



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Earth's Mantle Heterogeneity

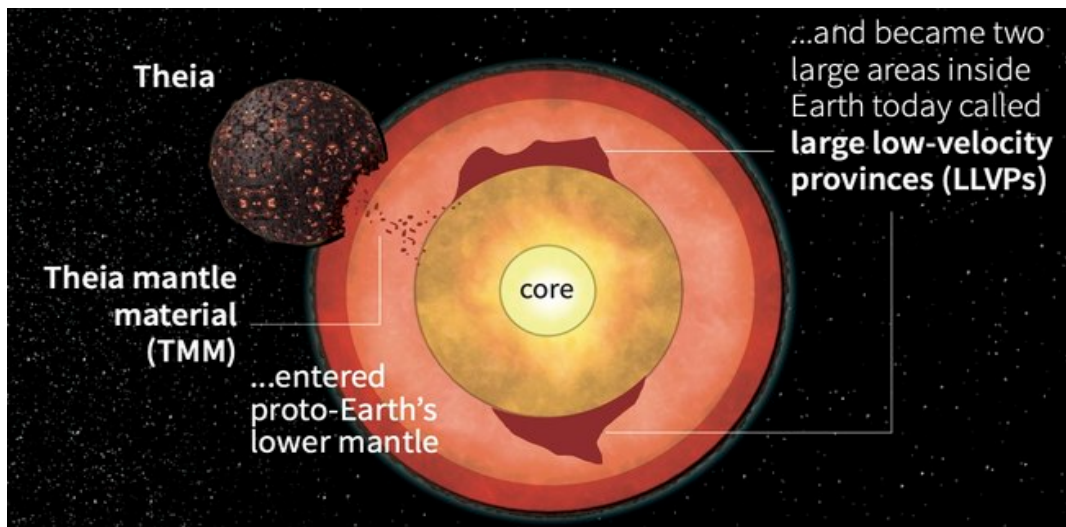
Syllabus: GS1/ Geography

Context:

- As per the research published in *journal Nature*, the interior of earth may be a remnant of the collision about 4.5 billion years ago that formed the moon.
 - The study relied on **computational fluid dynamics methods** in the Shanghai Astronomical Observatory (SHAO) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Background: The Formation of Moon

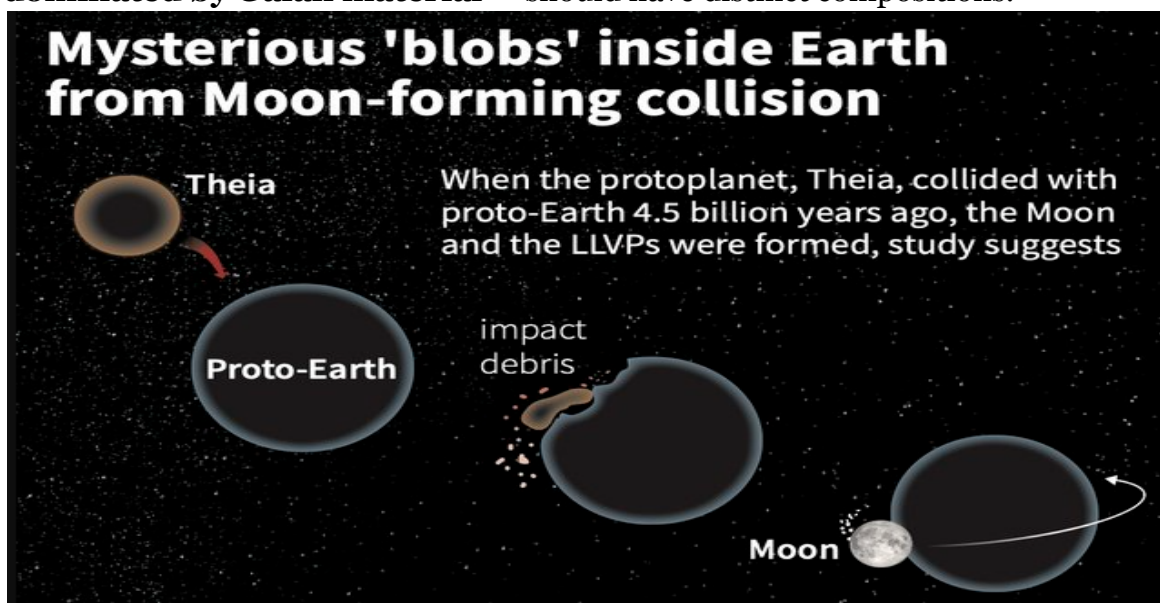
- As per the prevailing theory, there was a **massive collision** – '*giant impact*' – occurred between the *Primordial Earth (Gaia)* and a *Mars-sized proto-planet (Theia)* approximately 4.5 billion years ago.
 - **The moon** is believed to have **formed from the debris generated by this collision.**



- For decades, scientists have been baffled by **two large, mysterious blobs in Earth's mantle**.
 - These rock formations are thousands of kilometres long and **slightly denser than their surroundings**, hinting that they are made of different material than the rest of the mantle.

