes Khelo India Youth Games, Khelo India University Games, and Khelo India Winter Games.
<b>Organised by</b>	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Sports Authority of India, National Sports Federation (NSF), Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), Cerebral Palsy Sports Federation of India (CPSFI) and organizing committee
<b>Venue</b>	Delhi
<b>Mascot</b>	Ujjwala – a sparrow
<b>Total sports disciplines</b>	<b>Seven</b> (para-athletics, para shooting, para-archery, para football, para badminton, para table tennis and para weightlifting)
<b>Features</b>	1) Expected to meet the high standards of technical conduct, athlete experience, and overall execution seen in other Khelo India events like the Youth and University Games. 2) The Games will be live telecast on television and OTT platforms 3) Participants will represent only States & Union Territories. 4) There will be a single medal tally of States.

**Note-** CPSFI, Cerebral Palsy Sports Federation of India is an apex body promoting Cerebral Palsy Sports. Cerebral Palsy (CP) is the leading cause of chronic disability in children, making them physically and mentally handicapped and socially aloof

## New Swarnima Loan Scheme

### Why in the News?

Recently government has filed a reply in the Lok Sabha regarding the implementation of the Swarnima loan scheme.

### What is New Swarnima Loan Scheme?

Aspect	Details
<b>What is it?</b>	Loan scheme to provide financial assistance to women entrepreneurs from backward classes.
<b>Aim</b>	Inculcating the spirit of self-dependence among the women of Backward Classes under Term Loan.
<b>Nodal Ministry</b>	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
<b>Introduced by</b>	National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC)
<b>Implemented by</b>	State Channelising Agencies (SCAs) which act as the nodal agency.
<b>Eligibility</b>	1) Women belonging to Backward Classes, aged between 18 and 55 years. 2) Total annual family income should not be more than ₹3 lakh.
<b>Benefits</b>	1) A loan of maximum ₹2,00,000 per beneficiary is provided. 2) The rate of interest on the amount of loan is less as compared to the general

## Factly Compilation for the Month of December (Third Week) 2023

	loan scheme of the Corporation. 3) Loan is to be repaid in quarterly instalments with maximum 8 years.
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### What is NBCFDC?

1. NBCFDC is a Government of India undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
2. It was established on January 13, 1992, under Section 25 of the Companies Act 1956 (now section 8 of Company Act, 2013).
3. Aim- To foster economic and developmental initiatives for the benefit of Backward Classes and support skill development and self-employment ventures for the economically disadvantaged within these groups.

## Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2023

### Why in the News?

Recently PM Narendra Modi engaged in discussions with the participants during the Grand Finale of Smart India Hackathon 2023.

### What is Smart India Hackathon (SIH)?

Aspect	Details
What is it?	It is a nationwide initiative to provide students a platform to solve some of the pressing problems we face in our daily lives.
Aim	It aims to foster a culture of product innovation, problem-solving, and out-of-the-box thinking in students.
Launched in	2017
Nodal Ministry	Ministry of Education
Who can participate?	1) <b>SIH JUNIOR</b> – Class 6th-12th Students 2) <b>SIH SENIOR</b> – Higher Educational Students like Graduate/Postgraduate/PH. D
Key features	1) <b>SIH is being run in two formats:</b> SIH Software and SIH Hardware Editions for higher education students. 2) Participants propose solutions across various themes such as Space Technology, Smart Education, Disaster Management, Robotics and Drones, Heritage, and Culture. 3) SIH 2023 offers a total prize pool exceeding Rs 2 crore, with <b>each winning team receiving a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh per problem statement.</b>

## SVEEP Programme: Electoral literacy in classrooms

### Why in the News?

The Ministry of Education and the Election Commission of India have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to incorporate electoral literacy formally into the school and college education system.

### What is the MoU to Achieve Electoral Literacy in Classrooms?



### Objectives of the MoU:

1. To incorporate voter education and electoral literacy formally into the school and college education system.
2. To extend ECI's flagship Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) in schools and colleges.

