

Current Affairs Update (July 1-7)

National

Election to the Office of the Vice-President of India

The term of office of Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Vice-President of India, is ending on 10 August 2022. As per **Article 68** of the Constitution of India, an election to fill the vacancy caused by the expiration of the term of office of the outgoing Vice-President is required to be completed before the expiration of the term.

Article highlights:

- **Article 324** of the Constitution read with the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952 and the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974**, vests the superintendence, direction and control of the conduct of election to the office of the Vice-President of India in the Election Commission of India.
- The notification for election shall be issued on or after the sixtieth day before the expiration of the term of office of the outgoing Vice-President.
- As per **Article 66 of the Constitution** of India, the Vice-President is elected by the members of the Electoral College.
- **Electoral College consists of:**
 1. **Elected members of Rajya Sabha.**
 2. **Nominated members of Rajya Sabha.**
 3. **Elected members of Lok Sabha.**
- Since all the electors are members of both Houses of Parliament, the value of the vote of each Member of Parliament would be the same i.e.1 (one).

Aurangabad

- Maharashtra government renamed **Aurangabad as Sambhajinagar.**
- Aurangabad was founded in **1610 by Malik Ambar**, the Siddi general of the Nizamshahi dynasty of Ahmadnagar.
- Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son and successor of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, was tortured and killed in brutal fashion on Aurangzeb's orders in 1689.

Alluri Sitarama Raju

Alluri Sitarama Raju (1897 – 1924) was an Indian revolutionary who waged an armed campaign against British colonial rule in India. He was nicknamed “**Manyam Veerudu**” (Hero of the Jungle) by local villagers for his heroic exploits.

The Rampa Rebellion of 1922 was a tribal uprising, led by Alluri Sitarama Raju in Godavari Agency of Madras Presidency, British India. The **Rampa administrative area** was home to about 28,000 tribes. To get the forests cleared, ‘**The Madras Forest Act, 1882**’ was passed, thereby restricting the free movement of the tribal communities and prohibiting them from engaging in their traditional **Podu agricultural system**.

Why in news? PM Modi to launch the year-long celebrations on the 125th birth anniversary of Alluri Sitarama Raju, enabling a new generation to be aware of the heroics of Alluri and the sacrifices he made for the tribal community.

Panel suggests increasing tenure of House committees

There should be a dedicated hour during the **Rajya Sabha** proceedings to discuss the “**import and implications**’ **of the reports finalized by Parliamentary Standing Committees**, a panel headed by **former General Secretary and adviser P.P.K. Ramacharyulu** has recommended it.

Suggestions by the Panel:

- **Increasing tenure of Parliamentary Committees:** The committee suggested that the tenure of the Parliamentary committees should be increased **from the present one year to two years**.
- **Increase in field visits:** Field visits should also be increased from the present **two visits for a maximum of 10 days in a year to three visits and 15 days.**“
- **Formation of Committee hour:** Given the efforts that go into the preparation of reports by the DRSCs and their import and implications, a Committee Hour has been recommended for consideration to discuss select major reports in the Parliament for wider amplification of the content of the reports.
- **Reports should be accessible:** The panel said that these reports should be made more accessible to the stakeholders and general public.
- **Streamlining of the secretariat work:** The Study has suggested streamlining of the secretarial work, including disposing of 75% of the issues at lower and middle levels in a 10-layer hierarchy that exists in the secretariat at present.

IT Act sec 69A

Twitter initiated legal action against some of the government missives ordering it to take down certain content. Twitter has claimed that many of the blocking orders are procedurally and **substantively deficient under Section 69 (A) of the Act**: eg., **Not giving prior notice to users** before taking down content posted by them. MeitY has **failed to demonstrate how some of the content** it wants taken down falls under the purview of Section 69 (A).

Section 69 (A) of the Information Technology Act: Section 69 (A) of the IT Act, 2000 allows the Centre to issue blocking orders to social media intermediaries.

Blocking order can be issued only for:

- Interest of sovereignty and integrity of India
- defence of India
- security of the state
- friendly relations with foreign states
- public order
- For preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence relating to the above.

State Ranking Index for NFSA' 2022

- **Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister** released the '**State Ranking Index for NFSA' 2022** during a conference of State Food Ministers on '**Food and Nutrition Security of India**'. It **measures the effectiveness of NFSA: The current version of the Index measures the effectiveness of NFSA implementation majorly through operations and initiatives under TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System)**.
- **Odisha is in the first position**, followed by **Uttar Pradesh** and **Andhra Pradesh**.
- Among the **special category States (the Northeastern States, Himalayan States, and the Island States)**, **Tripura has obtained the first rank**. Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim are in the second and third positions.

