



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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SC Verdict on Same Sex Marriages

Syllabus: GS2/Polity/GS1/Indian Society

In News

- The Supreme Court unanimously **ruled against legalising same sex marriage in India.**

Highlights of the Supreme Court Verdict

- **The fundamental right to marry:** Judges agreed that **there is no fundamental right to marry** and the majority view is that the **legislature or Parliament must decide on bringing in same-sex marriage.**

- This is because granting same-sex couples the right to marry or enter into a union **will involve changes to a vast range of legislative architectures and policies.**
- **Interpretation of Special Marriage Act:** The verdict mentioned that the SC cannot strike down the provisions of the Special Marriage Act (SMA) or read words differently.
 - The petitioners had asked the SC to interpret the word marriage as between “**spouses**” instead of “**man and woman**” and to **strike down provisions of the SMA that are gender-restrictive.**
 - All judges unanimously agreed that **it is not possible to tweak the Special Marriage Act, 1954** by using gender neutral language to allow same-sex marriage.
- **Right to adopt a child:** The specific guidelines by the **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)** disallows same-sex or unmarried couples from jointly adopting a child.
 - The verdict found that **it is discriminatory** to assume that only married, heterosexual couples can provide a safe space for raising children.
 - Ultimately, the **court shifted the burden to the executive** – and encouraged it to reconsider the laws on adoption in line with the best interests and welfare of children.
- **Civil unions:** The bench also ruled in a 3:2 verdict against **civil unions for non-heterosexual couples.**
 - A ‘civil union’ refers to the **legal status that allows same-sex couples specific rights and responsibilities** that are normally conferred upon married couples.
 - Although a civil union resembles a marriage, it does not have the same recognition in personal law as marriage.
 - All judges took note of the Centre’s stand that a **high-level Cabinet committee will look into rights that can be conferred on non-heterosexual couples.**

Special Marriage Act of 1954

- All marriages in India can be registered under the **respective personal law Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Muslim Marriage Act, 1954, or under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.**
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 is an Act of the Parliament of India with provision for civil marriage for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, **irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party.**
- The couples have to serve a notice with the relevant documents to the Marriage Officer 30 days before the intended date of the marriage.

Arguments in Favour of Same Sex Marriages in India

- The right to marry will mean LGBTQIA+ **couples can avail the benefits and rights that come with the institution of marriage**, such as insurance, adoption, and inheritance.
- **Civil unions are not an equal alternative and do not address constitutional anomalies** due to exclusion.
 - The exclusion sends a message that the **latter's marriages are not as significant as "real" marriages**.
- Over **50 countries allow adoption rights of same-sex couples**, which is more than the countries that allow same-sex marriages.
 - The exclusion of same-sex couples from adopting has the effect of **reinforcing the disadvantage already faced by the queer community**.
 - **Law cannot make an assumption on good and bad parenting** based on the sexuality of individuals.

Arguments Against Same Sex Marriages in India

- The fundamental importance of marriage remains that it is **based on personal preference and confers social status**.
 - Importance of something to an individual **does not per se justify considering it a fundamental right**, even if that preference enjoys popular acceptance or support.
- While **the concept of gender may be fluid, the concepts of mother and motherhood are not**.
 - Entire architecture of laws is to protect the interest and the welfare of children who are naturally born to heterosexual persons, and the State is justified in treating heterosexuals and homosexuals differently.
- The court could not interpret the SMA to include same-sex couples since the **objective of the legislation is not to include same-sex couples within the realm of marriage**.

Conclusion

- The court stated that a **queer person has the right to choose** an emotional, intimate and/ or live-in partner, even if such a relationship does not amount to a marriage or civil union.
 - This is largely a **restatement of the law laid down in 'Navtej Singh Johar'**, where the court had decriminalised homosexuality by striking down **Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code**.
- It has become amply clear that extending marriage to queer couples is a **far more complex issue than the petitioners may have initially anticipated**.

- **New laws will have to be written**, and wholesale amendments will have to be made to existing laws.
- The legislature must now take the lead in **re-evaluating and improving Indian family law** to make it **more inclusive, gender-just, and non-discriminatory**.

Source: [IE](#)

The High Cost of Cheap Water Report

Syllabus: GS3/Environment Conservation

News:

- The **global water crisis threatens \$58 trillion in economic value, food security and sustainability**, according to The High Cost of Cheap Water Report.