Highlights of the study:

- It offers **important new insights about Earth's internal structure** along with its long-term evolution and the formation of the inner solar system.
- Numerical simulations have indicated that the **moon likely inherited material primarily from Theia**, while Gaia, due to its much larger mass, was only mildly contaminated by Theian material.
- Since **Gaia and Theia were relatively independent formations and composed of different materials**, the theory suggested that the **moon—being dominated by Theian material** — and the **Earth — being dominated by Gaian material** — should have distinct compositions.



- However, high-precision isotope measurements later revealed that the **compositions of the Earth and moon are remarkably similar**, thus **challenging the conventional theory of moon formation**.

Heterogeneity in the deep mantle:

- The **Earth's mantle** is known to be **heterogeneous**, meaning it has a **varied composition and structure**.
 - This heterogeneity is believed to be **created by various processes**, including the **recycling of old crust material at subduction zones**, where one tectonic plate slides beneath another.
- Seismic images of **Earth's interior** have revealed **two continent-sized anomalies** (*One is located beneath the African tectonic plate and the other under the Pacific tectonic plate*) with low seismic velocities, known as the **Large Low Velocity Provinces (LLVPs)**, in the lowermost mantle.
 - **When seismic waves pass through these areas, wave velocity is significantly reduced.**
- This discovery of heterogeneity in the deep mantle and its possible link to the Moon's formation provides a fascinating insight into the complex and dynamic nature of our planet's interior.

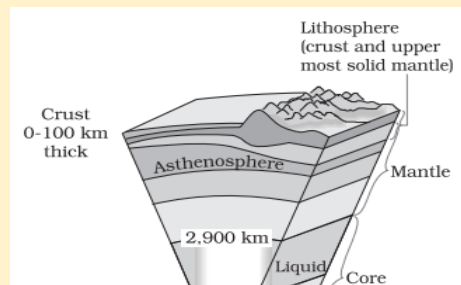
Significance of the study:

- **Large Low Velocity Provinces (LLVPs)** have significant implications for the evolution of the mantle, the separation and aggregation of supercontinents, and the Earth's tectonic plate structures.
- Small amounts of deep-seated heterogeneity can be brought to the surface by ***mantle plumes—cylindrical upwelling thermal currents caused by mantle convection.***
 - Some geologists argue that this heterogeneity is created by fluids rich in **'incompatible elements' (*elements tending toward liquid rather than solid state*) percolating upward** and transforming portions of the upper mantle irregularly.
- These findings highlight the scale at which **Earth's mantle composition varies** and contribute to an improved understanding of observed mantle heterogeneities and their relation to the thermo-chemical state of Earth's mantle.
 - This ultimately holds the **key to unlocking the secrets of the evolution of our planet.**

Composition of the Interior of the Earth:

The Crust:

- It is brittle in nature and the outermost solid part of the earth.
- The crust varies in the thickness of the oceanic and continental areas. The crust of the ocean is thinner as compared to the continental crust.
- Ocean crust mean thickness is 5 km whereas that of the continental is approx. 30 km.
- The crust of the continent is thicker in the mountain regions of the world. For



instance, it is approx. 70 km wider in the Himalayan region.

The Mantle:

- The next layer is the mantle extends from Moho's discontinuity to a depth of 2,900 km.
- Asthenosphere, is the upper portion of the mantle extending up to 400 km. The word 'astheno' means weak, hence in liquid state.
- It is the significant source of magma that finds its way to the surface during volcanic eruptions.
- The crust and the uppermost part of the mantle are called lithosphere (thickness ranges from 10-200 km).
- The lower part of the mantle extends beyond the asthenosphere which is in solid state.

The Core:

- The core-mantle boundary is located at the depth of 2,900 km and from crust is approx. 6,378 km.
- The earthquake wave velocities helped in understanding the existence of the core of the earth and signifies-
 - Outer core is in liquid state
 - Inner core is in solid state.
- The core is made up of extremely heavy material constituted by nickel and iron and can be referred to as the NiFe layer.