Operation "NARCOS"

- In order to bring **attention to the menace of NDPS**, a month-long pan-India drive against the smuggling of narcotics through rail was launched under the code name Operation "NARCOS" in the month of June-2022.
- RPF has been empowered to conduct search, seizure and arrest under NDPS Act since April 2019 and has been actively participating in the efforts of the Government to restrict this illegal trade.

Indians can get ₹10 lakh from relatives abroad

- The **Union Home Ministry** has amended certain rules related to the **Foreign Contribution(Regulation) Act (FCRA)**, allowing Indians to receive up to **₹10 lakh in a year** from relatives staying abroad without informing the authorities. The earlier limit was **₹1 lakh**.
- In a notification, the Ministry also said that if the amount exceeds it, the individuals will now have **90 days** to inform the government, instead of 30 days earlier.
- A host of entities are barred from receiving foreign funds, including election candidates, those connected with a registered newspaper, judges, government servants or employees of any entity controlled or owned by the government and members of any legislature. Political parties and their office bearers, too, are prohibited from receiving foreign funds.

International

G7 meet

According to its **12,000-word communiqué**, the G7 has issued four other statements as well — **on democracy (together with the guest countries), Ukraine, global food security, and the creation of a climate club**.

The G7 invited “guests”, top leaders from five countries — **Argentina, India, Indonesia, Senegal, and South Africa** — in a studied nod to the global south.

G7 Leaders’ Communiqué Highlights:

- **Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine:** The statement condemned Russia’s illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine.
- **Severe and enduring costs on Russia:** G7 members will continue to impose severe and enduring costs on Russia to help bring an end to this war. Leaders also agreed on a ban on imports of Russian gold.
- **Ensuring food security around the globe:** The participating leaders pledged to spend \$4.5 billion this year to help ensure food security around the globe through the Global Alliance on Food Security.
- **On China’s ‘market-distorting’ practices:** G7 leaders condemned China’s non-transparent and market-distorting international trade practices.
- **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment**
Through its Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, G7 countries aim to mobilize USD 600 billion over the next five years to narrow the global investment gap.

The Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA)

Recently, EU Parliament agreed upon a new law Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA) to regulate cryptocurrencies. Stablecoins came in question after the crash of **Terraform Labs' Luna** token.

About MiCA: It seeks to address concerns like money-laundering, protection of consumers and investors, accountability of crypto firms, stablecoins and the environmental footprint of crypto mining. It excludes **NFT** (non-fungible tokens)

Provisions:

- **Minimum Liquidity:** MiCA would mandate currencies like stablecoin issuers to maintain **minimum liquidity** to provide for sudden large withdrawals by users, and the **reserves** must also be protected from **insolvency**.
- **Supervision:** The European Banking Authority (EBA) has been brought in to supervise stablecoins, and the law asks stablecoin issuers to provide claims to investors free of charge. In addition,
- **Capping:** Large coins which are used as a means of payment will be capped at €200 million worth of transactions per day.
- **Public register:** MiCA requires the EBA to maintain a public register of non-compliant crypto asset service providers (CASPs).
- **Mandatory to declare Environmental footprint:** Under MiCA, crypto companies will be required to declare their environmental and climate footprint.

Science-Tech & Environment

Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022 Notified

MoEFCC has notified Forest (conservation) Rules 2022, under the Forest (conservation) Act, 1980.

New Rules says:

- **On monitoring:** Constitute an advisory committee, a regional empowered committee and a screening committee at the State/UT
- **Integrated Regional Office:** It will examine all the linear projects (e.g. roads, highways, etc) involving land up to 40 hectares and the use of forest land up to 0.7 canopy density
- **Time frame:** A fixed time for quicker review of each project
- **Responsibility to states:** States are given the responsibility of settling forest rights of forest dwellers (Forest Rights Act, 2006) and allowing diversion of forest land.

- **Allows compensatory afforestation (CA) in other states:** If the state already has over **two-thirds area under green cover or over one-third area under forest cover**, then CA could be taken in other states/UTs where the cover is **less than 20%**

IDIOT syndrome

- **The Internet Derived Information Obstructing Treatment (IDIOT) syndrome** medically called **cyberchondria** is when people blindly trust medical information available online and stop their treatment abruptly thus leading to making treatment for any disease hard for doctors.
- Due to innovations in technology, the expectations of people and patients on doctors are increasing.

