DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

By

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Important News Articles

GS I

1. Cancel free movement along Myanmar border: Manipur Chief Minister tells Centre - Indian Express

Relevance: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

News

	Prelims Take Away
	• Indo-Myanmar Border
	• Assam Rifles
	• Free Movement Regime

- The Manipur state government has requested the Centre to permanently wind up the **Free Movement Regime (FMR)** along the Indo-Myanmar border.
- Recently, at a press meet, CM of Manipur said that the FMR has been the biggest impediment in Manipur's efforts to curb the influx of illegal migrants from Myanmar through the unfenced border.

Issues raised by CM of Manipur

- **Permanently freeze the Free Movement Regime (FMR)**
  - o FMR has been the biggest impediment in Manipur's efforts to curb the influx of illegal migrants & drug trafficking from Myanmar through unfenced border.
- State is working towards **National Register of Citizens and fencing of the border with Myanmar**
- **On the issue of deployment of security forces**
  - o CM said that the security forces instead of being deployed at zero point, were found guarding the border 14 to 15 km inside Indian territory.

Issue of refugees and illegal migrants

- **Since** the **military coup** in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, the **ruling junta** has **launched** a **campaign of persecution** against the **Kuki-Chin people**.
- This has **pushed** large numbers of **Myanmar's tribals across** the **country's western border** into India, especially into Manipur and Mizoram, where they have sought shelter.
- **Mizoram**, where a **large section** of the population has close **ethnic and cultural ties** with people across the border, has set up **camps** for more than **40,000 refugees,** despite protests from the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- **Manipur** too has received a **chunk of illegal migrants** over the past year and a half.
  - o A **committee** set up by the **state government** to identify such **migrants** recently put their number at 2,187.
  - o In September 2022, 5,500 **illegal immigrants** were caught in **Moreh**, and 4,300 were pushed back. **Biometrics of these individuals** have been recorded.

Free Movement Regime:

- Under the FMR, **all the hill tribes, whether they are citizens of India or Myanmar, can travel within 16 km on either side of the Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB).**
- They **can cross the border by producing a border pass with a one-year validity** issued by the competent authority and **can stay up to two weeks per visit.**
- The FMR **was implemented in 2018 as part of the Central government's Act East policy.**
- FMR is **implemented by both governments for the people living along the IMB.**
- This **helps locals to get more culturally assimilated with trans-border village**s through weddings, celebrating common festivals together and trans-border trade.
- It is a **reflection of the physical, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and fraternal linkages** among the trans-border villagers.
- **Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB):**
  - o It **runs for 1,643 km in the four states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh.**

- o It **runs from the tripoint with China in the north to the tripoint with Bangladesh in the south.**
- o **Assam Rifles is tasked with guarding the IMB.**

2. India, UN launch capacity building initiative - India Today

Relevance: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

News

Prelims Take Away
• Capacity building initiative

- **India** and the **United Nations** have **jointly launched** an initiative **aimed** at **building** the **capacity** of countries in the Global South.
- The **goal** is to share **India's development experiences**, **best practices**, and expertise through **capacity-building** and training programs.

India, UN launch capacity building initiative

- The "**India-UN Capacity Building Initiative**" was announced at the event "India-UN for the Global South-Delivering for Development".
- As part of this initiative, the **UN India team** and the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** will partner together.
- This **partnership** will leverage **India's Technical and Economic Cooperation platform** to share India's development experiences and best practices across the world.

Key highlights

- **Operationalise development-relevant deliverables** of India's G20 Presidency. Hence, it is seen as a big boost to India's G20 Presidency. This includes:
  - o the G20 Action Plan for Accelerating Progress on the SDGs,
  - o technological transformation and building Digital Public Infrastructure.
- **Complements the India-UN partnership** in the form of "India-UN Development Partnership Fund".
  - o This fund has reportedly developed a portfolio of 75 development projects in 61 countries in the last 6 years.
- **Significance**
  - o Contribution to global efforts towards accelerating momentum for achieving the SDGs by strengthening South-South Cooperation.
  - o Reflects India's continuing efforts to strengthen its development partnership with the Global South.
  - o It builds upon the extensive cooperation in development and capacity building that India already has bilaterally with partner countries.