About

- The report was released on the occasion of **World Food Day October 16 by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)**.
- The amount — \$58 trillion — is the first ever annual estimate of the economic value of water and freshwater ecosystems. It is **equivalent to 60 per cent of global gross domestic product**, the report elaborated.

Key Findings

- Degradation of rivers, lakes, wetlands and aquifers threatens their economic value and their **irreplaceable role in sustaining not only our food security, but also human and planetary health**.
- Water and freshwater ecosystems offer several **direct and indirect benefits**.
 - **Direct economic benefits**, such as water consumption for households, irrigated agriculture and industries, amount to a minimum of **\$7.5 trillion annually**, according to the report.
 - At the same time, **unseen benefits — purifying water, enhancing soil health, storing carbon, and protecting communities** from extreme floods and droughts — are seven times higher at around **\$50 trillion annually**.
- **Downward spiral:**
 - The world has **lost a third of its remaining wetlands** since 1970, while **freshwater wildlife populations** have, on average, dropped by **83 percent**.
 - This has contributed to growing numbers of people facing **water shortages and food insecurity, with rivers and lakes drying up**, increasing pollution and food sources such as freshwater fisheries

dwindling. E.g. **80% of the floodplains along the Danube**, the second longest river of Europe, after the Volga, have been **lost**.

Humans to blame

- The report noted that **unsustainable agricultural practices** were among the primary threats to rivers and floodplains.
 - **Agriculture currently accounts for over 70 per cent of the freshwater** used by humanity, according to data from the World Bank.
 - **Over-extraction of water for crop irrigation also reduces its availability for other uses**, such as natural flows that support fisheries.
 - Agricultural fields now occupy floodplains. This has **reduced the purification, flood and drought risk capacities** of river systems.
- Also, **excessive fertilizer use** creates diffuse pollution affecting surface and groundwater.
- The current food production practices are **not only harming freshwater ecosystems**, but are also identified as the **primary contributors to biodiversity loss and climate change**. They are causing **land erosion and reducing the capacity of landscapes** to deal with water scarcity and droughts.

Measures Needed

- Threats to river systems are **threats to food security**. Hence, only by **protecting and restoring rivers and their active and former floodplains**, can we hope to maintain the productivity of agricultural systems into the future.
- The countries must **support nature-positive food production and maintain free-flowing rivers** for agricultural productivity.
- The world must also apply **sustainable land use practices** to facilitate natural water retention and **adopt diets that reduce demand for products that strain freshwater**.

Way Ahead:

- The report made a pitch for **healthy water ecosystems** which plays a key role in **climate adaptation** by mitigating extreme floods, building resilience to droughts, protecting against storms and erosion, regulating temperatures and micro-climates, and sustaining deltas.

Source: [DTE](#)

New Evolutionary Law

Syllabus: GS3/ Science & Technology

News:

- Scientists have proposed a new evolutionary law that can explain the **evolution of living and non-living entities, from minerals to stars.**

About

- As per the study, Natural systems, living and non-living entities, evolve to states of greater patterning, diversity and complexity.
- As **life evolved from single-celled to multi-celled organisms**, Earth's minerals, for example, became more complex, creating diversity. This, in turn, **drove biological evolution.**
- **Biodiversity leads to mineral diversity and vice-versa.** The two systems, biological and mineral, interacted to create life as we know it today, the researchers explained.

About the study:

- The researchers proposed that evolution occurs when a **new configuration or a new arrangement of atoms and molecules works well and functions improve.**
- **Selection of function, they explained, is key to evolution.** Darwin defined function as primarily with survival but the new study highlights at least **three kinds of functions** that occur in nature.
 - The first function is **stability**, which means systems made up of stable arrangements of atoms or molecules will continue to survive.
 - The second one includes **dynamic systems with energy supply.**
 - The third is "**novelty**" – the tendency of evolving systems to explore new configurations or arrangements that can give rise to new behaviours or characteristics.
- An example of novelty is when **single-celled organisms evolved to use light to make food.** Other examples include new behaviours among multicellular species such as **swimming, walking, flying and thinking.**
- Similarly, early minerals on Earth possessed a **stable arrangement of atoms, which acted as foundations for the evolution** of the next generations of minerals. These minerals were then incorporated into life. For example, minerals are present in living organisms' shells, teeth and bones.
 - For example, in the early years of the Solar System, Earth was **home to 20 minerals, which evolved to almost 6,000 known minerals today** thanks to ever more complex physical, chemical and ultimately biological processes over 4.5 billion years.
- As for stars, the first ones that formed after the Big Bang had two main ingredients: **Hydrogen and helium.** Those earliest stars used these ingredients to make about 20 heavier chemical elements. The next generation of stars consequently produced almost 100 more elements.