ISRO's 'POEM' platform

The PSLV Orbital Experimental Module is a platform that will help perform in-orbit experiments using the final, and otherwise discarded, stage of ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

PSLV: The PSLV is a **four-stage rocket** where the first three spent stages fall back into the ocean, and the final stage (PS4) — after launching the satellite into orbit — **ends up as space junk**. However, in the PSLV-C53 mission, the spent final stage will be utilised as a **"stabilised platform" to perform experiments**.

Payloads: POEM is carrying six payloads, including two from Indian space **start-ups Digantara** (for making the map of space radiations, debris, and orbits) **and Dhruva Space** (for full-stack satellite development, launch, deployment, operation and maintenance services)

Lisbon Declaration

2nd UNOC ended with Lisbon Declaration titled '**Our Ocean, Our Future: call for action**'. It was co-hosted by Kenya and Portugal in Lisbon. 1st UNOC was in UN HQ (New York) in 2017

Lisbon Declaration

- Protecting **at least 30%** of national maritime zones by 2030
- Achieving **carbon neutrality by 2040**
- Allocating funds to research on **ocean acidification, climate resilience and surveillance**
- **Scale-up Science-based** and innovative actions to address ocean emergency
- Support implementation of **SDG14 (life below water) by empowering women and girls-** recognising their participation is crucial to building a sustainable ocean-based economy
- **Protect biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**, which lie outside the 200-mile (322-kilometre) exclusive economic zones of countries.

Best Practices for managing plastic waste

- **Arunachal Pradesh:** Plastic banks were established in one district; Plastic was used in Road Construction in variable districts
- **Delhi:** Environmental compensation of INR 88,00,000/- levied for violation of PWM Rules
- **Tamil Nadu** Collection efficiency of plastic waste is 92%
- **Sikkim:** Usage of plastic waste in road construction initiated
- **Uttarakhand:** The use of plastic waste as fuel, RDF and waste in energy plants is proposed
- **Biodegradable cutlery:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Lab DFRL has developed technology for biodegradable cutlery

TiHAN

- **Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation**
- Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation” is a multidisciplinary initiative, which aims at making **India a global player in the futuristic and next-generation “Smart Mobility” technology.**
- It is seen as one of the steps toward India’s vision of ‘**Atmanibhar Bharat**’, ‘**Skill India**’ and ‘**Digital India**’.
- The focus will be on solving various challenges **hindering the real-time adoption of unmanned autonomous vehicles for both terrestrial and aerial applications.**
- There is no such testbed facility in India to evaluate the autonomous navigation of vehicles. TiHAN aims to fill this gap by developing **a fully functional and exemplary testbed facility dedicated to connected autonomous vehicles (CAVs).**

India’s supercomputing capabilities

- As per the **global ranking service of super-computers** (Top 500), India has only 3 top-ranked supercomputers among 500 and none in the top 100.
- **Param Siddhi** (5.27 PFlops), **Param Ganga** (1.66 PFlops) and **Pratyush supercomputer** (Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology’s))
- **World: China and the US account for nearly two-thirds** of the top 500 supercomputers in the world.
- **Frontier Supercomputer:** The world’s fastest supercomputer, *Frontier*, located at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, offers a peak performance of **1,685 PFlops.**

What are quarks?

Quarks are elementary particles that come in six “flavours”: up, down, charm, strange, top, and bottom. They usually combine together in **groups of twos and threes** to form **hadrons** such as protons and neutrons that make up atomic nuclei.

- **Strong force:** The interaction of quarks was tied to one of the fundamental forces of nature called the **strong force**. The force not only holds the insides of atoms together but is important in the interactions of other sub-atomic particles that make the universe tick.
- **Hadrons:** any of the subatomic particles (such as protons and neutrons) that are made up of quarks and are subject to strong force.

Anthrax outbreak in Kerala

- **An outbreak of Anthrax** has been declared in Athirappilly of Thrissur district, after finding several carcasses of wild boar.
- Anthrax is a serious infectious disease, which is caused by **spore-forming bacteria**.
- Anthrax is also called **wool sorter's disease or malignant pustule**. It is a rare but serious disease, caused due to rod-shaped bacteria called **Bacillus anthracis**. These bacteria occur naturally in soil.
- As per WHO, Anthrax is a disease of **herbivores**, affecting wild as well as domestic animals. It is a zoonotic disease; thus, **it is transmissible from animals to humans**.