GS II

3. Aadhaar unreliable in 'hot, humid' India: rating agency- The Hindu

Relevance: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News

Prelims Take Away
• Aadhaar
• blockchain technology

- **Global rating major Moody's Investors Service has flagged concerns** about **security and privacy vulnerabilities** in centralised identification systems like **India's Aadhaar programme.**
- **The unique ID system often results in "service denial**s", and using biometric technologies in humid conditions is unreliable, it noted.

Key Points

- The **Aadhaar system enables access to public and private services,** with verification via fingerprint or iris scans and alternatives like One-Time Passcodes (OTPs).

Unreliable biometric tech

- "The Unique Identification Authority of India **(UIDAI) administers Aadhaar,** aiming to integrate marginalized groups and expand welfare benefits access.
- The system often results in service denials, and the **reliability of biometric technologies, especially for manual laborers in hot, humid climates, is questionable.**
- In August, the **government extended its deadline for switching to Aadhaar-based** payment system (ABPS) for MGNREGA beneficiaries for the fifth time,

Privacy, security concerns

- In a report on **"Decentralized Finance and Digital Assets"** Moody's acknowledged Aadhaar as "the world's largest digital ID program.
- Stressing that **ID systems like Aadhaar lead to the concentration of sensitive information** with specific entities and increase the risks of data breaches,
- Moody's made a pitch for **decentralised ID (DID) systems such as digital wallets,** based on blockchain capabilities
  - o It gives users more control of their private data and can reduce online fraud.

Decentralised systems

- "In a **centralized system**, a single **entity controls and manages a user's identifying** credentials and their access to online resources.
- That **entity can dispose of the user's identity data** – name, address and Social Security number, for example – for internal or third-party profiling purposes,"
- **The adoption of DID** — where personal data is saved in a user's digital wallet and identity verification takes place on a **decentralised digital ledger such as a blockchain**
- It **increases privacy and reduces the amount of personal information** held by intermediaries.
- The **DID, can be stored and managed in a user's portable and reusable digital walle**t, rather than by a government, business, employer, or other entity.

Negative social repercussions

- Decentralised IDs a**lso pose some challenges.**
- At a broader level, **it warned that digital IDs, centralised or not, can have negative social repercussions**
  - o since they may strengthen group identities and political divides,
  - o particularly if offered by technology and social media companies with significant monopolistic influence.
- Further **polarization of group identities and political affiliations would undermine** the goal of a united and diverse digital space.

4. Multiple entry, exit option in higher studies may not suit India: House panel-The Hindu

Relevance: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News

- Recently, the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education**, has advised the Centre to hold discussions with all stakeholders on the **option of multiple entry and multiple exit (MEME) in the national education policy (NEP).**
- The panel, in a report titled '**Implementation of the National Education Policy, 202**0 **in Higher Education',** said Indian institutions were likely to face several issues in implementing this system.

Prelims Take Away
• Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)
• National education policy (NEP).

Key highlights of report

- The **NEP proposes multiple entry and multiple exit options** for the students in higher education.
- The panel, **citing high population, said the estimated intake of students in higher education every year was high.**

- If institutions allow MEME, **it would be very difficult for the institutions to predict how many students would exit and how many would join midway.**
- Since **institutions would not know the in- and out-traffic, it will certainly disturb the pupil-teacher ratio,"** the report said.
- The members in the panel also expressed concern that **uneven geographical distribution of higher educational institutions would create hurdles in managing MEME.**

Greater flexibility
- The panel, though noted that **MEME will offer students greater flexibility and choice in their educational pathways**
- **Panel asked the Centre to develop comprehensive guidelines** and a well-defined framework for MEME options, including:
  - o specific eligibility criteria
  - o credit transfer mechanisms providing a clear road map for students pursuing different exit points.
- Also, **implementation of a standardised Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)** system would facilitate smooth transitions between different levels of education
  - o It allows students to earn and transfer credits seamlessly across institutions
- it will **reduce the value of one's degree and this is a way to produce cheap labour fo**r the job market.
- **The Kerala governmen**t **has decided not to implement MEME in college**s and universities in the State.