- The universe generates novel combinations of atoms, molecules, cells, etc. Those combinations that are stable and can go on to engender even more novelty will continue to evolve.

Way Forward

- The law has **implications for a wide range of complex evolving systems**. It might apply to various domains of science, ranging from astrophysics to ecology to artificial intelligence.

Source: [DTE](#)

OBC Faculties in Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs)

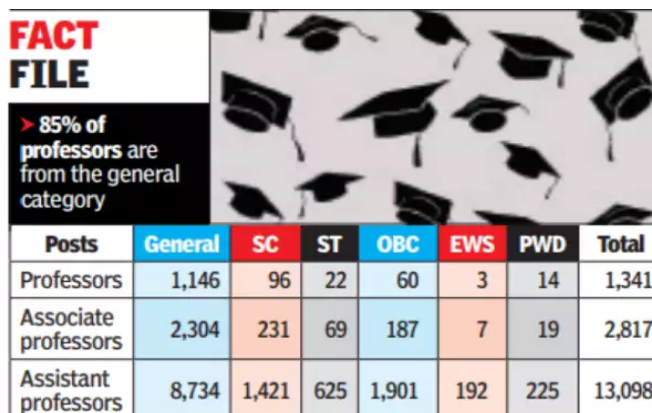
Syllabus: GS2/Social Issues

Context:

- Parliament of India was informed about the shortfall in the recruitment of professors belonging to **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** in higher educational institutes (HEIs).

About:

- A reply to a **starred question in Parliament** was based on annual data published by the University Grants Commission (UGC).
 - It stated that **only 4% of the professors recruited were from the OBC category**.
- The share of total OBC faculty at any level (professor, associate professor and assistant professor) for any year is less than the constitutionally mandated 27%.
- **On March 31, 2020**, there were only nine professors (0.85%) and 38 associate professors (1.41%) in the OBC category, which rose to 60 professors (4.5%) and 187 associate professors (6.5%) as on **March 31, 2023**.
 - It shows **an increase** of about seven times and five times in professors and associate professors from the OBC category, respectively, **within three years**.
- Share of OBCs at all levels of teaching was just 3.18% in **all IITs** and less than 0.1% for professors and associate professors.



Posts	General	SC	ST	OBC	EWS	PWD	Total
Professors	1,146	96	22	60	3	14	1,341
Associate professors	2,304	231	69	187	7	19	2,817
Assistant professors	8,734	1,421	625	1,901	192	225	13,098

Do you know?

- The **27 % reservation for OBCs** in central government jobs was introduced in **1993**.
- The Central Government provides 27% reservation for OBCs in Central Government services and Central Educational Institutions.
 - The subject matter 'reservation in the particular State/UT' squarely relates to services of State/UT Governments concerned.

Why less faculty members in Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs)?

- **Reservation for OBCs at the level of professors and associate professors:** It was implemented after the introduction of the **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019**, and took shape only after 2020.
- **The Career Advancement Scheme (CAS):** The minimum teaching experience required for promotion to the post of professor and associate professor is 15 and 12 years, respectively.
 - Reservation for OBCs at the entry level (assistant professor) was implemented in 2008.
 - So, it is natural that those OBC candidates recruited after 2008 would be eligible for promotion to the post of associate professor in 2021 and to the post of professor in 2024 under this particular scheme.
- **The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019:** It is a **200-point roster** being used to earmark the posts reserved at all levels of teaching after 2020.
 - Prior to 2020, a 13-point roster was being used, which resulted in fewer posts for all reserved categories, including OBCs.