[Source: TH](#)

Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)

Syllabus: GS2/International Relations

In News

- **Chief of the Naval Staff** has said that **The Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative**, is a testament to commitment to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) Initiative

- At the **2022 Quad Summit in Tokyo**, Leaders announced the IPMDA.
- IPMDA is a **technology and training initiative to enhance maritime domain awareness** in the Indo-Pacific region and to bring **increased transparency** to its critical waterways.

What is Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)?

- MDA is increasingly becoming a **pre-requisite for safe and efficient conduct** of maritime activity.
- Till 200 nautical miles from a country's coastline lies within the jurisdiction of coastal states, even large areas under the jurisdiction of coastal states remain **unmonitored**, either due to **lack of capacity of the coastal state or due to geographical limitations**.

Significance of Indo Pacific Region

- The Indo-Pacific is home to more than half of the world's people and **nearly two-thirds of the world's economy**.

- The Persian Gulf produces **nearly one third of the world's oil** and holds over **half of the world's crude oil reserves**, as well as a significant portion of the world's natural gas reserves.
 - The region also produces **some of the world's most critical minerals**.
- About **60 percent of the world's maritime trade** goes through the region, which also has nine out of the world's top ten ports.
- The Indo-Pacific has thus become the **global centre of interest** in the recent past with a number of countries publicly articulating their approaches and strategy towards the region.



The Economist

Challenges to MDA in the Indo-Pacific

- **Expanding Navies:** The maritime domain has seen a rise in the induction of ships, submarines and other vessels in the navies of the coastal states of the region.
 - This has caused concern in regions like the South and East China Seas, where such profusion of military platforms has added to existing tensions on account of various maritime disputes.
- **International Military Presence:** The renewed global focus on the region has led to increased extra-regional naval presence. Consequently, on an average, maritime forces from over 60 countries, including 4-6 Chinese warships, are present in the IOR at any given time of the year.
- **Natural Disasters:** The Indo-Pacific lies astride geologically sensitive zones like the **Pacific 'Ring of Fire'** making it prone to natural disasters. The establishment of warning systems to closely monitor this maritime geological activity requires cooperation amongst the Indo-Pacific littorals, considering the vast geographical impact of these events.
- **Presence of China:** Over the past three decades, China has demonstrated increasing contempt for the international rule of law by encroaching islets and reclaiming reefs in the South China Sea (SCS), on which military bases have been built in pursuit of its Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD) strategy.

Conclusion

- The IPMDA has correctly identified technology as a key enabler of the initiative. Consequently, technology-related issues related to identification of 'dark vessels', collaboration and interoperability will need to be addressed on priority.
- Multinational MDA exercises need to be held regularly between Quad partner countries.
- While India is not a treaty ally of the US, IPMDA offers scope for **greater sharing of intelligence of interest to India**, especially relating to China.

About QUAD

- It is known as the '**Quadrilateral Security Dialogue**' (QSD) and is an **informal strategic forum** comprising four nations, namely -- **United States of America (USA), India, Australia and Japan**.
- **Objective:** One of the primary objectives of the Quad is to work for a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.
- **Establishment:** The group met for the first time in 2007 on the sidelines of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean)**.
 - Its origins can be traced back to the **evolution of Exercise Malabar and the 2004 Tsunami** when India conducted relief and rescue operations for itself and neighbouring countries and was later joined by the US, Japan and Australia.
- **Principles of Quad:** To keep the strategic sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any military or political influence.
 - The core objective of the Quad is to secure a rules-based global order, freedom of navigation and a liberal trading system. The coalition also aims to offer alternative debt financing for nations in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Significance of Quad for India:** It is believed that the forum strategically counters China's economic and military rise. Interestingly, if Chinese hostilities rise on the borders, India can take the support of the other Quad nations to counter the communist nation.
 - In addition, India can even take the help of its naval front and conduct strategic explorations in the Indo-Pacific region.

Source: [TH](#)

Appointment of Chief Information Commissioner

Syllabus: GS2/Indian Polity

In News

- **Shri Heeralal Samariya** has been appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission.

Central Information Commission

- The Central Information Commission was constituted in **2005** under the **Right to Information Act, 2005**.
- The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over **all Central Public Authorities**.
- The Commission has certain powers and functions mentioned in the RTI Act, 2005.

- These broadly relate to adjudication in second appeal for giving information; direction for record keeping, suo motu disclosures receiving and enquiring into a complaint on inability to file RTI etc; imposition of penalties and Monitoring and Reporting including preparation of an Annual Report.
- The decisions of the Commission are **final and binding**.
- The Commission is headed by the **Chief Information Commissioner** and can have a maximum of **10 Information Commissioners**.

