



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Time: 45 min

Date: 27-10-2023

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SC Strikes Down Rule Banning Use of Donor Gametes Through Surrogacy

Syllabus: GS2/Health

In News

- The Supreme Court has protected the **right of parenthood of a woman**, suffering from a rare medical condition.

About

- The woman has the **Mayer Rokitansky Kuster Hauser (MRKH) syndrome**.

- Medical board records showed she has “absent ovaries and absent uterus, hence she cannot produce her own eggs/oocytes.
- A government notification this year amended the law, **banning the use of donor gametes**. It said “intending couples” must use their own gametes for surrogacy.
- The petition was filed in the Supreme Court challenging the **amendment as a violation of a woman’s right to parenthood**.
- Addressing the government’s contention that the surrogate child should be “genetically related” to the couple, the court pointed out that the **child would be related to the husband**.
 - In this regard the expression ‘genetically’ related to the intending couple has to be read **as being related to the husband**.

What is Surrogacy?

- It is a practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intending couple with the intention to hand it over to them after the birth.
- Currently, the Indian Government only allows altruistic surrogacy for which no monetary compensation can be provided.
- **Eligibility of the Couple:** It is only restricted to a legally wedded infertile couple who have no biological children of their own- not including a child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from a fatal illness- or a single or divorced woman above the age of 35.
- Surrogacy is **prohibited for commercial purposes**.

Who can be a surrogate?

- A surrogate mother has to be a **close relative of the couple**, a married woman with a child of her own, aged between 25-35 years, who has been a surrogate only once in her life.
- She must also possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy.

Commercial Surrogacy

- Commercial Surrogacy is a branch of gestational surrogacy in which a **gestational carrier is paid to carry a child to maturity** in her womb and is usually hired to by higher income infertile couples.
- Commercial surrogacy is also known as ‘wombs for rent’, outsourced pregnancies’ or ‘baby farms’.
- India was a popular surrogacy destination but commercial surrogacy was **banned in 2015**.

Reasons for the Ban

- Commodification of the body and the child (it was available in markets at low prices for sale) where both the surrogate as well as the child were treated as commodities and were sold at very low prices.
- Payment for reproductive labor;
- Gender exploitation;
- Human trafficking;
- Insufficient compensation;
- Degradation of the morality of women, etc.

Arguments in favour of Commercial Surrogacy

- Commercial surrogacy allows women to be compensated fairly for their year long commitment to intended parents as well as the physical and emotional demands of pregnancy.
- The ban on commercial surrogacy somewhat forces women into altruistic surrogacy which should not be the case as it is a women's personal choice to do what she wants.
- In countries with well-defined laws, commercial surrogacy is legally regulated to protect the rights of the surrogate as well as the intended parents.
- Commercial surrogacy is an option for intended parents who do not want to pressure close friends or family members to make the sacrifices required of altruistic surrogacy.
- In commercial surrogacy, contracts are negotiated ahead of time to determine the monetary compensation the surrogate will receive, which can prevent disputes over reimbursements during and after the pregnancy.

Arguments Against Commercial Surrogacy

- Commercial surrogacy is more expensive than altruistic surrogacy because intended parents will be responsible for surrogate compensation in addition to medical and legal costs.
- Some opponents of commercial surrogacy argue that it exploits vulnerable women.
- These women are criticized for being surrogate mothers and are morally degraded in society as society thinks of surrogacy as immoral.

Conclusion

- Health and background checks of a surrogate, laws to support them, strict punishments in place for not abiding by the rules and regulations, and educating these women on the rights available to them as well as the possible risks are ways to mitigate the perils of their exploitation.
- On the one hand, the state has a responsibility to safeguard the interests of the unborn child.
- The right of women to control their own reproductive processes and the right of individuals to parenthood.
- Surrogacy laws in India have had difficulty striking a balance between these competing interests.

Source: [TH](#)

Death penalty to former Navy officers in Qatar

Syllabus: GS2/International Relations

In News

- Eight former Indian Navy personnel were handed the **death penalty** by a local court in Doha in an **alleged case of espionage**.

Legal Options Available to the Government of India

- The first step is to appeal within the judicial system in Qatar.
- If due procedures are not followed or an appeal process is missing, then India can invoke **International Court of Justice jurisdiction**.
- Use of **diplomatic pressure** to resolve the issue.
- **NGOs and civil society** can raise the issue at a global level, and pressure from the United Nations can be taken too.

International Court of Justice

- The Court is the **principal judicial organ of the United Nations**.
- It was established by the United Nations Charter in **1945** in San Francisco (United States).
- It is composed of **15 judges**, has a **two fold role**: first, to settle legal disputes between States submitted to it by them and, second, to give advisory opinions on legal matters referred to it by duly authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.
- The Court has **no jurisdiction** to deal with applications from individuals, non-governmental organizations, corporations or any other private entity.
- It has **no jurisdiction** to try individuals accused of war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Death penalty: The international framework

- From the early 1960s, although a majority of countries still used the death penalty, the drafters of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) had already begun **moves for its abolition in international law**.
- The provisions say the death penalty should not ordinarily be given except in certain exceptional circumstances.