Way Forward

- The share of OBCs in total filled vacancies has increased from 2020 at all levels (professor, associate professor and assistant professor).
- It will roughly take 19, 22 and 35 years, in the case of professors, associate professors, and assistant professors, respectively, to reach the **constitutionally mandated 27% reservation for OBCs**.
- It implies that the percentage of professors, associate professors, and assistant professors from the OBC category will be around the constitutionally mandated 27% in 2039, 2042, and 2043, respectively, when one cycle of job for all levels will be complete.

[Source: TH](#)

Progress of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Syllabus: GS 3/Inclusive Growth

In News

- The SDG Summit took place in September 2023 under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly, aimed to catalyze renewed efforts towards accelerating progress on the SDGs.

About Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- The 17 SDGs and 169 targets are part of a transformative agenda - the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by 193 Member States at the UN General Assembly Summit in September 2015, and which came into effect on 1 January 2016.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all **United Nations Member States in 2015**.
- They embarked on a journey to achieve the **2030 Agenda** to promote prosperity, address inequalities while protecting the environment.
- The 17 SDGs offer the most practical and effective pathway to tackle the causes of poverty, violent conflict, human rights abuses, climate change and environmental degradation.



Importance and Objectives

- They are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.
- They are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership.
- They address the global challenges including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the world's best plan to build a better world for people and our planet by 2030.
 - Some gains on the SDGs have been made since 2015 – including in child mortality, electricity access and the battle against certain diseases .

Issues and Challenges

- The SDGs are in jeopardy as progress stalls amid the **climate crisis, economic fluctuations, conflicts** and **pandemic** aftermath.
- Lamenting the lack of progress on various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including biodiversity protection and greenhouse gas emissions, world leaders at the SDG Summit in New York once again reaffirmed their shared commitment to eradicate poverty and end hunger.
- They also recognised that the world was on track to **meet only 15% of its 169 targets that make up the 17 goals** – with quite a few going in reverse gear .
- A paper, published in by the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences identified five types of (dis)synergies that can be estimated along the value chain of an SDG intervention: those arising from resource allocations; creation of enabling environments; co-benefits; cost-effectiveness; and saturation limits.

Scenario In India

- India has made significant progress on both its climate and sustainable development goals.
 - But it still has an uphill task ahead before it can meet all the SDG targets by 2030 – as well as its promise to be net-zero by 2070.
 - In the realm of energy, which is a key contributor to both the net-zero and SDG goals, India continues to invest in high-carbon sources for reasons of security and reliability of supply

Suggestions and Way Ahead

- Today, progress is being made in many places, but, overall, action to meet the Goals is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required.
- Everyone is needed to reach these ambitious targets. The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all of society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context.
- India can require all its entities engaged in SDG reporting to start identifying and developing reporting frameworks on the value created from specific SDG interventions. Existing literature on the subject, modified to reflect national and local contexts, could provide a useful starting point for this work.
- There is an urgent need to develop a strategic roadmap to ensure success with regards to meeting the SDGs, “which should include an honest and transparent assessment of existing GOI programs that are directly or indirectly related to SDGs.”

Source:[TH](#)

Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022

Syllabus: GS3/Environment

Context:

- A disproportionately large number of species have been included in the new schedules of the Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022.

About:

- **Schedule I**, which confers the **highest protection**, contains about 600 species of vertebrates and hundreds of invertebrates, while **Schedule II** contains about 2,000 species (with 1,134 species of birds alone).

The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972:

- It provides the legal framework for the protection of various species of wild animals, management of their habitat and also for the regulation and control of trade in the products derived from various parts of wild animals. It includes:
 - Prohibition of hunting of wild animals;
 - Protection and management of wildlife areas and the animals, birds and plants in these areas;
 - Establishing new protected areas such as National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries; and
 - Control of illegal wildlife trade.

Key Changes in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2022:

- **Changes in the Preamble:** The phrase ‘protection of wild animals, birds and plants’ is substituted with the ‘**conservation, protection and management of wildlife**’.
- **Reduction of Schedules from six to four:**
 - **Schedule I:** Animal species that will enjoy the highest level of protection including those which are critically endangered.
 - **Schedule II:** Animal species that will be subject to a lesser degree of protection.
 - **Schedule III:** Protected Plant species
 - **Schedule IV:** Specimens listed in the Appendices under CITES (scheduled specimens)
- **Implementation of CITES:** The Union Government shall form a **Managing Authority** and a **Scientific Authority** to regulate import export of specimens of species.