GS III

5. Defence Board discusses plan for second Vikrant-like carrier-The Hindu

Relevance: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.
News
- Recently, **The Defence Procurement Board (DPB) di**scussed the Indian Navy's proposal for **acquiring a second Vikrant-like aircraft carrier**
- However, the **DPB is yet to clear it after which it will be put for final approva**l by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by the Defence Minister, a source said.

Prelims Take Away
• INS Vikrant (IAC-I)
• MiG-29K

Key Points
- The **262m long and 62m wide INS Vikrant displacing 44,800 tonnes** is powered by four General Electric LM2500 engines
  - o Which gives it a maximum speed of 28 knots and an endurance of 7,500 Nautical Miles.
- The ship **uses an aircraft-operation mode known as Short Take Off But Arrested Recovery (STOBAR)** for which it is equipped with:
  - o a ski-jump for launching aircraft,
  - o a set of three 'arrestor wires' for their recovery onboard.
- The **Navy also operates the 44,500-tonne carrier INS Vikramaditya**, which also employs the STOBAR mechanism, procured from Russia

INS Vikrant (IAC-I)
- **It** is the first aircraft carrie**r built in India and the first Vikrant-class aircraft carrier built by Cochin Shipyard (CSL) in Koch**i, Kerala for the Indian Navy.
- The **motto of the ship is Jayema Sam Yudhi Sprdhah** which is taken from Rig Veda and is translated as "I defeat those who fight against me".
- The carrier is **262 m long, 62 m at the widest part and with a depth of 30 m** minus the superstructure.
- There are **14 decks in all,** including five in the superstructure.
- The deck is **designed to enable aircraft such as the MiG-29K** to operate from the carrier.

- It is expected to **carry an air group of up to thirty aircraft,** which will include up to 24–26 fixed-wing combat aircraft, primarily the Mikoyan MiG-29K .

6. Galactic tides: Pushing and pulling the heavens. What is it?

Relevance: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

News

Prelims Take Away
• Galactic tides
• Milky Way

- Recently, researchers discovered that like the earth's oceans at their shores, **the universe's galaxies also experience tides, b**ut on a much larger scale.
- The **Andromeda galaxy is heading towards the Milky Way at 110 km/s** and will collide in four billion years.

Galactic tides

- They are **caused by gravitational forces within a galaxy,** arising in the interactions between celestial objects like stars and gas clouds.
- These **tidal forces influence various aspects of a galaxy's evolution.**
- They can r**eshape a galaxy structure by creating tidal tails and bridges,** promoting star formation, and disrupting smaller star systems.

Effect of Galactic tides

- Over aeons**, galactic tides also disrupt the orbits of stars,** leading to long-term changes in galactic structure.
- they also have a say in **the ways in which proximate galaxies do and don't interact.**
- In fact, r**esearchers have observed the closest galaxy to the Milky Wa**y, the colossal Andromeda,
  o It was found that tidal streams near its edges could be signatures of dwarf galaxies that were later devoured.
- It also **affects the supermassive black holes at galaxy centres**, leading to events that change the ways in which these cosmic beasts interact with nearby stars.
- In astronomy, understanding galactic tides is crucial if we are to truly **understand the complex dynamics and evolution of galaxies over cosmological time.**

7. NIA confiscates properties of Sikhs for Justice founder, seizure notice on Nijjar house too - Indian Express

Relevance: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

Notes

Prelims Take Away
• NIA
• NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019

- The National Investigation Agency (**NIA**) **confiscated land** and part of a **house belonging** to Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, the **US-based founder** and **lawyer** of the **banned Sikhs for Justice**, in Amritsar and Chandigarh.