Is Qatar in line with International Law?

- The United Nations' **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963**, recognises the vulnerability of a foreign national arrested abroad. **Qatar acceded to the convention in 1998**.
- According to the Convention, when a foreign national is arrested, detained or pending trial in another nation, the host nation must inform the individual without delay that they are entitled to have consular officials informed of their detention, and if they request it, the consulate must be notified immediately.

Overview of the India and Qatar Relations

- **Diplomatic Relations:** The visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Qatar in 2008 marked a turning point, becoming the first by an Indian Prime Minister.
 - Subsequently, the Qatari Emir visited India in 2015, and Prime Minister reciprocated with his visit to Qatar in 2016.
 - This growing rapport signifies the importance of the bilateral relationship between the two nations.
- **Economic Relations:** In 2021, India ranked among the **top four export destinations for Qatar**. Additionally, India is among the top three sources of Qatar's imports.
 - The bilateral trade between the two countries is valued at US\$15 billion, with a significant portion of it attributed to liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) exports from Qatar.
- **Defence Relations:** The India-Qatar Defence Cooperation Agreement, signed in 2008, was extended for another five years in 2018, marking a critical development.
 - The agreement included provisions for the training of the Qatari Emiri Navy (QENF) by India and mutual visits.

- Indian Naval and Coast Guard ships have made regular visits to Qatar, and QENF delegates participated in maritime exercises in India.
- **Indian Community:** There are over 8,00,000 Indian nationals residing in Qatar.
 - They comprise the **largest expatriate community in Qatar** and are engaged in a wide spectrum of professions including medicine; engineering; education, finance; banking; business; and media apart from a large number of blue-collared workers.

Conclusion

- The situation of the eight former Indian Navy officers detained in Qatar remains intricate and raises various questions about the India-Qatar relationship.
- Thus, there is scope for the further development of the India-Qatar relationship, which has proven strong and resilient throughout the seemingly intractable diplomatic crisis.

Source: [TH](#)

Universal Basic Income

Syllabus: GS3/Economic development

In News

- Recently, localized experiments with **universal basic income (UBI)** have yielded mostly positive results across states, reinforcing calls for social policy.

About Universal Basic Income

- UBI is a social welfare policy in which all beneficiaries receive a **guaranteed income** in the form of an **unconditional** transfer payment on a **regular basis**.
- The **goal of UBI** is to ensure that every citizen has a **minimum level of income** to cover basic needs like food, shelter, and healthcare, thereby reducing poverty and economic inequality.
- It is designed to **simplify social welfare systems** by replacing or consolidating various targeted social programs, which can be complex and administratively burdensome.
- A **UBI support programme** has **five accepted principles**: unconditional support; periodic payments as opposed to lump sum transfers; direct cash transfer instead of coupons or cash equivalents; and individual beneficiaries rather than households.

Key findings of WorkFREE Pilot Project

- It is implemented by the University of Bath, Montfort Social Institute-Hyderabad and India Network for Basic Income, with funds from the European Research Council.
- Under the project, an adult gets Rs 1,000 and a child Rs 500 a month for 18 months.
- Several recipients used the cash support to expand economic activities or to pay for emergency needs that otherwise would have forced them to borrow.
- 66 percent of benefiting households used the cash to buy food, fuel, clothes and pay utility bills.
- Around 36 per cent of the households spent the money on education fees, 40 percent added to savings and 23 per cent repaid their debts.

- The survey also shows that about 43 per cent of households spent cash on medicines, diagnostic tests and doctor visits.

UBI as panacea for addressing India's poverty

- **Direct Financial Assistance:** Providing direct cash transfers to all citizens will ensure that even the most vulnerable individuals have a basic level of financial support which will be beneficial considering our large informal labor sector.
- **Poverty Reduction in Vulnerable Groups:** It can be particularly effective in reducing poverty among vulnerable and marginalized groups, including the elderly, disabled, and those living in remote or underserved areas.
- **Reduction in Extreme Poverty:** UBI provides a safety net for those who do not have access to formal social security systems, addressing extreme and acute poverty.
- **Developing Human Capital:** It enables individuals to invest in their own human capital development, such as education and skills training, which can lead to higher earning potential in the long term.
- **Adaptation to Technological Changes:** As automation and artificial intelligence are reshaping the job market, UBI can enable individuals to adapt to changing labor market conditions and explore new opportunities.
- **Economic Stability:** Regular cash transfers through UBI can provide economic stability to households, reducing the vulnerability of families to economic shocks, health crises, and other emergencies.