### Activities to be undertaken:

- 1) **School curriculum:** Electoral literacy will be added to NCERT textbooks as part of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for classes 6-12.
- 2) **College/University:** Voter education will be integrated into existing courses.
- 3) **Teacher training:** Training to teachers will be provided by way of inclusion of the subject matter in teacher education course materials
- 4) **Beyond the classroom:** Spread awareness among students through Electoral Literacy Clubs in schools/colleges and Democracy Rooms in every senior secondary school, administering a pledge to vote by students, organising mock polls, EVM-VVPAT demonstrations, etc.

### What is Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)?

- 1) SVEEP is a flagship program of the Election Commission of India (ECI).
- 2) It is aimed at voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India.
- 3) **SVEEP Strategy document (2022-25):** It aims to a) Increase voter turnout to 75% in Lok Sabha elections 2024 and b) Enhance the quality of electoral participation in terms of informed and ethical voting through continuous electoral and democracy education.

### PM-DevINE scheme: Ministry holds meet with CMs of northeast States over lag in scheme

#### Why in the News?

Recently the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) convened a meeting with the Chief Ministers of the States in the region regarding the **hurdles in implementation of the projects under the PM-Devine scheme.**

#### What is PM-DevINE scheme?

1. The Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North-East (PM-DevINE) Scheme is a **central sector scheme** (100 per cent funded by the Union Government) introduced in the **2022-23 Union Budget** with an initial allocation of ₹1,500 crore.
2. **Aim-** The scheme is designed for the rapid and comprehensive development of the northeast region by funding infrastructure and social development projects, based on felt needs of the States.
3. It also aims to **fill sectoral gaps without replacing the current Central and State Schemes.**

#### What are the hurdles faced by Northeastern States in implementation of the projects under the scheme?

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1. **Delay in approvals-** The total approved outlay for PM-DevINE scheme for the period 2022-23 to 2025-26 is ₹6,600 crore. But only nine projects worth ₹855.85 crore had been approved so far. Several projects still pending for approval from the centre.
2. **Law and order situation-** Prevailing law and order situation in northeastern states like Manipur has created hurdles in taking up new projects under the scheme.

### DAY-NRLM SHGs: Ministry of Rural Development signs MOU with JioMart

#### Why in the News?

The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with JioMart to onboard DAY-NRLM's Self Help Groups (SHGs).

#### What is the objective of this partnership?

1) This collaboration will enable **SHGs** operating under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) to be **on-boarded as sellers onto the e-commerce fold on JioMart**.

2) Once on-boarded, all SHG sellers associated with the DAY-NRLM will also get to avail benefits and guidance in growing their businesses online.

#### 3) Significance:

a. Amplify the visibility of their products and **widen their market**.

b. **Increase the income of SHGs** on a sustainable basis.

c. Boost MoRD's provision under the SARAS Collection to be available to a larger consumer base.

**Note-** the Saras Collection showcases **daily utility products made by rural SHGs** and aims to provide SHGs in rural areas with market access to Central and State Government buyers.

### Palna Scheme: Government aims to set up 17,000 creches across India

#### Why in the News?

The Union Women and Child Development Ministry aims to establish 17,000 creches in Anganwadi Centres across the country. This is being done as part of **Palna Scheme**.

#### What is the Palna Scheme?

Specifications	Details
<b>Nodal Ministry</b>	Ministry of Women and Child Development
<b>Earlier Name</b>	National Creche Scheme
<b>Type</b>	Centrally Sponsored Scheme
<b>Aim</b>	1) To address the urgent need for quality day-care facilities /creches for the children of working women. 2) To improve nutrition and health status of children.
<b>Component of</b>	Samarthya which is a sub-component under Mission Shakti.
<b>Focus of the scheme</b>	The scheme focuses on two types of creches 1) <b>Anganwadi-cum-Crèches:</b> These centers combine existing Anganwadi services with dedicated crèche facilities. This approach aims to holistically

## Factly Compilation for the Month of December (Third Week) 2023

	address the needs of both mothers and children in one convenient location. 2) <b>Stand-alone creches:</b> The crèches which were running under the erstwhile National Creche Scheme have been included as Stand Alone Creches.
<b>Target Group</b>	The scheme focuses on children of 6 months to 6 years of working women in rural and urban areas who are employed for a minimum period of 15 days in a month, or six months in a year.

### What is Creche?

A crèche is a facility which enables parents to leave their children while they are at work and where children are provided a stimulating environment for their holistic development.