Banni grasslands

The Gujarat Forest department will restore **10,000 hectares of the Banni grasslands** in the coming year.

Under Bonn declaration: India's endeavour to reach the target of **restoring 26 million hectares** of degraded land by 2030.

About

- **Location:** It is the largest grassland (accounting for 45% of pastures in Gujarat) in Asia situated near the **Great Rann of Kutch** in Gujarat.
- **Ecosystem and Vegetation:** Two ecosystems, wetlands and grasslands, are mixed side by side in Banni.
- It is dominated by **low-growing plants, forbs and graminoids**, many of which are halophiles (salt-tolerant).
- It is a **Reserve Forest** (most restricted forest; local people are prohibited unless specifically allowed by a Forest Officer in the course of the settlement).
- **Maldharis** are a tribal herdsmen community inhabiting Banni.
- It is one of the last remaining habitats of the **cheetah** in India and a possible **reintroduction site** for the species.

Issues facing: heavy uncontrolled **grazing**, widespread ingress of **Prosopis Juliflora** (a harmful exotic tree species), **dams** constructed on rivers flowing towards Banni, periodic occurrence of **droughts** and continuous increase in **soil salinity**.

Economics

Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB)

The government has transformed Banks Board Bureau (BBB) into Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) by making some amendments.

Aim:

- It will make recommendations for **appointments of full-time directors as well as the non-executive chairman** of banks and financial institutions.
- Issues guidelines to select **general managers and directors of public sector general insurance companies**.

Why the need for revamping:-

- **Delhi HC order:** Delhi high court last year observed that the bureau was not a competent body to recommend appointments at PSU general insurers, and held that circulars enabling BBB to select general managers and directors of PSU insurers were not legally valid. Thus, the need for an overhaul.
- **Slow recruitment process:** Despite the BBB's good work, recruitment to a higher level has been slow. Also, BBB's extended two-year term ended, and new recruitments can restart only when a new body is in place.

About BBB: It was **set up in February 2016** as an **autonomous body**– based on the recommendations of the **RBI-appointed Nayak Committee**. It was part of **the Indradhanush Plan**.

Dumping

In recent times, **India's optical fibre industry** has seen unfair competition from cheap imports from China, Indonesia and South Korea. These countries have been **dumping** their products in India at rates lower than the market price.

When the **goods are exported by a country** to a foreign country at a **price lower than the price it charges** in its own home market is called dumping.

Dumping is a situation of **international price discrimination** this unfair trade practice has a **negative impact on international trade**.

Dumping is legal: Under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, **dumping is illegal** only if the foreign country can **reliably show the negative effects** the exporting firm has caused its domestic producers. In order to protect domestic producers from dumping, countries use **tariffs and quotas**.

Anti-dumping is a protectionist tariff, imposed by a domestic government on foreign imports that are at a price lower than the price it normally charges in its own home market.

Development of Enterprise and Service Hubs (DESH)

The government plans to table the **Development of Enterprise and Service Hubs (DESH) Bill** to overhaul the **special economic zones (SEZ) legislation**. DESHs as the DESH Act will replace the current SEZ Act of 2005.

Why replace the existing SEZ Act?

WTO's dispute settlement panel has ruled that India's export-related schemes, including the SEZ Scheme, were **inconsistent with WTO rules** since they directly linked **tax benefits to exports**.

- Countries aren't allowed to **directly subsidize exports** as it can distort market prices.

Why SEZ is not so popular now?

- **MAT and Sunset clause:** SEZ started losing its allure after the **introduction of minimum alternate tax and a sunset clause** to remove tax sops.
 - SEZ units used to enjoy **100% income tax exemption** on export income for the first five years, **50%** for the next five years, and **50%** of the ploughed back export profit for another five years.

How is the DESH legislation different?

- **Boost domestic manufacturing:** The DESH legislation goes beyond promoting exports and has a much wider objective of boosting domestic manufacturing and job creation through **'development hubs'**.
 - These hubs will no longer be required to be **net foreign exchange positive** cumulatively in five years (i.e, export more than they import) as mandated in the SEZ regime, and will be allowed to sell in the domestic area more easily. The hubs will, therefore, be **WTO-compliant**.

- **Single window portal:** DESH legislation also provides for an online single-window portal for the grant of time-bound approvals for establishing and operating the hubs.