Concerns

- **Targeting the Vulnerable:** The goal of UBI is to give the most disadvantaged members of society a safety net. However, ensuring precise targeting and preventing financial misappropriation would be crucial and necessitate the use of complex administrative systems and data infrastructure.
- **Regional Disparities:** India has significant economic disparities between states and regions. According to experts, a one-size-fits-all approach of UBI may be ineffective.
- **Creating obstructive incentives:** Apprehensions about decrease in motivation to work while also lowering productivity and efficiency may foster a culture of reliance, entitlement, and laziness.
- **Impact on Work Incentives:** Some experts raise concerns that providing a basic income unconditionally could reduce work incentives, particularly in the informal labor sector, where labor force participation is already a challenge.
- **Inflationary Pressure:** Critics argue that injecting a substantial amount of cash into the economy through UBI could lead to inflation.
- **Financial Feasibility:** Implementing UBI on a large scale in India would require significant financial resources. Finding sustainable funding sources and ensuring fiscal discipline are critical challenges.
- **Administrative Challenges:** While UBI is often promoted as administratively simpler, the implementation of such a program on a national scale would require substantial infrastructure for distribution, eligibility verification, and fraud prevention.

Alternatives of UBI

- **Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs):** Programs providing financial support to individuals or families contingent on fulfilling specific conditions, such as sending children to school, attending health check-ups, or participating in job training programs.
- **Guaranteed Minimum Income:** It is a policy approach that sets a minimum income level below which no individual or household should fall. It guarantees income support to those who fall below the threshold but adjusts the assistance based on other sources of income.
- **Quasi-universal basic rural income (QUBRI):** It is a form of universal basic income, which is characterized as a cash transfer that is given to all people, everywhere, and without conditions.
- **Universal Basic Services:** It is a concept for a type of social security in which all citizens have unrestricted access to a variety of free, basic public services provided by a government or public institution.

Best practices across world

- **Spain - Minimum Vital Income (Ingreso Mínimo Vital):** Introduced in 2020, it is a means-tested program that provides financial assistance to low-income households. While not a pure UBI, it aims to reduce poverty and income inequality by offering targeted support.
- **Brazil - Bolsa Família:** It is a notable example of a targeted conditional cash transfer program that provides financial assistance to low-income families, contingent on meeting health and education conditions for their children.

Way Forward

- While UBI has the potential to alleviate poverty in India by providing financial support to all citizens, its success depends on careful planning, addressing implementation challenges, and considering the broader policy context.

Source: [DTE](#)

Six Years of UDAN Scheme

Syllabus: GS3/ Economy/Infrastructure

In News

- **India's RCS-UDAN** completes 6 successful years in 2023, marking a milestone in the country's aviation sector.

About

- Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN) was launched as a vital component of India's **National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016** by the **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) in 2016** with a 10-year vision.
- The objective of the scheme is to create **affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights** on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
- The scheme envisages providing **connectivity to un-served and underserved airports** of the country through the revival of existing air-strips and airports.
- Under-served airports are those which do not have more than one flight a day, while unserved airports are those where there are no operations.

- Started with **UDAN 1.0**, expanding to **UDAN 5.2**, the scheme continuously evolved, addressing various challenges and demands. Major versions of UDAN Scheme are:
 - **UDAN 4.0:** Gave impetus to North-Eastern Regions, Hilly States, and Islands. The operation of helicopters and seaplanes incorporated.
 - **UDAN 5.1:** Designed for helicopter routes, expanding opportunities for helicopter operators. Increased Viability Gap Funding (VGF) and reduced airfare caps.
 - **UDAN 5.2 (Ongoing):**
 - Aims to enhance connectivity in remote and regional areas.
 - Emphasis on small aircraft (<20 seats).

RCS-UDAN's Impact on the Aviation Industry

- **Airlines Growth:** Four new airlines have emerged in the last six years, thanks to RCS-UDAN, fostering a sustainable business model.
- **Diverse Aircraft Demand:** The scheme's expansion has fueled demand for various aircraft types, from helicopters and seaplanes to propeller and jet planes.
- **Expanded Fleet:** A wide range of aircraft, including Airbus, Boeing, ATR, DHC, Embraer, and Tecnam models, now serve RCS routes. Indian carriers have ordered over 1,000 aircraft for the next decade, significantly expanding the nation's fleet.
- **Tourism Promotion:** RCS-UDAN not only offers last-mile connectivity but also boosts the tourism sector. It introduced tourism routes, especially in the Northeast, and expanded helicopter services in hilly regions to stimulate tourism, hospitality, and local economic growth.
- **Connectivity:** RCS-UDAN has connected 30 States/UTs, with 75 operational airports, including eight in the Northeast region. Many of these airports, like Darbhanga, Hubli, Kannur, and Mysuru, have become self-sustaining with non-RCS commercial flights.

Challenges to the RCS-UDAN Scheme

- **Commercial Viability:** Some routes lack the demand needed for airlines to operate profitably, even with subsidies.
- **Route Cessation:** Many RCS routes have stopped operating, raising sustainability concerns.
- **Infrastructural Constraints:** Remote areas lack proper airport infrastructure, necessitating upgrades.
- **High Operating Costs:** Operating in remote regions entails higher costs, impacting profitability.
- **Airfare Caps:** Airfare caps can limit airline revenue, discouraging service on certain routes.