National Investigation Agency

- The **National Investigation Agency Act, 2008** was enacted and the National Investigation Agency was born.
- The Act gives the NIA powers to:
  o Take **Suo motu** cognisance of terror activities in any part of India and register a case,
  o Enter any state without permission from the state government, and
  o Investigate and arrest people.
- At present NIA is functioning as the **Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency** in India.
- **Objectives:**
  o To set the **standards** of excellence in **counter terrorism** and other national security related investigations at the national level by **developing** into a **highly trained, partnership oriented workforce**.
  o To create **deterrence** for **existing and potential terrorist groups/individuals**.

- **Jurisdiction:**
  - o Provisions of the NIA Act **extend** to the **whole of India** and also applies to **Indian citizens outside the country./**
- **Headquarters**: New Delhi
- **Nodal Ministry**: Ministry of Home Affairs

Functions of NIA:
- In-depth **professional investigation** of scheduled offences using the latest scientific methods of investigation and setting up such standards as to **ensure** that all **cases entrusted to the NIA are detected.**
- Ensuring effective and **speedy trial.**
- Maintaining **professional and cordial relations** with the governments of States and Union Territories and other law enforcement agencies in compliance of the legal provisions of the NIA Act.
- **Assist** all States and other **investigating agencies** in investigation of terrorist cases.
- Build a **data base** on all **terrorist related information** and **share** the **database** available with the States and other agencies.

NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019:
- The 2019 NIA Amendment Act **expanded the type of offences that the investigative body could investigate and prosecute**.
- The agency can now investigate offences related to human trafficking, counterfeit currency, manufacture or sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism, and offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.
- The amendment also enables the Central government to designate sessions courts as special courts for NIA trials.

Can NIA Conduct Raids & Seize Properties?
- The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act (UAPA)**, also passed in 2019, allows an NIA officer to conduct raids, and seize properties that are suspected to be linked to terrorist activities.
- The NIA does not have to take permission of the Director General of Police of a state.
- The investigating officer only requires sanction from the Director General of NIA.

8. What are the reasons for rise in global debt? - Indian Express

Relevance: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

News

Prelims Take Away
• GDP
• Debt

- According to the **Institute of International Finance** (IIF), **global debt rose** to an **all-time high** of $307 trillion in the 2nd quarter (April-June 2023), rising by about $100 trillion over the last decade.

What is Global Debt?
- Global debt refers to the **borrowings of governments as well as private businesses** and individuals.
- **Governments borrow to meet various expenditures** that they are unable to meet through tax and other revenues.
- Governments may also borrow **to pay interest on the money** that they have already borrowed to fund past expenditures. **The private sector borrows predominantly to make investments.**
- Both global debt in nominal terms and global debt as a share of GDP **have been rising steadily over the decades.**
- **The rise came to a halt during the pandemic** as economic activity turned sluggish and lending slowed down.
- But global debt levels have started to rise again in the last few quarters. During the first half of 2023, total global debt rose by $10 trillion.
- **Most (over 80%) of the rise in global debt** in the first half of the year **has come from advanced economies** such as the US, UK, Japan, and France.
- **Among emerging market economies**, China, India and Brazil have seen the most growth in debt.

Why is Global Debt Rising?

- **This has happened amid rising interest rates**, which was expected to adversely affect demand for loans.
- What is more interesting than rising debt levels is the **drop in global debt as a share of GDP over seven consecutive quarters prior to 2023**.
    o **The IIF attributes this to the rise in price inflation**, which it claims has helped governments to inflate away the debts denominated in their local currencies.
    o **Inflating away of debt refers** to the phenomenon wherein the central bank of a country either directly or indirectly uses freshly created currency to effectively pay off outstanding government debt.
    o **But the creation of fresh money causes prices to rise**, thus imposing an **indirect tax on the wider economy** to pay the government's debt.
- A further rise in debt levels over time is to be expected **since the total money supply usually steadily rises** each year in countries across the globe.

Is the Rising Global Debt a Cause for Worry?