Service Charges

Context: Central Consumer Protection Authority (**CCPA**) (regulator under the **Consumer protection act 2019**) barred hotels and restaurants from adding service charges automatically or by default to the food bill.

What are service charges?

They are a **type of fee collected** to pay for services associated with the purchase of the primary product or service.

Current Affairs Update (July 15-30)

National

Simultaneous Elections

Simultaneous Election (SE) is an exercise of the democratic process wherein the **elections** to the various house (Lok Sabha and state assemblies) and bodies are **synchronized together** to have **more efficiency** and **save expenditure**.

In India, SE was the norm till 1967, however, more recently **Niti Aayog, Law Commission Report**, and our **Prime minister** have pushed for SE to make the election in India a **meaningful democratic exercise**.

Benefits of having SE:

- **Reduce Policy paralysis:** Imposition of **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** over the state for a **longer period of time** leads to stoppage of developmental programs.
- **Reduce huge expenditures on elections:** Around Rs 55,000crore (\$8 billion), was spent during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections (as per the report by the Centre for Media Studies)
- **Reduce the disruption of public life:** Regular elections impact the functioning of essential services such as regular transport, prices of essentials, etc.
- **Reduce the impact on social fabric:** Elections are known to perpetuate religion, caste, corruption, and communal tensions.
- **Reduce the impact of populist measures:** Populist measures are often not in sync with the **economic principles** and have a **narrow vision of immediate electoral gains**.
- **Increase voter turnout:** Frequent election leads to voters' exhaustion and reduces their participation in the democratic process.

Limitations to SE:

- **Limitation of democratic principles:** Curtailing the terms of the existing legislature to synchronize the election will **undermine democracy and federalism**.
- **Limitation of Voter Behaviour:** Some political scientists' say voters may be **influenced to vote on national issues** (thus **benefiting national parties**) even for State elections, thereby diluting electoral neutrality
- **Limitation of Accountability:** Frequent election ensures political and developmental accountability of parties in power. But SE might dilute that.

- **Constitutional limitation:** SE would require amendment in the provisions of the constitution, RPA 1951, and ratification by states. It may be hard to get in a multiparty and diverse country like India.

Some countries where Simultaneous Elections are successfully implemented: SE are successfully held in **South Africa** (national and provincial), and **Sweden** (including local election as well on the same day).

Freebies culture

SC has a direct union government to consult the finance commission on whether it is possible to regulate the distribution of freebies by political parties using public money.

Stand of ECI on freebies: It said it has **no power to regulate** the same or take action against parties making such poll promises. **ECI cannot regulate policy decisions:** “offering/distribution of any freebies either before or after the election is a policy decision of the party concerned.

Impact of such freebies on state budgets:

Expenditure side:

- **Huge drain on state resources:** farm loan waiver in Maharashtra resulted in an outgo of **Rs 45,000-51,000 crore** during the financial year 2020-21.
- **Lack of specific outcome targets:** No responsibility for the money spent. Telangana has committed **35%** of revenue receipts, **almost 63%** of the state’s own tax revenue, to finance populist schemes which are cantered on freebies.

Revenue side:

- **Negative impact on state-owned enterprises:** leading loss-making PSU’s. March report from ICRA, subsidy payments by governments were estimated to comprise 16% of Discom revenues at an all -India level in 2021-22.
- **Low tax collections:** due to Free electricity, free water, free rides etc., there is no realization of tax on these.

Political:

- **Competitive manifestos,** sometimes seem **impractical and illogical and unimplementable.** It leads to the **degeneration** of the political agenda. This can even lead to the wastage of resources on frivolous promises without any real results to show.

Issues with Freebies culture:

- **Huge debt burden:** The debt-to-GDP ratio of Punjab reached **53.3%** in 2021-22 due to the high-subsidy burden.
- **Creates a never-ending cycle of freebies:** as populist schemes are countered with more populist measures.
- **Social inequalities:** With the **Rajasthan government's** decision to revert to the old pension scheme for its employees, just 6% of the population captures benefits as high as **56%** of the pension and salary expenditure.
- **More expenditure towards servicing just interest costs:** Andhra Pradesh spent roughly **13%** of its budget of 22,000 crores on interest payments.

Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on E-commerce

Issues highlighted by the report:

- **Few platforms control a large part of the e-commerce** market (which may lead to monopoly)
- **Lack of platform neutrality**, i.e., providing preferential treatment to selected sellers
- **Deep discounting**, e., discounts of preferred sellers are selectively funded by the platform
- **Non-transparent** search rankings
- **Misuse of data**

Indian Antarctica Bill, 2022

The Lok Sabha passed the **Indian Antarctica Bill, 2022** under its obligations as a signatory to the **Antarctic Treaty**

Objectives: To demilitarise Antarctica, establish it as a zone free of nuclear tests and the disposal of radioactive waste, and ensure that it is used for peaceful purposes only; to promote international scientific cooperation in Antarctica and to set aside disputes over territorial sovereignty.

The Antarctic treaty (signed in **1959** and implemented in **1961**) made it mandatory for the **54 signatory countries** to specific laws governing territories on which their stations are located. India signed the treaty in **1983** and therefore a law was needed to preserve the pristine Antarctic environment and ocean around it.

Key features of the bill:

- **Applicability:** It will apply to any person, foreigners, corporations, firms, vessels or aircraft that is a part of an Indian expedition to Antarctica.

- **Central Committee:** 10 members (to be nominated from various ministries) + two experts (on the Antarctic) + chairman (Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Science)
 - It will give **permits, ensure compliance and review** information provided by parties to the treaty.
 - **Private tours and expeditions to Antarctica** would be prohibited without a permit or written authorisation by a Member country.
 - **Permit can be granted** only after the environmental impact assessment and waste management plan have been prepared.
- **Prohibited activities:** The Bill prohibits certain activities in Antarctica including
 - **nuclear explosion** or disposal of radioactive wastes
 - introduction of **non-sterile soil**
 - **discharge of garbage, plastic** or other substance into the sea which is harmful to the marine environment.
- **Offences and penalties** (extends the jurisdiction of Indian courts to Antarctica) :
 - Conducting a nuclear explosion in Antarctica will be punishable with an **imprisonment of 20 years** which may extend to life imprisonment and a fine of at least Rs 50 crore.
 - **Drilling for mineral resources** or introducing **non-native animals or plants** in Antarctica without a permit will be punishable with imprisonment of up to seven years and a fine between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 50 lakh.
 - The **central government may notify one or more Sessions Courts** to be the Designated Court under the Bill and specify its territorial jurisdiction to try offences punishable under the Bill.
- **Antarctic Fund:** For the welfare of Antarctic research work and the protection of the Antarctic environment.

Impact of Social Media on the institution of judiciary

- **Impact on accused**
 - **Damages dignity of accused:** Social media usually portrays the accused as a villain not based on facts but only to **sensationalize the news**, which causes damage to the dignity of the accused. E.g. Parents of Arushi Talwar in Arushi murder case (2008)

- **Issue of Media trial:** Media trial describes the impact of television and print media coverage on a case through an attempt by the media to **hold the accused guilty** even before the trial begins.
 - Biased views being propagated by media are affecting the people, weakening democracy, and harming the system. In this process, **justice delivery** gets adversely affected.
- **Impact on victim**
 - **Mental trauma to the victim:** In cases of a sexual offense, the explicit description of the ordeal on television creates mental torture to the victim. It leads to a breach of privacy, a bias in public opinion, as well as interferes with the sentencing process.
- **Impact on Judges**
 - **Lowers the faith in judge's decision**
 - **Influences judge:** Social media draws the judge's attention to **details** that are not to be addressed in adjudicating the case and could subconsciously influence the judge's judgment.
- Impact on the society and legal system
 - **Threat to judicial institutions**
 - **Violates principle of natural justice**
- **Ethical and privacy impact in Judicial cases:** In an open court trial, protecting privacy becomes very difficult, especially for women, children, and teenagers and also those who do not know how to protect their personal information on the web.

Soorai Pottru

Tamil movie "Soorai Pottru" bagged national awards for the Best Feature Film, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Background Score and Best Screenplay at **the 68th National Film Awards**.

NAMASTE Scheme

- Govt. has formulated the **NAMASTE scheme (national action for mechanized sanitation ecosystem)** for cleaning sewers, and septic tanks (to be implemented **from 2022 to 2026**)
- **Aim:** It aims to **achieve outcomes like zero fatalities** in sanitation work in India, no sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter and all Sewer and Septic tank sanitation workers have access to alternative livelihoods.
- **Nodal Ministries:** Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

- **It will replace the previous scheme:** Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers.
- Skill Development and training of **Safai Mitras** are being taken up with the support of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment through the **National Safai Karamchari Finance Development Corporation**.