Conclusion

- UDAN has not only improved air connectivity to remote areas but has also catalyzed airline growth, diversified the fleet, and promoted tourism, contributing significantly to India's aviation industry's development, yet commercial challenges and airline sustainability hinder success.
- To ensure sustainable air connectivity in smaller regions, collaboration among government, industry stakeholders, and local authorities is essential. Focus needs to be given on infrastructure, subsidies, operations, and awareness.

Source: [PIB](#)

Carbon Credit and Trading Scheme for Indian Carbon Market

Syllabus: GS3/Environment, Conservation

Context:

- The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) aims to amend the Carbon Credit and Trading Scheme (CCTS) for Indian Carbon Market (ICM).

About:

- **The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** unfolded some crucial aspects of the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) and it holds for the future of decarbonising India.
 - It focused on detailing the compliance mechanism for the ICM and accreditation process for carbon verification agencies.
- BEE aims the CCTS to build on the existing **Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) framework** which has essential elements required for GHG emission reduction.

Do you know?

- To create a domestic carbon market, the Union government **proposed the amendment to the Energy Conservation Act, 2001** to empower the central government to specify a carbon credit trading scheme.

The Carbon Credit and Trading Scheme (CCTS):

- It was notified by the Union Government under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**, to develop the **country's first-ever domestic carbon market**.
- It was set up as the **regulatory framework** for the Indian Carbon Market (ICM), with **BEE as the administrator**.
 - It envisioned the formation of a **National Steering Committee for Indian Carbon Market (NSCICM)** for the governance and direct oversight of the Indian Carbon Market (ICM). The committee will be **chaired by the Secretary (Ministry of Power)**; and co-chaired by the Secretary (Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change).
- **BEE** will be the **administrator for the ICM** and will be responsible for the development of the GHG emissions trajectory and the targets for the entities to be obligated under the notification.
- The **Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)** will be the **regulator** for the trading of carbon credit certificates.

Do you know?

- The **idea of carbon credit** began in the **first decade of the 2000s**, after the **Kyoto Protocol**, set up under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), entered into force.
- Countries agreed to **set up the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** for the purchase of carbon credits from developing countries. But with the end of the Kyoto Protocol, this market dried up.
- It was **replaced by an unregulated global market** of buyers and sellers, called the **voluntary carbon market**.

Types of carbon markets:

- **Voluntary carbon markets (national and international):** These refer to the issuance, buying and selling of carbon credits, on a voluntary basis.
 - The current supply of voluntary carbon credits comes mostly from private entities that develop carbon projects, or governments that develop programs certified by carbon standards that generate emission reductions and/or removals.
- **Compliance markets:** These are created as a result of any national, regional and/or international policy or regulatory requirement.

Differences between the PAT and CCTS:

- The PAT scheme had **energy efficiency targets** measured in reductions per tonne of oil equivalent, whereas the CCTS would have **reductions per tonne of GHG emissions**.
- **PAT cycle** had a target period for **three years**, but **CCTS would have yearly targets**.
- The empanelled **Accredited Energy Auditors (AEAs) under PAT** will be eligible to become **Accredited Carbon Verifiers (ACVs)**.
 - The AEAs will also have training on carbon verification in capacity building sessions conducted by BEE.

What about the Indian Carbon Market (ICM)?

- The **setting up of ICM** with the aim of **reducing GHG-linked emissions from the industrial sector** of India which accounts for **about 20% of total GHG emissions**.
- ICM would **not have a cap-and-trade mechanism**. It means **there would not be an overall cap on the absolute emissions** but emission intensity baseline will be the instrument to decide targets.
 - This is known as the **baseline-and-credit system**, where baseline emissions are decided per tonne of product and deviation from them would result in a **trade of credits**.
 - Other major emission trading systems like European Union Emissions Trading System, California cap-and-trade and Korean Emissions Trading System markets have a **cap-and-trade mechanism, unlike ICM**.
- Currently, **targets are being prepared for four industrial sectors – cement, iron and steel and pulp and paper**.

Issues with CCTS:

- **Decarbonising Energy Intensive Industries:** It is not easy to mitigate or decarbonise the process emissions from energy intensive industries like cement, iron and steel and aluminium.
 - India's updated **Nationally Determined Contributions** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change commits **to reduce GHG emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030**.
- **Lenient targets in the PAT scheme:** It is essential that committees under CCTS set ambitious targets for each of the sectors, considering the best practices in the country.

- **Coverage of GHGs:** The CCTS would **mainly cover carbon dioxide emissions and perfluorocarbons** emitted from aluminium smelting. **Other GHG gases** like methane and nitrous oxide are **not covered**.
 - The European Union Emission Trading System (ETS) also covers only carbon dioxide and perfluorocarbons.
- **No focus on Voluntary Carbon Market:** The notification is silent on the voluntary carbon market or the issue of export of credits.
- **Issue of monitoring and reporting:** Monitoring, reporting and verification are crucial components to ensure effective implementation of the scheme.

Way ahead:

- Carbon credit trading aims to reduce carbon emissions, and hence, address climate change. The Union Ministry of Power aims to regulate the CCTS, but the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest is more appropriate to address the issue of emission.
- It is crucial for policymakers to emphasise transparency, conduct more extensive consultations, and prevent conflict of interests during the process of shaping this regulatory framework.