Right to Information Act, 2005

- It was **promulgated in 2005** to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority.
- The law is applicable **to Government at all levels**- Union, State and Local as well as recipients of government grants.
- Only such information can be supplied under the Act which already exists and is held by the public authority or held under the control of the public authority.
- The Central Public Information Officer is not supposed to create information; or to interpret information; or to solve the problems raised by the applicants; or to furnish replies to hypothetical questions.
- The Act gives the citizens a right to information at par with the Members of Parliament and the Members of State Legislatures.

Chief Information Commissioner

- **Appointment:** The CIC is appointed by the **President**, on the recommendation of a **committee** including the **prime minister, leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Union cabinet minister** nominated by the prime minister.
- **Eligibility:** Information Commissioner shall be a person of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass-media or administration and governance.
 - Information Commissioner **shall not be a Member of Parliament** or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.
- **Term of office:** He/She shall hold office for a period of **three years** from the date on which he enters upon his office.
- **Removal:** He/She shall be removed from his office **only by order of the President** on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity.

What are the powers and functions of Information Commissions?

- The Central Information Commission or State Information Commission while inquiring into any matter under this section, have the **same powers as are vested in a civil court** while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, in respect of the following matters,
 - Summoning and enforcing the attendance of persons and compel them to give oral or written evidence on oath and to produce the documents or things;
 - Requiring the discovery and inspection of documents;

- Receiving evidence on affidavit;
- Requisitioning any public record or copies thereof from any court or office;
- Issuing summons for examination of witnesses or documents; and
- Any other matter, which may be prescribed.

Source: [PIB](#)

UN climate summit: Loss and damage Fund Pact

Syllabus: GS3/ Environmental Pollution & Degradation

In News

- An international **panel on loss and damage** due to the climate crisis has recently agreed on operationalising a **global fund**.
 - The US has formally objected to the outcome.

More about the news

- **About the Loss and damage fund pact:**
 - The agreement was concluded in **Abu Dhabi**
 - The text will be **forwarded for further discussion** at the 28th Conference of Parties (**COP28**) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
 - The **parties denote countries** that are **signatories to the convention**.
- **Significance of the fund:**
 - The fund will provide support for responding to loss and damage, which may include:
 - Funding complementary to humanitarian action taken immediately after an extreme weather event;
 - Intermediate or long-term recovery, reconstruction, or rehabilitation actions; and
 - Action to address slow onset events like extreme heat, drought and sea level rise.
 - This clear and strong recommendation to operationalise the loss and damage fund and funding arrangements paves the **way for an agreement at COP28**.
- **The fund contributions:**
 - The fund is able to receive contributions from a wide variety of sources of funding, including grants and concessional loans from public, private and innovative sources, as appropriate.
 - It only urged developed countries to continue to provide support, and encouraged other nations to provide voluntary support for activities to address loss and damage due to the climate emergency.

Criticisms & Challenges

- **USA's Objection to the fund:**
 - The US wanted to withdraw support to the text because it insisted that it should be made clear that **contributions to the fund** were **voluntary**.
- **Taking away the historical responsibility:**
 - According to developing countries, the funding **arrangements are weak** and take away from the historical responsibility of rich nations in contributing to global warming.

Conference of Parties(COP):

- **About:** Every year, the United Nations (UN) organises climate summits where the main agenda of the parties is to limit global temperature rises.
 - These summits are called the Conference of Parties (COP).
- **Participants:** The participants come from 197 countries that have signed the 1992 UN climate agreement.
- **Aim:** It aims to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere to prevent dangerous interference from human activity on the climate system.
 - The agreement seeks to **limit global warming to well below 2°C**, preferably to **1.5°C**, compared to **pre-industry levels**.
- **Summits:** It was **signed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**.
 - Since 1994, COPs have been organised every year. This year (2023) marks the 28th such summit, called the COP28 summit. One year was skipped because of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - **2015 Paris Agreement:**
 - Here all the countries agreed to limit the temperature rise to 1.5-degree Celsius.
- **COP27:** It was concluded in 2022 in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Shaikh.
 - COP27 was labelled as an “implementation” conference, in the sense that countries were determined to solve outstanding questions on climate finance.
 - This refers to money that developed countries had committed to developing countries to help them turn their economies away from fossil fuels, build infrastructure resilient to climate shocks and access technologies to enable widespread use of renewable energy.
- **COP 28:** The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, more commonly referred to as COP28, will be the **28th United Nations Climate Change conference**, held from **November 30th until December 12th, 2023** at the **Expo City, Dubai**.