- **Management of Wildlife Sanctuaries: State governments** have power to form an Advisory Committee consisting of Chief Wildlife Warden, members of legislature, wildlife NGOs and Panchayat Raj to manage wildlife sanctuaries.
 - It empowers the Gram Sabha and other local village institutions to collectively protect the forests, wild animals and biodiversity and take action against any activity posing threat to wildlife.

What are the issues?

Issue of Conservation:

- **The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972:** It was originally intended to regulate the use of various species (including hunting), restrict trade, and police the trafficking of species.
- **The Wild life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022:** Nowhere in the Act has a clear connection between endangerment and conservation. It aligns itself with CITES, and includes the CITES appendices as well.
- The listing of species has two direct effects:
 - The same level of protection is offered to tigers and jackals, to the great Indian bustard and common barn owls, to the king cobra and rat snakes.
 - Instead of promoting conservation, these Acts disincentive plantation owners from planting native trees, and promote exotics.

Man-Animal Conflict (Impact on people):

- Various **Schedule I** species pose enormous physical, mental and economic harm to people.
 - Crocodiles in the Andamans, leopards in certain pockets, and elephants everywhere kill people, destroy their livelihoods, and leave lasting psychological impacts.
 - The new Act elevates wild pigs and nilgai to Schedule I, which means that the few States that have now allowed limited culling of problematic animals may not be able to retain that policy.

Getting permits for research work:

- Despite the support of many individuals in the forest bureaucracy, the paperwork involved in getting permits for research is tedious and time consuming.
- The listing of such a large number of species could have debilitating effects on research.

Way Forward:

- All three issues – conservation, people's issues, and research – need to be addressed with different degrees of urgency. Those whose lives are at stake need to be safeguarded first.
- Management actions for species and habitats need to be tailored to ecology, species biology, and context.

- Both citizens and ecologists have a right to observe nature and collect data if they so desire, as long as it does not cause undue harm to populations, and follows the basic principles of the ethical treatment of animals.

[Source: TH](#)

Facts In News

Global Maritime India Summit 2023

Syllabus: GS3/Economy

In News

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the **third edition of Global Maritime India Summit 2023**.

About

- The Prime Minister also unveiled ‘**Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**’, a blueprint for the Indian maritime blue economy.
 - The blueprint outlines strategic initiatives **aimed at enhancing port facilities, promoting sustainable practices, and facilitating international collaboration**.
 - The foundation stone for projects worth more than Rs 23,000 crores that are aligned with the ‘Amrit Kaal Vision 2047’ was laid.
- **Tuna Tekra all-weather deep draft terminal**: Its foundation was laid down at **Deendayal Port Authority in Gujarat**.
 - The terminal is likely to emerge as an international trade hub, will handle next-gen vessels exceeding 18,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) and will act as a **gateway for Indian trade via the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC)**.

About Summit

- The summit provides an excellent platform for **attracting investment in the country's maritime sector**.
- The **first Maritime India summit** was held in **2016** in Mumbai while the Second Maritime Summit was held **virtually in 2021**.
- **The summit of 2023** will witness the participation of Ministers from across the globe representing countries from Europe, Africa, South America, and Asia (including central Asia, Middle East and BIMSTEC region).
 - The three-day summit will discuss and deliberate key issues of the maritime sector including ports of the future; decarbonisation; coastal shipping and inland water transportation; shipbuilding; repair and

recycling; finance, insurance & arbitration; maritime clusters; innovation & technology; maritime safety and security; and maritime tourism, among others.

What is the Blue Economy?

- The Blue Economy is defined by the World Bank as the “**sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ecosystem.**”
- The blue economy of India is a subdivision of the national economy that includes the complete ocean resources system as well as human-made economic infrastructure in the country's legal jurisdiction marine, maritime, and onshore coastal zones.
- India's blue economy accounts for roughly **4% of the GDP** and is estimated to increase once the mechanism is improved.

Source: [PIB](#)

Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)

Syllabus: Prelims/General Science, GS2/ Health

News

- **Lao People's Democratic Republic has eliminated Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)**, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

About

- This is the **country's second neglected tropical disease (NTD) to be eliminated in six years**, following the elimination of **trachoma** as a public health hazard in 2017.
- Lao PDR is now the **second country after Bangladesh to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF) in 2023**.
- Over the last 15 years, the **global population requiring LF interventions has decreased by 53 per cent**. According to WHO, this is due to the **Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis launched in 2000**.

Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)

- LF, also known as **elephantiasis**, is a **preventable mosquito-borne infectious disease**.
- **Vector:** Culex mosquitoes
- It occurs when one of the filarial (arthropod-borne) parasites — ***Wuchereria bancrofti*, *Brugia malayi* and *B. timori*** are transmitted to humans through mosquito bites.
 - The filariae are thread-like **parasitic nematodes (roundworms)** that are transmitted by arthropod vectors.

- The parasites nest in the **lymph vessels**, damaging them. This leads to **hydrocele**(swelling in the scrotum) and **lymphedema**(swelling due to build-up of lymph fluid in the body).

Treatment

- The most cost-effective method for treating all affected residents of LF-endemic areas and stopping future transmission is **mass drug administration (MDA)**.
 - WHO recommends the **triple therapy combination of ivermectin (I), diethylcarbamazine (D) and albendazole (A)**, for MDA against LF.
 - Multiple rounds of MDA, **covering over 65 per cent of the population**, are required.

Status in India

- Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana, and Bihar account for about **60% Lymphedema cases in India**.
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare recently launched nationwide **Sarva Dawa Sevan or Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign** to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) with focus on High-burden districts in states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, among others.
- India **aims to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027**, three years ahead of the global target.

Source: [DTE](#)

Provisional Coal Statistics 2022-23

Syllabus:GS3/Economy

News

- The Ministry of Coal released the statistical publication of "Provisional Coal Statistics for 2022-23".

About

- **The Provisional Coal Statistics 2022-23** provides comprehensive and detailed information on various aspects, including coal reserves, production, coal production & productivity, pit-head closing stock, performance of captive blocks & commercial blocks, dispatches, import, export, coal washeries, Royalty, DMF, NMET etc.
- **Significance:** It offers valuable insights into the dynamic landscape of the Coal and Lignite sector, enabling stakeholders to take informed decisions based on reliable data.

Production and Productivity of Coal for 2022-23

- **Total production of raw coal** in India in the year 2022-23, was **893.190 MT** whereas it was 778.210 MT in 2021-22, showing a growth of **14.77%** over the previous year.

- **The contribution of the public sector is higher** as compared to private sectors in the production of raw coal (both Coking and Non-Coking coal).
- **Odisha** registered the highest coal production (24.52%), followed by **Chhattisgarh** (20.70%), **Jharkhand** (17.52%) and **Madhya Pradesh** (16.35%).
- **96.10%** of coal production in India was from **Open Cast mines (858.342 MT)** and the rest **3.90%** was from UnderGround mines (34.848 MT).

Import & Export

- **Import of coal** in the year 2022-23, was **237.668 MT** compared to **208.627 MT in 2021- 22**, thus showcasing an increase of **13.92%** over 2021-22.
 - **It was mainly imported** from Indonesia, Australia, Russia, South Africa, USA, Singapore and Mozambique.
- **Export of coal** in the year 2022-23, was 1.163 MT compared to 1.316 MT in 2021-22. Coal was mainly exported to Nepal and Bangladesh.

Source:[PIB](#)

Delhi-Meerut RRTS Corridor

Syllabus:GS3/Infrastructure

News

- The maiden voyage of India's first regional train service, the **Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)**, also known as **RapidX**, is set to begin on a 17-kilometer stretch.

Delhi-Meerut RRTS

- **The RRTS is developed by** the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), a joint venture of the Government of India and governments of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Infrastructure:**The construction of the corridor began in **2019**.The total length of the Delhi-Meerut corridor is **82 kilometers** which will be covered in just an hour. It comprises **24 stations**. It will be completed by 2025.
- **Funding:**The project has been constructed at a cost of ₹30,274 crore. The Asian Development Bank, New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank have also funded this project.
- **Speed:**The RRTS is different from the Metro rail. It has an operational speed of **160 kilometers** per hour against the Metro's speed of 80 kph.
- **Facilities:**The RRTS trains feature several commuter-centric facilities such as overhead luggage racks, Wi-Fi, mobile and laptop charging facility at every seat. Each train will have one premium class car with wider seats, more legroom, and coat hangers. The trains will also come equipped with a vending machine facility.