[Source: DTE](#)

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

Syllabus: GS2/International Relations

News

- The US President has said that the ambitious **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor** is one of the reasons for Hamas terrorist attack on Israel.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

- **Participants:** During the Delhi G20 Summit, India, USA, UAE, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, Italy and the European Union signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.
- **Objective:** The corridor will encourage and provide impetus to economic development through enhanced connectivity and economic integration between Asia, West Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

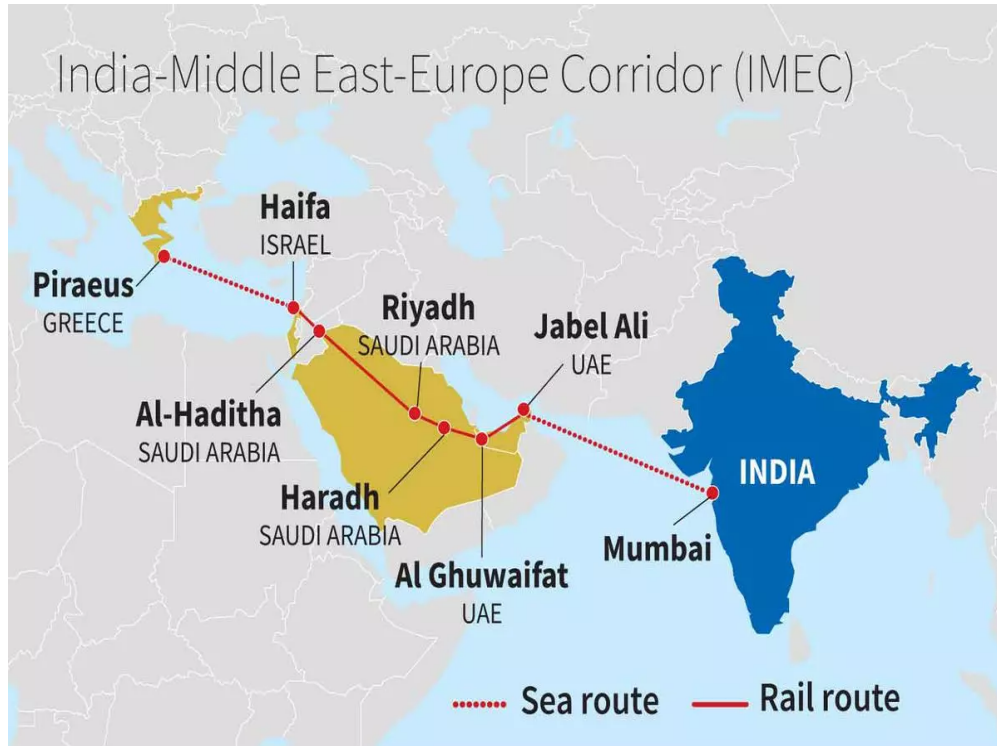
Components

- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor will consist of two separate corridors,
 - **The East corridor** connecting India to West Asia/Middle East and
 - **The Northern corridor** connecting West Asia/Middle East to Europe.
- The project would involve the building of a **railway line** across the Arabian Peninsula through the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and develop **shipping connectivity** to India and Europe on either end of this corridor.
- The corridor could be further developed to transport energy through pipelines and data through an optical fiber link.

Opportunities for India

- **Alternative to BRI:** It is an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which seeks to establish trade and infrastructure networks connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa.

- **Bypassing Pakistan:** IMEC breaks Pakistan's veto over India's overland connectivity to the West. Since the 1990s, India has sought various trans-regional connectivity projects with Pakistan. But Pakistan was adamant in its refusal to let India gain access to land-locked Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- **Indo-US collaboration in the Middle East:** This project has broken the myth that India and the United States might work together in the Indo-Pacific but not in the Middle East.



Source: [IE](#)

One nation, One Student ID initiative

Syllabus: GS2/Government Policies and Interventions

News

- Recently, state governments requested schools to seek parental consent for the creation of a **new student identity card** known as the **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR)**.

About

- APAAR is a part of the **'One nation, One Student ID'** initiative of the Union government.
- This initiative was launched as part of the **National Education Policy 2020** by the Education Ministry.

APAAR

- APAAR, which stands for **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry**, is envisioned as a **special ID system for all students in India, starting from childhood**.

- Under the initiative, **each student would get a lifelong APAAR ID, making it easy for the learners, schools, and governments to track academic progress** from pre-primary education to higher education.
- APAAR would also **serve as a gateway to Digilocker.**
 - Digilocker is a digital system where **students can store their important documents and achievements**, such as exam results and report cards, digitally, making it easier to access and use them in the future for higher education or finding a job.