More about the ‘Loss and damage’

- Loss and damage refer to the negative consequences that arise from the **unavoidable risks of climate change**, like rising sea levels, prolonged heat waves, desertification, the acidification of the sea and **extreme events**, such as bushfires, species extinction and crop failures.
- As the climate crisis unfolds, these events will **happen more and more frequently**, and the **consequences** will become more **severe**.
- **How does it work?**
 - The African continent for example, contributes the least to climate change yet is the most vulnerable to its impacts.
 - African countries that contribute so little will have to spend up to five times more on adapting to the climate crisis than on healthcare.
 - Pakistan has seen US\$30 billion in damages from severe flooding but emits less than 1 per cent of global emissions.
 - **G20 countries**, meanwhile, represent **around 75 per cent of global greenhouse emissions**.

Financing 'Loss and damage'

- **Shortfall:**
 - United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) research shows that finance for adaptation falls short.
 - The **2022 Adaptation Gap Report** indicates that international adaptation finance flows to developing countries are five to ten times below estimated needs, and will need over US\$300 billion per year by 2030.
- **Suggestions:**
 - Loss and damage finance needs are closely connected to our ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
 - Some **traditional financing instruments** could be used to deal with loss and damage.
 - Social protection, contingency finance, catastrophe risk insurance and catastrophe bonds can provide a certain buffer and rapid pay-outs after disasters.
 - However, a **broadened donor base and innovative finance tools** would be needed to respond to the magnitude of loss and damage.

Way ahead

- For the fund to be effective, the root cause of climate change must be tackled – and that involves reducing emissions.
- Unless emissions are drastically reduced, more and more countries will face the devastating effects of climate change.
- The world urgently needs to find more resources for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage so that climate change will not erode humanity's chances to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: TH

Breaching of Personal Data of Indians

Syllabus: GS3/Cyber Security

Context:

- Personally identifiable information of many Indian citizens were being sold on the dark web.

More about the news:

- Resecurity, an American cyber security company, said that personally identifiable information of 815 million Indian citizens, including Aadhaar numbers and passport details, were being sold on the dark web.
- The threat actors like **pwn0001** and **Lucius** selling the data claimed it was **sourced from various repositories** like the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and voter IDs and driving licence records, which has been subjected to numerous cyber-attack attempts that has been reported.

Earlier Incidences:

- Aadhaar data leaks were reported in 2018, 2019, and 2022.
- Farmer's data stored on the PM Kisan website was made available on the dark web.

- Earlier this year, a bot on the messaging platform Telegram was returning personal data of Indian citizens who registered with the COVID-19 vaccine intelligence network (CoWIN) portal.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII):

- It is **any information connected to a specific individual** that can be used to uncover that individual's identity, such as their social security number, full name, or email address.
 - It can be used alone or with other relevant data, and can identify an individual.
- PII may be direct identifiers like passport information or quasi-identifiers that can be combined with other information to successfully recognise an individual.
- **Not all personal data is considered PII**, and it *only refers to information that points to a particular person*.

Types of PII:

- **Direct identifiers:** Direct identifiers are unique to a person and include things like a passport number or driver's licence number. A single direct identifier is typically enough to determine someone's identity.
- **Indirect identifiers:** Indirect identifiers are not unique, and they include more general personal details like race and place of birth. While a single indirect identifier can't identify a person, a combination can.

How did such actors gain access to sensitive data?

- Threat actors selling stolen data on the dark web declined to specify how they obtained the data without which any effort to identify the source of the data leak would be speculative.
- Threat actors leverage stolen identity information to commit online-banking theft, tax frauds, and other cyber-enabled financial crimes.

Threats arising from the leaked information:

- According to a survey from Resecurity, India being one of the fastest growing economies of the world, ranked fourth globally in all malware detection in the first half of 2023.
- Another survey found that nearly 45% of Indian businesses experienced more than a 50% rise in disruptive cyberattacks in 2022.
 - It also found that 67% of Indian government and essential services organisations experienced over a 50% increase in disruptive cyberattacks.

Challenges associated with the PII:

- **No uniformity in regulations:** Different regulations set different standards for what kinds of data must be protected, complicating things further.
- The **European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** requires organisations to protect all personal data, defined as 'any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person'.
 - Under the GDPR, organisations must protect sensitive and non-sensitive PII, but also things that **might not even be considered sensitive data** in other contexts, such as political opinions, organisational affiliations, and descriptions of physical characteristics.
 - Complying with these regulations can be difficult because different jurisdictions may have different or even contradictory rules.

- Other major concerns related to PII are issues related to *privacy, data management and safety because of increased cyber attacks, and vulnerability to identity theft* etc.