- Rising global debt levels **usually leads to concerns about the sustainability of such debt**.
    o The IIF has warned that the international financial infrastructure is **not equipped to handle unsustainable domestic debt levels**.
    o This is particularly so in the case of government debt which is prone to rise rapidly due to **reckless borrowing by politicians to fund populist programmes**.
- When central banks raise interest rates, **servicing outstanding debt becomes a challenge for governments with a heavy debt burden**.
    o **Rising interest rates can increase pressure on governments** and force them to either default outright or inflate away their debt.
- **Rapidly rising private debt levels** also lead to worries among analysts about their sustainability.
    o This is because such a rise is linked to **unsustainable booms** that end in economic crises when such lending is not backed by genuine savings.
    o The most recent example of the same was the **2008 global financial crisis**, which was immediately preceded by an economic boom fueled by the US Federal Reserve's easy credit policy.

9. Department of Fisheries is promoting Artificial Reef (AR) under PMMSY for rejuvenating coastal fisheries - PIB

Relevance: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
News

- To **promote sustainable practises**, the **Department of Fisheries** has **sanctioned** 732 **artificial reef units** for 10 coastal states as a sub-activity **under** the **"Integrated Modern Coastal Fishing Villages"** of Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

Artificial Reefs (AR)

- An artificial reef is **a manmade structure** that **may mimic** some of the **characteristics of a natural reef.**
- These are **engineering technology interventions** used to rehabilitate and/or improve natural habitats, increase **productivity, and manage aquatic resources,** including habitat enhancement (FAO, 2015).
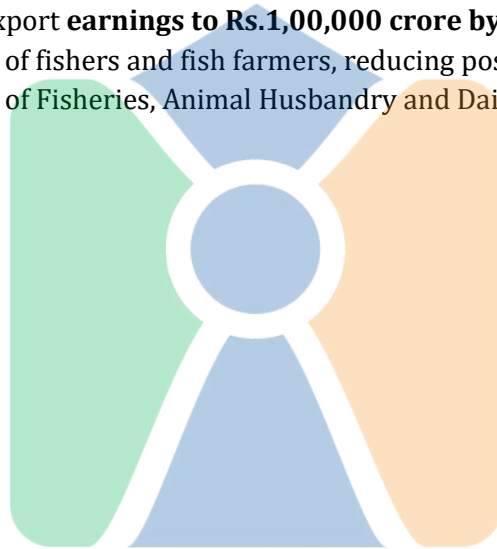
Prelims Take Away
• PMMSY
• Artificial Reefs
• Integrated Modern Coastal Fishing Villages

- Materials used to construct artificial reefs have included rocks, cinder blocks, and even wood and old tyres, which come in an infinite number of shapes and styles.
- The projects are being implemented with the technical support of **the Fisheries Survey of India** (FSI) and **ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute** (CMFRI).
- **Advantages of AR**
  o It boosts marine biodiversity.
  o It encourages fish population growth.
  o It reduces pressure on natural reefs.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
- It is a flagship scheme for **focused and sustainable development** of the **fisheries sector** in the country, with an estimated investment of Rs. 20,050 crores for its implementation during a period of 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25 in all States/Union Territories.
- **What are the aims of the scheme?**
  o It aims at enhancing fish production by an additional 70 lakh tonnes by 2024-25.
  o Increasing fisheries export **earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore by 2024-25.**
  o Doubling the incomes of fishers and fish farmers, reducing post-harvest losses from 20-25%.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

Editorials, Gists and Explainers

1. Hoysala temples on UNESCO heritage list - Indian Express

Relevance: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Context
- Three Hoysala-era temples in Karnataka [Chennakeshava (Belur), Hoysaleswara (Halebidu) and Keshava Temple (Somanathapura, Mysuru)] recently made it to UNESCO's World Heritage List, under the collective entry of '**Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas**'.
- The announcement was made by UNESCO, during the World Heritage Committee's 45th session in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Who were the Hoysalas?
- The Hoysalas, which began as provincial governors under the Western Chalukyas, held power in **Karnataka from the 10th century to the 14th century**.
- The dynasty came to power when the two dominant empires of the South, the Western Chalukyas and the Cholas crumbled.
- The capital of the Hoysalas was initially located at **Belur**, but was later moved to **Halebidu**(or Dwarasamudra).
- It was an important period in the development of South Indian **art, architecture, and religion**.
- The empire is remembered today primarily for **Hoysala architecture** - ~100 surviving temples are scattered across Karnataka.
- **No known monuments other than temples**, like palaces or forts, survive from the Hoysala period.
  - o This is one of the paradoxes of the early medieval and medieval non-Islamic world, because the **non-temple buildings were all built in either mud or brick or wood.**