Significance

- The goal behind introducing APAAR is **to make education hassle-free and reduce the need for students to carry physical documents.**
- The vision is to create a positive change, **allowing state governments to track literacy rates, dropout rates, and more, helping them make improvements.**
- It's about **giving states the tools to enhance their performance.**
- APAAR also aims **to reduce fraud and duplicate educational certificates** by providing a single, trusted reference for educational institutions.
 - Only first party sources that issue certificates will be allowed to deposit credits into the system, ensuring authenticity.

How does the government envision APAAR ID to work?

- Every individual will have a unique APAAR ID, which will be **linked to the Academic Bank Credit (ABC).**
 - **ABC is a digital storehouse that contains information of the credits earned by students** throughout their learning journey.
- With the APAAR ID, **students would be able to store all their certificates and credits**, whether they come from **formal education or informal learning.**
- When a student completes a course or achieves something, **it's digitally certified and securely stored in her account by authorised institutions.**
- If the student changes schools, whether within the state or to another state, **all her data in the ABC gets transferred to her new school just by sharing the APAAR ID.**
 - **She won't need to provide physical documents or transfer certificates.**

What do students have to do to get their single ID created?

- To sign up for APAAR, students will have to **provide basic information** such as name, age, date of birth, gender, and a photograph. **This information will be verified using their Aadhar number.**
- It's important to know that the **Aadhar number is only used for verification to match the name and date of birth.** APAAR won't use or share these details with anyone else during registration.
- **Students will need to sign a consent form, and they can choose to either accept or decline sharing their Aadhar number and demographic information** with the Ministry of Education for creating the APAAR ID.

- **For minors, parents will have to sign the consent form**, allowing the Ministry to use the student's Aadhar number for authentication with UIDAI.
- **Registration for creating APAAR ID is voluntary, not mandatory.**

Concern surrounding APAAR:

- Parents and students have concerns about **sharing their Aadhar details because they worry that their personal information could be leaked to outside parties.**
- The government, however, says that the **information shared by students will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any third party except for entities engaged in educational activities**, such as the UDISE(Unified District Information System for Education).
 - UDISE is the government's catalogue that **contains data related to schools, teachers and students.**
- At any given time, **students have the option to stop sharing their information with the mentioned parties**, and their data processing will be halted. However, any personal data already processed will remain unaffected if consent is withdrawn.

Source: TH

Green hydrogen

Syllabus:GS3/Environment

News

- According to a study by Climate Risk Horizons (CRH) India's plans to produce 'green hydrogen' might end up worsening pollution if proper checks and balances are not in place.

Background

- **India's National Green Hydrogen Mission**, piloted by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) expects to manufacture five million tonnes by 2030.
- This would require the installation of renewable energy capacity worth **125 GW** and the use of **250,000 gigawatt-hr units of power**, equivalent to about **13%** of India's present electricity generation.

Findings

- As of August 2023, India's total renewable energy (RE) capacity (excluding hydropower dams bigger than 25 MW) stood at **131 GW**; the 2030 green hydrogen plan thus envisages adding an equivalent RE capacity by 2030.
- India has committed to install **500 GW** of RE capacity by 2030 as part of its **Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement**. However India installed only 15 GW of new solar and wind capacity in 2023, against the **45 GW per year** needed to reach the 2030 target.

Using coal-based power

- The MNRE has defined green hydrogen as hydrogen produced in a way that emits no more than **2 kg of carbon dioxide per kg** of such hydrogen. Currently,

producing 1 kg of 'gray hydrogen', as it is known, ends up emitting 9 kg of carbon dioxide

- **Concern:** To run electrolyzers (which split water to produce hydrogen and oxygen) 24x7, the electricity from coal-powered grid will be used as at night there is no availability of solar power. Ultimately it will increase carbon emissions.

Costly diversion

- Another challenge is that India's standards allow the use of biomass — which also results in carbon emissions when burned — for the production of green hydrogen.
- Diverting scarce renewable energy capacity towards the production of green hydrogen might mean inadequate clean electricity being made available for consumers.

Way Ahead

- The MNRE needs to guard against the risk that finance for RE projects that would otherwise decarbonise the electricity grid will instead be diverted to produce green hydrogen.
- This would delay India's journey to net zero, undermine a nascent industry, and deny States and electricity consumers the cost benefits that cheap renewable energy has to offer.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News **Vajra Mushti Kalaga**

Syllabus:GS1/Art and Culture

Context:

- A martial art form in terminal decline.

About:

- The '**Vajra Mushti Kalaga**' (**diamond fist duel**) is a form of unique **martial art** that incorporates various **techniques of hand-to-hand combat** like grappling, wrestling and striking techniques.
- Vajra Mushti (Thunderbolt Fist) is characterised by the utilisation of a **knuckleduster**, a small metal weapon, usually made of animal horns like buffalo, elephant (ivory), is worn on the knuckles of the fighter.
- The **main objective** of this Indian martial art form is **to neutralise the opponent and counter his weapon.**



Occasion:

- It is held on the **ninth day of Navaratri** at **Amba Vilas Palace in Mysore.**

- The fight is real and the **jetty's make all efforts to draw blood from the opponent's head**, and whosoever draws the blood from the opponent's head first is declared the winner.

Who Are The Jetties?