Data Privacy Laws and PII:

- **International Privacy Regulations:** According to McKinsey, 75% of countries have implemented data privacy laws governing the collection, retention, and use of PII.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection Law:**
 - **Individual consent to use data and data principal rights:** Under the new legislation, personal data will be included and processed only with explicit consent from the individual, unless specific circumstances pertaining to national security, law, and order require otherwise.
 - **Personal data breach:** This means any unauthorised processing of personal data or accidental disclosure, acquisition, sharing, use, alteration, destruction or loss of access to personal data, that compromises the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of personal data.
- **Cyber Laws of India:** Cyber crime is unlawful acts wherein the computer is either a tool or a target or both.
 - Cyber crime can involve criminal activities that are traditional in nature, such as theft, fraud, forgery, defamation and mischief, all of which are subject to the Indian Penal Code.
 - The abuse of computers has given birth to a gamut of **new age crimes** that are addressed by the **Information Technology Act, 2000.**

Way Forward: Protecting The PII

- To safeguard PII, organisations typically create data privacy frameworks. These frameworks can take different forms depending on the organisation, the PII it collects, and the data privacy regulations it must follow.
 - Identify all PII in the organisation's systems, and categorise PII according to sensitivity level.
 - Minimise the collection and use of PII, and regularly dispose of any PII no longer needed.
 - Apply data security controls. Example controls that may include Encryption, Identity and access management like two-factor or multifactor authentication, zero-trust architecture and role-based access controls etc.
- It's worth noting that NIST and other data privacy experts often recommend applying different controls to different data sets based on how sensitive the data is. Using strict controls for non-sensitive data may be cumbersome and not cost-effective.
- Organisations or individuals can follow the **best practices** for *web applications and browser security, email security, wireless security, USB security, and protection from Phishing* etc.

[Source: TH](#)

Deep Fake

**Syllabus: GS3/Cybersecurity
In News**

- The recent controversy pertaining to the **viral deepfake video** of an actor has triggered concerns about online safety, particularly of women.

What is Deep Fake?

- Deepfakes use a form of artificial intelligence called **deep learning** to make images of fake event.
- Deepfake technology utilises **advanced machine learning algorithms** to create or manipulate video content, thereby making it appear as if individuals are saying or doing things they never actually did.
- Most of the deepfake videos have been pornographic in nature. But during elections time, digitally altered clips of politicians are also circulated to falsely attribute a statement or promise to them.

How to spot a deepfake video?

- One should **look for inconsistencies** such as unnatural blinking patterns, facial distortions, or mismatches between the voice and lip movements.
- Additionally, there are **emerging tools and software** that utilize machine learning to detect deepfakes by analyzing these and other subtle cues that may not be immediately apparent to the human eye.

What should the govt do to address the deepfake menace?

- **The IT Act 2000** does provide a framework for addressing impersonation and fraud conducted via digital means, the advent of deep fakes calls for more **specialized measures**.
- The government should amend existing laws to **specifically address the unique challenges posed by deepfakes**.
- The government should support the **development of more sophisticated detection tools** that can be used by authorities and the public.
- **Educational initiatives** should be undertaken to inform citizens about the nature of deep fakes and how to critically assess digital content.
- There is a need to **work with tech companies** and social media platforms to detect and mitigate the spread of deep fakes.

Source: [IE](#)

Facts In News **Balban's Tomb**

Syllabus: GS1/Art and Culture

In News

- Several renovations within the Mehrauli's Archaeological Park were unveiled, with one of them being the tomb of Balban

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban:

- Ghiyas-ud-din Balban was a Sultan of the Mamluk (Slave) dynasty, the first of the Delhi Sultanate dynasties.
- Ruled from Delhi between 1266 AD and 1287 AD.
- He was sold as a slave to the then-ruler Iltumish in 1232 CE but was later released.

Balban's Tomb:



- **Location:** Mehrauli's Archaeological Park, New Delhi.
- The tomb is situated within the archaeological park and was originally known as the "**Dar-ul-Amaan**" or "**Haven of Safety**." It was a square building with spacious rooms on either side.
- It is considered one of the **first structures in India to feature true arch construction**, with the keystone placed at the center. This architectural innovation allowed for **even distribution of the weight of the superstructure** and became a common feature in **Indo-Islamic architecture** in Delhi.
- **Purpose:** It offered refuge to those seeking protection from debt collectors and pursuers. Even individuals who had committed murder could find solace within its walls, as the Sultan would compensate the families of the victims.
- **Historical Accounts:** The structure is referenced by historical figures, including Ibn Batuta, who spoke of it as one of Balban's acts of generosity.