## Subject: Reports & Indices

### Logistics Ease Across Different State (LEADS) 2023 ranking

#### Why in the News?

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has released the Fifth edition of the LEADS annual exercise.

#### What is LEADS ranking?

Specifications	Details
<b>What is it?</b>	1) Its an annual ranking exercise providing insights into improvement of logistics performance at State/UT level. 2) It was <b>inspired by the Logistics Performance Index of the World Bank</b> and has undergone continuous development since its inception. 3) Unlike the LPI, which relies solely on perception-based surveys, LEADS incorporates both subjective and objective measures.
<b>Launched in</b>	2018
<b>Launched by</b>	Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI)
<b>Parameters</b>	The survey parameters are based on three key pillars—infra-structure, services, and operating and regulatory environment.

#### What are the Key Highlights of the 2023 LEADS Report?

The report includes 11 states and 2 UTs encompassing coastal, landlocked, Northeastern States and UTs.

#### Performance Highlights from LEADS 2023:

Specifications	Details
<b>Coastal Group</b>	<b>Achievers:</b> Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu <b>Fast Movers:</b> Kerala, Maharashtra <b>Aspirers:</b> Goa, Odisha, West Bengal
<b>Landlocked Group</b>	<b>Achievers:</b> Haryana, Punjab, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh

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	<b>Fast Movers:</b> Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand <b>Aspirers:</b> Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand
<b>North-East Group</b>	<b>Achievers:</b> Assam, Sikkim, Tripura <b>Fast Movers:</b> Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland <b>Aspirers:</b> Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram
<b>Union Territories</b>	<b>Achievers:</b> Chandigarh, Delhi <b>Fast Movers:</b> Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Puducherry <b>Aspirers:</b> Daman & Diu/ Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh

## Subject: Art & Culture

### Sahitya Akademi announces awards

#### Why in the News?

Sahitya Akademi has announced the annual Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023 in 24 languages. The awards are for books published between January 2017 and December 31, 2021.

#### What is the Sahitya Akademi Awards?

Specifications	Details
<b>What is it?</b>	1) It is a literary honour that is <b>conferred annually by Sahitya Akademi</b> . 2) Awarded to the most outstanding books of literary merit <b>published in any of the 24 major Indian languages</b> (22 languages of the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, Rajasthani and English.). 3) The awards are given to books first published during the five years immediately preceding the year of the award
<b>Purpose</b>	To recognise and promote excellence in Indian writing and also acknowledge new trends.
<b>Instituted in</b>	1954
<b>Prize</b>	Consists of an engraved copper plaque, a shawl, and a prize money of Rs. 1 lakh.
<b>Criteria for awardee</b>	1) Author must be an Indian national. 2) The award is <b>conferred to living writers</b> and not awarded posthumously. 3) Eligible works must be outstanding contributions to their respective language and literature. 4) If books exhibit equal merit, criteria such as overall literary contribution and the standing of authors will be considered for the award.
<b>Key Features</b>	1) It is the <b>second highest literary honour</b> by the Government of India, after Jnanpith award. 2) <b>Other Sahitya Akademi Awards:</b> a. <b>Sahitya Akademi Bal Sahitya Puraskar</b> - Awarded based on the author's overall contribution to children's literature. b. <b>Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar</b> - Applies to books published by authors aged 35 and below.

### What are Jnanpith award?

- 1) The Jnanpith Award is an Indian literary award **presented annually by the Bhartiya Jnanpith** to an author for their outstanding contribution towards literature.
- 2) The award was instituted in 1961.
- 3) It's awarded exclusively to Indian writers in languages listed in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India and English, with no posthumous awards.

### Bihar to develop Sita's birthplace

#### Why in the News?

The Bihar Chief minister has launched a Rs 72-crore development plan for Goddess Sita's birthplace at Punaura Dham in Sitamarhi, Bihar.

#### What is Bihar's Government plan for Punaura?

Punaura Development plan includes:

1. Renovate the existing temple dedicated to Sita and prepare a roofed pradakshina path (path for circumambulation) around it.
2. Developing the Luv Kush Vatika, Sita Vatika, and Sita Kund
3. Showcasing Sita's life story through a 3D film experience.
4. The Sita temple within Sitakund will be built after the completion of the Ram temple in Ayodhya (January 2024).