- They are traditionally from Gujarat and settled in the old Mysore area for over 600 years since the advent of the Moghuls.
- Their ancestors are settled in Maharashtra and are still practising wrestling.

Background:

- It was popular during the period of the **Vijayanagar rulers (between the 14th and the 17th centuries)**.
 - However, it has **gone extinct and takes place only during Dasara**.
- Vajramushti was **first mentioned in Manasollasa**, a manual of warfare in the time of **King Someshwara III of the Chalukya dynasty (1124–1138)**.
- **Portuguese travellers** noticed this form of wrestling during the Navaratri celebrations in Vijayanagar empire and have left detailed accounts of it.
- **British soldier James Scurry**, who was in captivity under Tipu Sultan in Srirangapatnam, gives the **first account of a Vajramushti in English**.

[Source: TH](#)

National Icon for Voter Awareness

Syllabus: GS2/ Indian Polity

In News

- Actor Rajkummar Rao signed MoU for a period of 3 years with Election Commission of India as **ECI's latest National Icon for Voter Awareness**.
 - Rao played the role of election officer in a Naxal-affected area in the **film Newton**.
 - Newton was India's official entry at the 90th Academy Awards (the Oscars) in the 'Best Foreign Language Film' category.

About

- ECI appoints renowned Indians as National Icons to encourage voter participation.
- In the past, notable figures like Pankaj Tripathi, Sachin Tendulkar, M.S. Dhoni, Aamir Khan, and Mary Kom have held this role. Sachin Tendulkar was the most recent addition to the list.
- These National Icons motivate citizens to engage in the democratic process. They share a commitment to empower and educate citizens about the importance of exercising their voting rights.

Other ECI's Initiatives on Electoral Literacy

- Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation' (SVEEP) Initiative
- Electoral Literacy Club' (ELC) for mainstreaming of electoral literacy in Schools, Colleges and Communities.
- Voter Awareness Forum (VAF)

Source: PIB

International Competition Network (ICN)

Syllabus: GS2/ Governance

News

- The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** recently became a part of the prestigious **18-member steering committee of the International Competition Network (ICN)**.

International Competition Network (ICN)

- **Established:** October 2001.
- **Aim:** ICN is a **specialized yet informal network** of competition agencies, with the common aim of **addressing practical competition law enforcement and policy issues**.
 - The ICN is the **only global body devoted exclusively to competition law enforcement**.
- **Membership:** 141 competition agencies.
 - It is a **voluntary, consensus-based organisation**, and members are national or multinational competition agencies, or a competition agency of a customs territory.
- **Structure and Function:** The ICN is **not a rule-making organisation and its work products are not legally binding instruments**.
 - When ICN members reach consensus on recommendations or recommended practices arising from its projects, **individual competition agencies decide whether and how to implement the recommendations**.
- **Mission:** To advocate the adoption of superior standards and procedures in competition policy around the world,
 - formulate proposals for procedural and substantive convergence, and
 - seek to facilitate effective international cooperation to the benefit of member agencies, consumers and economies worldwide.

Source: [ET](#)

EU-India Joint Naval Exercise

Syllabus:GS3/Defence

News

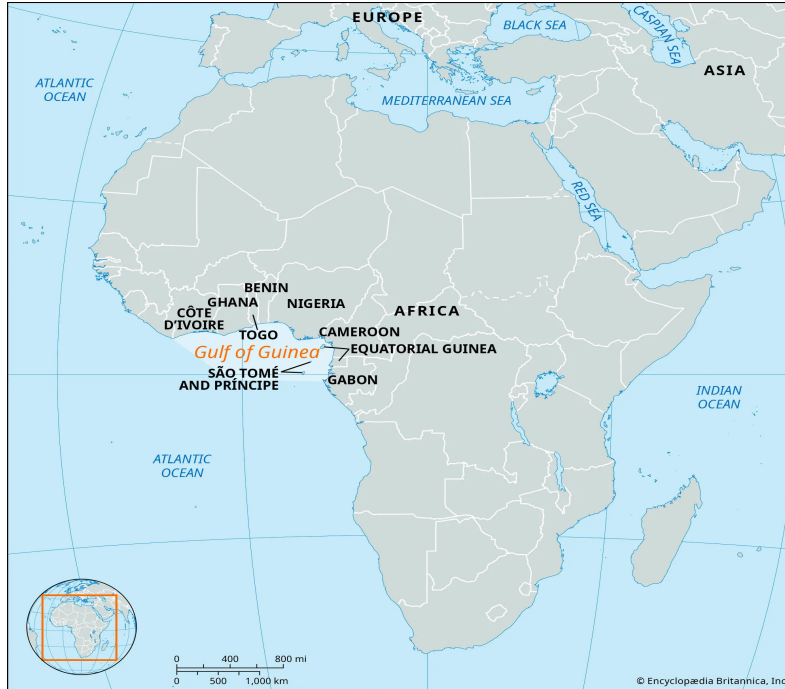
- India and the European Union conducted their **first joint naval exercise** in the **Gulf of Guinea**.