- **The first phase** covering 17 kilometers will cover five stations- Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Guldhar, Duhai and the Duhai Depot. These RRTS stations will be integrated with various metro lines, airports and bus stands, wherever possible.

Source: [TH](#)

69th National Film Awards

Syllabus: Miscellaneous

Context:

- The President of India presented the **69th National Film Awards** in various categories in New Delhi.

About the 69th National Film Awards:

- It honours **films censored in the year 2021**, was announced by filmmaker Ketan Mehta who headed the 11-member jury.
- Films received awards this year have depicted issues like *climate change, girls' trafficking, oppression of women, corruption and social exploitation, and focus on various subjects like tribal communities' love for nature and art, establishment of the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, fighting with indomitable spirit amidst adversities, transformative power of education and special achievements in the field of art and culture.*

Highlights:

- **The Best Actor award:** Allu Arjun for his performance in '**Pushpa: The Rise**'.
- **The Best Actress award:**
 - **Alia Bhatt** for her performance in **Gangubai Kathiawadi**, and
 - **Kriti Sanon** for her performance in **Mimi**.
- **Best Feature Film award:** Rocketry: The Nambi Effect (written, produced and directed by R. Madhavan).
- **National Award for Best Director:** Nikhil Mahajan for Marathi film Godavari.
- **National Award for Best Editing:** Director Sanjay Leela Bhansali for Gangubai Kathiawadi.
- **Best Supporting Actor award:** Pankaj Tripathi, who starred alongside Kriti Sanon in Mimi.
- **Best Supporting Actress award:** Pallavi Joshi for The Kashmir Files.
- **Nargis Dutt Award (for best film on national integration):** The Kashmir Files, directed by Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri.
- **Best Non-feature Film Award:** Ek Tha Gaon by Srishti Lakhera.

National Film Awards:

- It was established in **1954**.
- By Whom: **The President of India**.

- Initially called ‘**State Awards**’, with two President's Gold Medals, two certificates of merit and silver medals for a dozen regional films, for the first six years.
- Separate awards for artists and technicians were instituted in 1968 for the films of 1967.
 - **First Best Actress** (then called Urvashi) Awards: Nargis Dutt
 - **First Best Actor** (then called Bharat) Awards: Uttam Kumar

Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award:

- The President of India conferred **Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award** for the year 2021 on **Ms Waheeda Rehman**.
- Waheeda Rehman has been critically acclaimed for her roles in Hindi films, prominent among them, Pyaasa, Kaagaz ke Phool, Chaudhavi Ka Chand, Saheb Biwi Aur Ghulam, Guide, Khamoshi and several others.
 - She was honoured with the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 1972, later receiving the Padma Bhushan in 2011. She won the National Award for Best Actress in 1971.

Source: PIB

MOU with NRSC for Watershed Development

Syllabus: GS3/ Agriculture

In News

- The Department of Land Resources, DOLR and National Remote Sensing Centre, NRSC signed an MoU for monitoring of **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana** - Watershed Development Component.

About

- The MoU will aid in better utilization of wasteland and help in ground water recharge.
- It aims to restore ecological balance by harnessing, conserving, and developing degraded natural resources such as soil and water.

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana

- The major **objective of PMKSY** is to achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level, expand cultivable area under assured irrigation, improve on-farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage of water, enhance the adoption of precision-irrigation and other water saving **technologies (More crop per drop)**.
- **PDMC scheme is implemented under RKVY**, Now serving as portal for **Per Drop More Crop Scheme** for obtaining Physical progress as well DBT data from States and its reporting, dissemination of other aspects of the scheme.
- PMKSY has been **conceived amalgamating ongoing schemes** viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) of the Ministry of Water

Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation (MoWR, RD&GR), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) of Department of Land Resources (DoLR) and the On Farm Water Management (OFWM) of Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC). The scheme will be implemented by Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development.

Source: [PIB](#)

Gond Art

Syllabus :GS 1/Art and Culture

In News

Several of the tribal skilled artisans have made significant contributions to fostering tribal art and culture including **Durga Bai Vyam** an Indian artist renowned for her detailed and bright **Gond art**.