Source: [IE](#)

Mubarak Manzil

Syllabus: GS1/Art and Culture

In News

- Begum Munawwar-ul-Nisa, the wife of Malerkotla's last ruler Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan, passed without witnessing the 'Mubarak Manzil Palace' restored.

About

- It is a historic 19th-century palace located in Malerkotla, Punjab, India.
- The palace is notable for its architectural significance, featuring European influences in its design.
- Mubarak Manzil served as the residence of the ruling family of Malerkotla, with Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan being one of the prominent figures associated with it.
- The palace suffered from neglect and decay, primarily due to family disputes and financial constraints.



Significance

- Malerkota town is revered for its historical connection to Guru Gobind Singh, who blessed Malerkotla for its stand against the execution of his sons.
- Both Sikhs and Muslims hold deep sentiments and respect for Malerkotla and its royal family.
- The historical significance of the town is a source of pride and reverence for the local communities.

Source: [TH](#)

Operation Cactus

Syllabus: GS2/International Relations

In News

- 35 years ago, India prevented a coup in Maldives.

About

- The Maldives is an island nation located southwest of the Indian mainland, comprising approximately 1,200 low-lying coral islands in the Indian Ocean.
- **1988 Coup Attempt:** President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom faced coup attempt organized by Maldivian businessman Abdullah Luthufee and Ahmed "Sagaru" Nasir, with support from Uma Maheswaran, the leader of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), a militant Sri Lankan Tamil organization.
- **Indian Intervention:** India when requested swiftly responded by activating the Parachute Brigade, led by Colonel Subhash C Joshi. Indian paratroopers were flown in from Agra to Hulhulé, the main airport in the Maldives. Their arrival caused the rebel forces to abandon their mission and flee.
- **Success of Operation Cactus:** Indian paratroopers secured the airport and proceeded to the capital, Malé, to rescue President Gayoom. Some rebels attempted to escape on a hijacked merchant vessel with hostages. The Indian Navy intercepted the rebel ship, leading to the surrender of the rebels.
- **Lasting Relationship:** The intervention in Operation Cactus is remembered with gratitude by the Maldivian people. The relationship between India and the Maldives has endured, with continued efforts to enhance bilateral relations.

Source: [IE](#)

Advocate-on-Record System

Syllabus: GS2/Polity

In News

- SC called for a “comprehensive plan” for reforming and improving the AoR system.

About

- An AoR is a lawyer who is qualified to represent clients in the Supreme Court of India. Only AoRs have the authority to file cases directly before the Supreme Court.

Eligibility criteria

- **Training:** Minimum one year training with a court-approved AoR, before taking the AoR examination.
- **Experience:** The advocate must have at least four years of legal practice before starting the training.
- **Examination:** 3 hour test covering subjects such as Practice and Procedure, Drafting, Professional Ethics, and Leading Cases. To pass, the advocate needs to score a minimum of 60% (240 out of 400) with at least 50% in each subject.

Other Requirements

- An AoR must have an office in Delhi within a 16-kilometer radius of the Supreme Court.
- Additionally, they are required to employ a registered clerk within one month of being registered as an AoR.

Rules Governing the AoR System:

- **Article 145** of the Constitution, the Supreme Court has the authority to create rules and regulate its own procedures for hearing cases.
- The **Supreme Court Rules, 2013** outline specific eligibility criteria and a rigorous examination that an advocate must clear to become an AoR

- The AoR system in India is somewhat based on the British practice of barristers and solicitors, with AoRs serving as the equivalent of solicitors.
 - Barristers typically argue cases in court, while solicitors handle cases from clients.
 - Senior advocates in India are designated by the Court and have a distinct gown. They cannot directly solicit clients and are typically briefed by other lawyers, such as AoRs.

Source: [IE](#)

Australia and India Cooperation in Education Sector

Syllabus: GS2/International Relations

Context

- 1st Australia India Education and Skill Council meeting (AIESC) was held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

About

- The **Australia India Education and Skill Council (AIESC)**, previously known as the **Australia India Education Council (AIEC)**, was **established in 2011** to guide the **strategic direction of the education, training, and research partnerships** between the two countries.
- The scope of this forum was enhanced *to align with the national priorities of both countries, promoting internationalisation, two-way mobility, and collaboration in the domains of education as well as the skill ecosystem.*

Major Highlights of the Meeting

- AIESC aims to build stronger knowledge bridges and establish knowledge vertically as one of strongest pillars of India-Australia Friendship.
- There were **5 MoUs exchanged** between Australian and Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) **to facilitate greater academic, research and skill collaborations.**
- India to go for focussed research in identified sectors under **Phase III of the Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) Programme.**
 - **The SPARC is an initiative of the Ministry of Education** (formerly, Ministry of Human Resource Development) that aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's HEIs by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the **best institutions in the world.**
 - Both countries welcome the imminent opening of **Deakin and Wollongong university campuses in GIFT City in Gujarat.**
- India sets aside 2.5 million USD for collaboration with Australia for research in **critical minerals and other priority areas** like agriculture, mines and minerals, logistics, renewable energy, water management, healthcare, and artificial intelligence.