About

- **The exercise aimed** to reinforce naval maritime security cooperation and uphold the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea.
- INS Sumedha, was joined by Italian Navy Ship ITS Foscari, French Navy Ship FS Ventôse, and Spanish Navy Ship Tornado.

Gulf of Guinea

- **Location:** The Gulf of Guinea is the northeasternmost part of the **Atlantic Ocean** from **Cape Lopez in Gabon** to **Cape Palmas in Liberia**. The coastline on the gulf includes the **Bight of Benin** and the **Bight of Bonny**.
- **Rivers:** The **Niger and Volta** drain into the Gulf of Guinea.
- **Islands in the Gulf of Guinea:** Annobón, Bioko, Bobowasi Island, Corisco, São Tomé and Príncipe.



Source: [TOI](#)

Brazzaville Summit of the Three Basins

Syllabus: GS3/ Environment, Conservation

In News

- The summit is held in **Brazzaville (capital of Congo)**. The first Summit of the Three Tropical Forest Basins was held in Brazzaville in 2011.

About

- The **Three Basins (Amazonia, Congo, Borneo-Mekong-Southeast Asia)** collectively house 80% of the world's tropical forests and two-thirds of terrestrial biodiversity.
- Tropical forest nations play a central role in combating **tropical deforestation and shaping global climate** and biodiversity governance.

Three Basins (Amazonia, Congo, Borneo-Mekong-Southeast Asia)

- **Amazon basin:** It is the largest drainage basin in the world, more than twice as large as that of the Congo River in Africa. It extends over 9 countries in South America.
- **Congo basin:** Nine countries (Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia) have part of their territory in the Congo Basin. More than 39 per cent of undisturbed Tropical Moist Forests overlap with oil and gas blocks and nearly 27 percent overlap with mining concessions.
- **Borneo-Mekong-Southeast Asia Basin:** It is the world's third largest carbon sink, and is composed of two sub-regions, the island of Borneo and the Mekong River. The Mekong River is one of the largest rivers in the world, crossing six countries: China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Source: [DTE](#)

Antarctic krill

Syllabus: GS 3/Species in news

In News

Antarctic krill in the Antarctic ecosystem are at risk due to declining sea ice.

About Antarctic krill

- **Scientific Name** : Euphausia suberba.
- Krill is a general term used to describe about 86 species of crustaceans found in open oceans. They belong to the group of crustaceans called **euphausiids**.
- **Antarctic krill** is one of 5 species of krill that lives in the Southern Ocean, south of the Antarctic convergence.
- Antarctic krill (and other krill species) are **bioluminescent**, meaning they produce light.
- It feeds on **phytoplankton** , which absorb carbon dioxide.
- It is a key species, supporting populations of penguins, seals, whales and other marine life.
- **Habitat and Distribution** :Habitat includes open ocean areas as well as more coastal locations
 - live exclusively in the Southern Ocean and have a very wide distribution over a range of habitats.
- **Threats** : victims of the combined effects of ocean warming and loss of sea ice, and they are further threatened by ocean acidification and increasing interest in the krill fishery.
- **Conservations Status** :Listed as Least Concern(IUCN Red List of Threatened species)
 - Krill fishery has been regulated by the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) since the 1980s.



Hydrilla

Syllabus :GS 3/Species in news

In News

Hydrilla has been found in Michigan, US, for the first time.

About Hydrilla

- Scientific Name : (Hydrilla verticillata)
- It is called water thyme, and is a submersed perennial herb.
- **It is** an invasive aquatic plant known for its rapid growth and harmful effects on ecosystems.
- It has several ways of reproducing, allowing it to spread rapidly, outcompete native plants and quickly form dense single-species infestations.
- **Habitat and Distribution:** It can thrive in both **low- and high-quality waters** and has been found in lakes, rivers, reservoirs, wetlands, ponds and streams.



- Native to: Parts of Asia, Africa, and Australia
- It can be treated with herbicide, it is difficult to eradicate because tubers and turions can persist in the sediment for years, and plants can reproduce from even small fragments.

Paintbrush swift butterfly

Syllabus :GS 3/Species in news

In News

The paintbrush swift butterfly has been photographed and documented for the first time in Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district.

- The State supports around 430 butterfly species or about 25% of the total number of butterfly species found in India.

About Paintbrush swift butterfly((Baoris farri)

- It is a butterfly species of the **Hesperiidae family** and It is rare in the western Himalayas.
- It was first described by **lepidopterist Frederic Moore**, more than 145 years ago, from the **eastern Himalayas**.
- Habitat distribution is **common in northeast, central and south India, and rare in Uttarakhand**.
- The species' larvae feed on bamboo and some other grass species.
- **Threats :** Habitat loss and scarcity of larval host plants are major causes of the decline in the butterfly population.
 - **other causes :** An increase in pesticide use, deforestation, and climate change.
- **Suggestions :** establishment of butterfly parks and conservation reserves in the State
 - Butterfly rearing or breeding centres should also be established.
 - Creating awareness on the importance of butterflies