- She received the fourth highest civilian honour in India, the Padma Shri, in 2022.



About Gond art

- Gond art is a traditional tribal art style that evolved from the Gondi people of central India, particularly in **Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh** regions.
- It is one of India's most vivid and unique tribal art traditions.
- Detailed and colourful portrayals of nature, legends, and daily life characterise Gond art.

Features of Gond Art

- It is renowned for its intricate patterns, dots, and lines that are used to create detailed and artistically pleasing compositions.
 - These patterns are frequently used to fill in shapes and forms in artwork.
- Many Gond art pieces feature the region's flora and fauna, including animals, birds, trees, and other natural aspects.
- Tribal mythology and folklore are frequently used in Gond art.
- The artwork may include mythical animals, gods, and goddesses from Gondi mythology.

Source: TH

Apna Chandrayaan

Syllabus: GS-2/Governance

Context:

- Launched by the Ministry of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.

About

- The web portal has activity-based support material such as **books, quizzes, puzzles, picture builders, and inspiring stories in the form of graphics on Chandrayaan-3 for students.**
- The portal will display the inspiring stories in the form of graphic novels depicting events that shaped ISRO's journey to Chandrayaan 3.
- Also, the **Digital certificates** will be issued to those who would score more than 70%, and the first 1000 winners will receive age-appropriate books.
- There will be **10 special modules** on Chandrayaan-3 which will offer a comprehensive overview of various **scientific, technological, and social aspects.**

Source: [PIB](#)

First Indian Coast Guard Training Ship

Syllabus: GS-3/Economy

Context:

- The Ministry of Defence (MOD) signed a contract for the construction of a **Training Ship for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL).

About:

- The agreement marks a significant step towards augmenting the **Indian Coast Guard's maritime operational capabilities** through the construction of a training ship.
- According to the MOD, this vessel will be tailored to meet the precise training requirements of the Coast Guard.
- The vessel will be equipped with **integral helicopter capabilities and advanced high-tech surveillance monitoring systems** that will instill an understanding of **maritime operations and life in the Coast Guard.**
- This effort not only aligns with the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative but also positions the contract as a catalyst for employment generation over the next three years.

<u>Indian Coast Guard</u>

- The Indian Coast Guard is a maritime law enforcement and search and rescue agency of India with jurisdiction over its territorial waters including its contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone.
- It was established in 1977 by the Coast Guard Act, 1978 of the Parliament of India.
- **Parent Agency:** Ministry of Defence
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Head:** Director General Indian Coast Guard (DGICG)

Missions of the Indian Coast Guard

- Safety and protection of artificial islands, offshore terminals and other installations.
- Protection and assistance to fishermen and mariners at sea.
- Preservation and protection of marine ecology and environment including pollution control.
- Assistance to the Department of Customs and other authorities in anti-smuggling operations.

Source: [PIB](#)

IndiaSkills 2023-24

Syllabus: GS-2/Governance

Context

- The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship launched the **IndiaSkills 2023-24 program** and felicitated **WorldSkills 2022 winners**.
 - India had secured **11th position** in the global competition last year.

India Skills Program

- It is the biggest skill competition in India held every two years exhibiting extraordinary talent from across the country with the support of State Governments and Industry.
- The IndiaSkills serves as a stepping stone to the **WorldSkills Competition**.
 - Participants who will excel in IndiaSkills at the national level will take part in the global event.
 - The next WorldSkills Competition is to be held in **Paris**.
- These competitions provide both a benchmark for high performance and a way to assess vocational excellence among the workforce.

About WorldSkills Competition

- It is the most extensive skill competition globally, taking place biennially.
- It is conducted by **WorldSkills International**, which has **86 member countries**.
 - **WorldSkills** is an international charity that organises world and national championships for vocational skills and is held every two years in different parts of the world, and also hosts conferences about vocational skills.

- **WorldSkills India** is an initiative of the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** under the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**.

About the WorldSkills Competition 2022

- WorldSkills Competition 2022 Special Edition was the official replacement for **WorldSkills Shanghai 2022**.
- It saw over 1,000 competitors from 58 countries in 61 skills.
 - **India participated in 50 skills** including new-age skills like **robot system integration, additive manufacturing, industry 4.0, digital construction, mobile application development, and renewable energy**.

Source: [PIB](#)