Significance:

- It is for the first time that **education and skilling** is being brought under the **same institutional forum.**
- It can act as a catalyst in charting new roadmaps for building stronger knowledge bridges, advancing mutual priorities in education and skill development,

boosting people-to-people linkages and establishing the knowledge vertical as one of the strongest pillars of [India – Australia ties](#).

[Source: IE](#)

‘Bharat Atta’

Syllabus: GS 3/Agriculture

In News

- The Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry flagged off 100 mobile vans for sale of **wheat flour (Atta)** under ‘**Bharat**’ brand, from Kartavya Path, New Delhi.

About ‘Bharat Atta’

- 2.5 LMT of wheat @ Rs.21.50/kg has been allocated for Semi-Government and cooperative organisations i.e. Kendriya Bhandar, NCCF and NAFED under **Open Market Sale Scheme [OMSS (D)]** for converting to atta and offer it for sale to the public under '**Bharat Atta**' brand at an MRP not exceeding ₹ 27.50/Kg.
- It will be available at all physical and mobile outlets of Kendriya Bhandar, **NAFED and NCCF** and will be expanded to other co-op/retail outlets.
- The launch will increase **supplies in the market at affordable rates**, and will help in **continued moderation of prices** of this important food item.

Other Steps taken by the GoI for the welfare of ordinary consumers.

- Various measures were taken in the past with regard to **Tomato and Onion to cool off prices**.
 - The Government had procured **tomatoes under Price Stabilisation Fund** and made it available at a highly subsidised rate to consumers.
 - In order to check the volatility in prices of onion, the Government maintains an onion buffer under the PSF.
 - The Govt. has imposed Minimum Export Price (MEP) of \$800 per ton on onion on 28.10.2023 to check price rise
- The Centre is also providing **Bharat Dal(Chana dal) at Rs. 60 per kg** through Kendriya Bhandar, NAFED and NCCF to provide relief to consumers.
- To **prevent hoarding**, stock limits have been imposed on tur and urad under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 till 31.12.2023.
- The **Basic Duty on Crude Palm Oil**, Crude Soyabean Oil and Crude Sunflower Oil was reduced from 2.5% to Nil.
- **The Basic Duty on Refined Soybean oil and Refined Sunflower Oil was reduced** to 17.5% from 32.5% and the Basic Duty on Refined Palm Oils was reduced from 17.5% to 12.5% on 21.12.2021.

Do you know ?

- Nationwide procurement operations are undertaken to implement the **PSS (Price Support Scheme)** which ensures the benefit of MSP to farmers.
- **Export of wheat** has already been **banned** in order to ensure sufficient domestic availability of this commodity.
- Government has also **imposed limits on stock holding of wheat** by different categories of entities to prevent hoarding.
- **Government has also banned export of non- basmati rice** and imposed a floor price of USD 950 for export of Basmati rice.

- **Price Stabilization Fund (PSF)** has been set up to check the volatility in the prices of agri-horticultural commodities in order to mitigate the hardships faced by consumers.

Source : [PIB](#)

Timed out Rule

Syllabus :Miscellaneous

In News

- **Angelo Mathews** was timed out during **Sri Lanka's clash against Bangladesh** in Delhi in a **first in international cricket**.

About Timed out Rule

- The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 playing conditions pertaining to "timed out" dismissals reads thus:
 - **40.1.1** After the fall of a wicket or the retirement of a batter, the incoming batter must, unless Time has been called, be ready to receive the ball, or for the other batter to be ready to receive the **next ball within 2 minutes** of the dismissal or retirement.
 - If this requirement is not met, the incoming batter will be out, Timed out.
 - The bowler does not get credit for the wicket.
- It was the first time in international cricket, men's or women's, that a batter was dismissed according to the "timed out" law.
- **Other instances :** In 2007, **Sourav Ganguly** was nearly **timed out in a Test match** against **South Africa** after he **took more than six minutes** to step out .
 - Then South Africa skipper Graeme Smith decided not to appeal and Ganguly went on to bat.

Source:[LM](#)