#### Where is the birthplace of Sita?

1. Earlier, the Janaki temple in Sitamarhi was believed to be the birthplace of Sita. But now Punaura Dham is recognized as Sita's birthplace in Sitamarhi by both the Centre and State.
2. Researchers have found that the Janaki temple is only about 200 years old, while Punaura Dham aligns with references in the Ramayana and has historical structures like Sitakund and dedicated gardens.

## Subject: Geography and Places in News

### Surat Diamond Bourse inaugurated in Gujarat

#### Why in the News?

The Prime Minister has inaugurated Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB) in Gujarat.

#### What is Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB)?

1. Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB) is a global centre for trading of both rough and polished diamonds as well as jewellery.
2. **Designed by:** An architecture firm named Morphogenesis.

## Factly Compilation for the Month of December (Third Week) 2023

3. **Aim:** To shift the diamond trading business from Mumbai to Surat, which is the hub of diamond cutting and polishing with thousands of factories across the city.
4. **Features:** It will consist of-
  - a) State-of-the-art 'Customs Clearance House' for import and export.
  - b) Jewellery mall for the retail jewellery business.
  - c) Facility for international banking and safe vaults.
5. **Significance:** It is the world's largest diamond trading hub. It is also the world's largest office building ahead of The Pentagon.

### India's First Winter Arctic Expedition

#### Why in the News?

India has launched its first winter expedition to arctic region. The team from Raman Research Institute (RRI) was chosen as the initial group of scientists to conduct various experiments in the region.

#### What are the details of the expedition?

**Funded by:** The Earth Sciences Ministry.

**Nodal Agency:** The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research in Goa.

#### What are the objectives of the expedition?

1. Researchers will **assess the radio frequency environment in Norway's Arctic Svalbard region to determine its suitability for precise astronomy measurements.**
2. It seeks to **establish India's continuous year-round presence at the Himadri station.**
3. Scientists at RRI are developing the SARAS series, to study the faint cosmological signal from hydrogen emerging from the cosmic dawn.

Note – Cosmic dawn signifies the era when the first stars and galaxies emerged in the universe.

**Significance of the experiments** – It could open possibilities for deploying low-frequency radio telescopes in the region.

#### What are the research initiatives of India in Arctic?

##### 1) Himadri

- a) It is India's first permanent Arctic research station, located at Spitsbergen, Svalbard, Norway.
- b) It was inaugurated on the 1st of July 2008 by the Minister of Earth Sciences.
- c) It is located at a distance of 1,200 kilometers from the North Pole.

##### 2) IndARC

- a) India's first underwater moored observatory in the Arctic region.
- b) It was deployed in 2014 at Kongsfjorden fjord, Svalbard, Norway.
- c) Its research goal is to study the Arctic climate and its influence on the monsoon

## Subject: Miscellaneous

### Bengaluru airport wins award at UNESCO's 2023 Prix Versailles

#### Why in the News?

Terminal 2 (T2) of Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru has been awarded the Special Prize for an Interior at the UNESCO's 2023 Prix Versailles Awards.

**Note-** Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) is the only Indian airport to receive this award.

#### What is the Prix Versailles Awards?

1. The Prix Versailles awards were established in 2015. It is announced each year at UNESCO.
2. The award is given for outstanding achievements in architecture and design on a global scale.
3. The award focuses on intelligent sustainability as a cultural driver, acknowledging innovation, creativity, reflection of local heritage, ecological efficiency and values of social interaction.

#### Why was Terminal 2 (T2) of Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) given this award?



Figure 1. Source: TOI

1. T2 called a "Terminal in a Garden", was inaugurated in 2022. The terminal can accommodate 25 million passengers annually.
2. The terminal features a spacious indoor garden with waterfalls and hanging planted bells enhancing its aesthetics.
3. It had previously earned the prestigious IGBC platinum certification from the Indian Green Building Council.  
**Note-** Green building ratings bring together a host of sustainable practices and solutions to reduce the environmental impacts.
4. It is also the world's largest terminal pre-certified with a platinum LEED rating by the US Green Building Council (UGBC) even before commencing operations, reflecting its sustainable design.