The Hoysala Temples
- Hoysala temples are known for the **rare beauty and finesse of their wall sculptures**, and have been described as **art which applies to stone the technique of the ivory worker or the goldsmith**.
- One notable feature of Hoysala architecture is the use of **soapstone**, a malleable stone that is easy to carve.
- This is one of the **reasons behind the abundance of intricate sculptures** (animals, scenes of daily life, depictions from the epics and the Puranas)one can see on the temple walls.
- **The temples are generally built on stellate (star-shaped) platforms**, and have several structures inside the complex.
- Another special feature of Hoysala architecture is the unique confluence of styles - Hoysala architecture is an **amalgamation of 3 distinctive styles** (Dravidian, Vesara and the North Indian Nagara style).
- An interesting feature of Hoysala temples is that they are **'signed'** - the sculptors, masons leave behind their names, and sometimes a few more details.
- These **Vaishnava and Shaiva shrines** were built at the time Jainism was prominent in the region, and thus **mark a turn towards Hinduism**.

The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas
- **Built in the 12th and 13th centuries**, the 3 temples selected for the UNESCO list are important not just because they **demonstrate their builders' superior skill**, but also because they **narrate the tale of the politics that shaped them.**
- **The Chennakeshava temple** (dedicated to Lord Vishnu) was consecrated around 1117 AD by the mighty Hoysala king Vishnuvardhana, to mark his victories against the Cholas.
  - o It is thus also called the Vijaya Narayana temple.

- **The Kesava temple** (also a Vaishnava shrine) was built in Somanathapura in 1268 by Somanatha, a general of Hoysala King Narasimha III.
  - It is built in the shape of a 16-point star and has 3 shrines dedicated to Keshava (the statue is missing now), Janardhana and Venugopala.
- **The Hoysaleswara temple** is believed to be the largest **Shiva temple** built by the Hoysalas, and is dated to the 12th century.

2. An economic corridor, the Israel link and the geopolitics - The Hindu

Relevance: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context

- The 2023 **summit of the G-20** under India's presidency went **exceptionally well** given the **group's limited economic approach** to the **complex issues** that the world faces.
- From **climate change** and **underdevelopment**, wealth concentration and **poverty** and, most **critically for our times**, falling **democratic norms** and **principles of peace.**

The G20 summit in India

- India's remarkable success at the summit this year, in early September, was captured by the global press, except in China, for various outcomes such as the inclusion of the African Union in the G-20, a tangible offer of clean energy through a biofuel alliance, increasing substantial aid for Asia-Africa, an economic corridor that connects India, West Asia and Europe using an ambitious rail and shipping link, and the Delhi Declaration which was a joint statement of all the group.

A candid view

- The joint statement called the Delhi Declaration is newsworthy because of the fractured international order and power struggles between India and the United States with China or the U.S. with Russia.
- Despite the absence of China's President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the summit, India still got their agreement for the declaration which sums up the achievement.
- Substantially speaking, the statement is pareve as it does not name Russia for aggression against Ukraine; but it does evoke the United Nations charter and principles of territorial sovereignty.
- But the boldest outcome, and unanticipated by many, was the announcement of the economic corridor (the "India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor"), of a rail-ship route, to transport goods to Europe from India via the United Arab Emirates-Saudi Arabia-Jordan-Israel.
- Such a project will change the geopolitics for the future. The fact that it challenges China's Belt and Road Initiative is beside the more significant point.