Karakoram Anomaly

'Karakoram Anomaly' is the abnormal growth of glaciers in the central Karakoram (whereas in other parts, there has been a retreat of glaciers)

In a paper published in **the American Meteorological Society's Journal of Climate**, has for 1st time found that **winter precipitation associated with Western Disturbance (WD)** has been triggering and sustaining this anomaly.

International

World Press Freedom Index 2022

India has been ranked India at **150** (declined from 142) **among 180 countries** on **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**

Important Findings:

- **Top:** Norway (1st) Denmark (2nd), Sweden (3rd)
- **Worse:** North Korea (bottom) and Russia were placed in 155th position.
- **Increased polarization:** The report reveals a **two-fold increase in "polarisation"** amplified by information chaos, that is, media polarisation fuelling divisions within countries, as well as polarization between countries at the international level.

Twiplomacy

It has been observed recently that many world leaders use Twitter as a means to communicate and put out their views to the public.

Twitter diplomacy, also called "**Twiplomacy**" or "**hashtag diplomacy**" is the use of the social media website **Twitter by heads of state**, leaders of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and their diplomats to **conduct diplomatic outreach and public diplomacy**.

Russia to quit International Space Station after 2024

Russia is all set to exit the International Space Station after 2024. Russia took this decision after escalation of tensions between Russia and the West due to Russian military intervention in Ukraine and

sanctions against Russia. Russia and the United States have been working side by side on the International Space Station since 1998, when it was deployed

The International Space Station is jointly run by space agencies of US, Russia, Japan, Canada and Europe. It was first placed in orbit in 1998. It is continuously inhabiting since last 22 years.

Science-Tech & Environment

India Designates 5 New Ramsar Sites

India has designated five (5) new wetlands of International importance, which include

- **Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest (TN):** It is a **freshwater marsh** in Chennai. It is the **only surviving wetland ecosystem** in Chennai and the last remaining natural wetlands of South India.
- **Karikili Bird Sanctuary (TN):** Located in the Kancheepuram District of Tamil Nadu
- **Pichavaram Mangrove (TN):** It is located near Chidambaram in the Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu. It could be counted among the largest mangrove forests in the country (more than 1100 hectares).
- **Pala wetland (Mizoram):** It is the **largest natural wetland** in Mizoram. The wetland is surrounded by green woodlands.
- **Sakhya Sagar (MP):** This lake is an integral part of **Madhav National Park in Shivpuri**, Madhya Pradesh.

The Ramsar sites have been increased from **49 to 54 Ramsar sites**.

Bioeconomy

BIRAC (Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council) releases the Indian Bio-economy Report (IBER) 2022

- **Definition:** As per FAO, bioeconomy is **“the production, use and conservation of biological resources with the aim of moving towards a sustainable economy”**.
- **Aim:** The ultimate aim is to protect the **environment, avoid overexploitation of natural resources** and enhance **biodiversity**.
- **Example:** Bioplastics, biofuels, biodegradable clothing, biomass (for energy), natural farming (for food) etc.
- **Findings of the report:** Bioeconomy size in India is **USD 80bn**; BioAgri (e.g. biopesticides, marine biotech, Bt Cotton) will double its contribution

- **India's initiatives:** National Mission on Bioeconomy (2016); National Biopharma Mission (Industry + Academia for indigenous manufacture in biopharma); Bio-incubators (startups); Bio-clusters (e.g. NCR, Bangalore, Pune etc.); Ethanol blending target; National Policy on Biofuels.

ISRO's upcoming mission

- **Gaganyaan abort mission** (India's 1st manned mission) – scheduled for later in 2022
- **XpoSat** (designed to study cosmic x-rays): XpoSat will be India's second astronomical observatory in space after the Astrosat.
- **'Space docking experiment' (2024):** Space docking is a process of joining two separately launched spacecraft, and is mainly used for setting up modular space stations.
- **Aditya L1 mission:** Indian spacecraft going 1.5 million km away to the L1 or Lagrangian point between the Sun and Earth.
- **Chandrayaan 3:** It will be a lander-rover mission that aims for a soft landing on the Moon that was planned for the second lunar mission.
- **Three Earth Observation Satellites (EOSs) (2022):** EOS-4 (Risat-1A) and EOS-6 (Oceansat-3) — will be launched using Isro's workhorse PSLV, the third one, EOS-2 (Microsat), will be launched in the first developmental flight of the **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)**.
- **Shukrayaan Mission:** The ISRO is also planning a mission to Venus, tentatively called Shukrayaan.
- **Own Space Station:** India is planning to launch its own space station by 2030, joining the league of the US, Russia, and China as an elite space club.