Israel's absence, possible factors

- India 'set a precedent in G20 history by inviting the most Middle Eastern countries ever to take part as guests in the group's key summit', and one wonders why Israel, India's strategic partner also from the region, was not given such an invitation.
- As a host, India invited nine non-member countries — Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates — to the summit.
- Perhaps factors such as a meet between Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Mr. Netanyahu may have been impossible unless there was diplomatic normalisation.

A push for peace

- Saudi Arabia is willing to end the diplomatic boycott of Israel.
- It is a historical change because such an acceptance of Israel by the most important, religiously speaking, Muslim country, will help Israel with other countries such as Pakistan (already willing), Indonesia and Malaysia.
- For such a change, Saudis demand that Israel commits to the two-state solution and the well-being of the Palestinian people, even if the occupation does not end soon.

Way forward

- Israel-Palestine peace is a very challenging aim and given the rise of extremism on both sides, it appears all the more impossible.
- Saudi Arabia is aware of it and is still interested in having deliberations to walk smoothly among Arabs and other Muslims while working with the Biden administration to make peace with the State of Israel.
- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor will have to wait until this happens.

Quick Look

1. Norman E. Borlaug Award

- Indian agriculture scientist Swati Nayak won the prestigious Norman E. Borlaug Award for 2023.

Norman E. Borlaug Award:

- The award recognises exceptional scientists under 40 and someone who works in the field of food and nutrition security and hunger eradication.
- It is given in memory of the Nobel awardee and Green Revolution's chief architect Dr Norman Borlaug.
- The award will honour an individual who is working closely and directly "in the field" or at the production or processing level with farmers, animal herders, fishers or others in rural communities in any discipline or enterprise across the entire food production, processing, and distribution chain.
- The award diploma incorporates the image of Dr. Borlaug at work in the fields of Mexico and a cash prize of $10,000.
- It is endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation and will be presented every October in Des Moines, Iowa, by the World Food Prize Foundation.
- Other Indian recipients: Aditi Mukherji (2012) and Mahalingam Govindaraj (2022).

Contributions of Swati Nayak

- She introduced Sahbhagi Dhan', a drought-tolerant variety rice suitable for hilly uplands, and 'BINA Dhan-11', which is flood-tolerant.
- BINA-Dhan-11', which contains a submergence-tolerant Sub1 gene identified from an indigenous land race of Odisha.
- The Sub1 gene has been incorporated into many existing popular high-yielding varieties such as 'Samba Mahsuri', 'Swarna' and 'Ranjit'.
- There are, likewise, other drought-tolerant varieties, such as 'DRR Dhan 42' and 'DRR Dhan 44'.

2. Pink Diamond

- Pink diamonds, also known as fancy pink diamonds, are some of the rarest and most coveted gemstones in the world.
- Pink diamonds have uniquely bent crystalline structures.
- More than 90% of all the pink diamonds ever found come from a single mine in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.
- All diamonds are found in pipelike volcanoes or in their eroded remnants.

How did they form?

- Around 1.8 billion years ago, Western Australia and Northern Australia collided in a cataclysmic event.
- This impact is believed to have been the catalyst that transformed once-colourless diamonds into their pink variants.
- Scientists found that at Argyle, diamonds crystallised deep in Earth's interior were brought to the surface when a supercontinent, Nuna, began to break apart.
- As continents break up, their edges stretch, allowing small pockets of diamond-rich magma to rise to the surface.

3. Nuna

- It is an ancient supercontinent that graced our planet's surface.
- Scientists believe Nuna existed around 1.6 to 2.5 billion years ago, predating even the famous Pangea by a considerable margin.
- Researchers actively map Nuna's formation by piecing together geological and paleomagnetic data.
- These clues suggest that Nuna brought together fragments of what we now identify as North America, northern Europe, and parts of Siberia.
- This supercontinent experienced multiple cycles of coming together and breaking apart. Each phase of assembly and dispersal reshaped the Earth's surface.
- These changes gave rise to new geological formations, laying the groundwork for subsequent continents.
- One of the most intriguing findings about Nuna lies in its connection to Earth's atmospheric evolution.
- As Nuna formed, volcanic activities increased. These volcanoes released vast amounts of carbon dioxide, playing a pivotal role in shaping the planet's early atmospheric conditions and potentially influencing the course of life.