Crypto-jacking

Crypto-jacking is a cyber-attack wherein a computing device is hijacked and controlled by the attacker, and its resources are used **to illicitly mine cryptocurrency**.

Economics

EU's palm oil row with Malaysia and Indonesia

European Union previously decided to **phase out** the import of **unsustainable palm oil** by 2030. **Indonesia and Malaysia** say the **EU's palm oil** restrictions are unfair, "discriminatory", and "crop apartheid" and challenged the EU in the WTO.

- **Indonesia and Malaysia**, are the world's two largest palm oil producers, accounting for **90% of the global production**. However, most of it is produced on the plantation by clearing rainforests.
- **ReFuelEU initiative:** EU lawmakers adopted draft rules for the ReFuelEU initiative, which would mean 85% of all used aviation fuel would have to be "sustainable" by 2050.

About Palm Oil:

- It is an edible vegetable oil derived from the **mesocarp (reddish pulp)** of the fruit of the oil palms.
- **Uses:** As a cooking oil, in cosmetics, processed foods, cakes, chocolates, soaps, spreads, shampoo, and biofuel (the use of crude palm oil in making biodiesel is being branded as ‘**green diesel**’)
- It is **inexpensive** and produces more oil per hectare as compared to other alternatives such as **soybean**.
- **India** is the biggest importer of palm oil (almost 40% of its need)
- **Government initiatives: National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm**(to boost India’s domestic palm oil production by 3 times (till 2025-26)); Kharif Strategy 2021 for oilseeds; yellow revolution.

MIST Submarine Cable System

Context: Expert appraisal Committee (Ministry of forest and Climate Change) has given the coastal Regulatory Zone clearance for the 8100 KM long Myanmar/Malaysia-India-Singapore Transit (MIST) Submarine cable System connecting **Tuas (Singapore) to Mumbai**.

MIST will directly connect Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and India (Mumbai and Chennai) and deliver a design capacity of more than **216 terabits per second (Tbps)**

Submarine Cable: A submarine cable system consists of a communication cable laid on the sea bed between cable landing stations (CLS) on the land to carry telecommunication signals across stretches of ocean. Submarine cable systems generally use **optical fibre cables** to carry international traffic.

Report on Digital Banks

Niti Aayog has called for setting up Digital Banks (DBs). It has highlighted the challenges presented by the ‘**partnership model**’ of **neo-banking**—which has emerged in India due to a **regulatory vacuum** and the absence of a digital bank licence.

Digital Banks: The Digital Banking definition is banking done through the digital platform, doing away with all the paperwork like cheques, pay-in slips, Demand Drafts, and so on.

Other measures are taken for financial inclusion in India: Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, India Stack, Aadhaar, UPI, extending microcredit facilities to street vendors through PM-SVANIDHI, ‘**open banking**’ through the **Account Aggregator (AA) regulatory framework**.

Central Bank Digital Currency

- **A Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)**, or national digital currency, is simply the digital form of a country’s fiat currency.

- Instead of printing paper currency or minting coins, the central bank issues electronic tokens. This token value is backed by the full faith and credit of the government.
- **CBDC** is not comparable with private virtual currencies or cryptocurrencies. It will be a sovereign-backed digital currency.

Challenges in rolling out National Digital Currency:

1. Potential **cybersecurity threat**.
2. Lack of **digital literacy** of the population.
3. Issue with **regulation, tracking investment** and purchase, taxing individuals, etc.
4. **Threat to Privacy:** The digital currency must collect certain basic information about an individual so that the person can prove that he's the holder of that digital currency.

White Onion gets GI tags

Location: Alibagh (Maharashtra) is known for growing white onion using the traditional method and utilizing geo-climatic conditions for a unique taste, flavour and shape.

A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

Sports GK

44th International Chess Olympiad

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate 44th International Chess Olympiad on July 28, 2022. The Olympiad will be inaugurated at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai.

The 44th chess Olympiad was originally scheduled to be organised at Khanty-Mansiysk, along with the Chess World Cup 2019. However, it later moved to Moscow for 5 to 17 August 2020. However, it was postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the event was relocated to Chennai, in the aftermath of Russian invasion of Ukraine. France's International Arbiter Laurent Freyd will be the Chief Arbiter of the event.