4. Mt. Semeru volcano

- It is an active volcano in East Java, Indonesia.
- It is located in a subduction zone, where the Indo-Australia plate subducts under the Eurasia plate.
- It is the highest mountain on the island of Java.
- The name "Semeru" is derived from Meru, the central world mountain in Hinduism, or Sumeru, the abode of gods.
- Indonesia sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity.

Pacific Ring of Fire
- It, also known as the Circum-Pacific Belt, is a path along the Pacific Ocean characterised by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.
- Its length is approximately 40,000 kilometres.
- It traces boundaries between several tectonic plates—including the Pacific, Juan de Fuca, Cocos, Indian-Australian, Nazca, North American, and Philippine Plates.

5. Bolson tortoises

- It is the largest and rarest land reptile, as well as the rarest of the six Gopherus species native to the North American Continent.
- Adult males are generally smaller than females in this species.
- The tortoise is a land-dwelling reptile that spends more than 95% of its time in a burrow that it constructs with its shovel-like front feet.
- All foraging, nesting and mating activities take place during the tortoise's active season from roughly April to October.
- The average life span of a Bolson tortoise is not known but probably lies upward of a century.

Distribution:
- This species at present, is restricted to a relatively small area of the grasslands of north-central Mexico in the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila and Durango, where it exists in disjunct sub-populations.
- Conservation status
- IUCN: Critically Endangered

6. Jhelum River

- It is a river that flows in India and Pakistan.
- It is a tributary of the Indus River.
- The Jhelum (Vyeth in Kashmiri, Vetesta in Sanskrit and Hydaspes in Greek) is the main waterway of the Kashmir valley.
- It is the largest and most western of the five rivers of Punjab and passes through the Jhelum District in the North of Punjab province, Pakistan.

Course
- Origin: It originates at the Verinag Spring at Anantnag, at the foot of the Pir Panjal range in the Kashmir Valley.
- It then flows via Srinagar and Wular Lake prior to entering Pakistan.
- The river makes a deep, narrow gorge on its way to Pakistan.
- It joins the Chenab River near Trimmu, Pakistan.
- Length: It has a total length of about 725 km (450 mi).

Major Tributaries
- The largest tributary of the Jhelum is the Kishenganga (Neelum) River, which joins near Muzaffarabad and enters the Punjab province, Pakistan.
- Kunhar River is the second largest tributary of the river, which connects Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan on the Kohala Bridge of Kanghan Valley.
- Other tributaries include Sandran River, Bringi River, Arapath River, Watlara River, Lidder River and Veshaw River.

7. NASA's first asteroid samples land on Earth

- NASA's first asteroid samples fetched from deep space was parachuted into the Utah desert on September 24.
- The asteroid hunting spacecraft OSIRIS-Rex dropped a capsule containing pristine asteroid material in the Utah desert.
- In a flyby of Earth, the spacecraft released the sample capsule from 100,000 km out.
- The small capsule landed four hours later on a remote expanse of military land, as the mother-ship set off after another asteroid.
- Osiris-Rex is already chasing the asteroid Apophis, and will reach it in 2029.

Prelims Track Question

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to Free Movement Regime
1. All the hill tribes, whether they are citizens of India or Myanmar, can travel within 16 km on either side of the Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB).
2. They can cross the border by producing a border pass with a one-year validity issued by the competent authority
3. The FMR was implemented in 2018 as part of the Central government's Act East policy.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Q2. Consider the following statements about India-UN Development Partnership Fund
1. It is a fund to promote sustainable development projects across the developed world.
2. It was launched by India and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Consider the following statements about Blockchain
1. It is a distributed database or ledger that is shared among the nodes of a computer network.
2. These are best known for their crucial role in cryptocurrency systems, such as Bitcoin, for maintaining a secure and decentralized record of transactions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following statements about National Education Policy
1. the National Education Policy was prepared on the basis of Kasturirangan Committee.
2. The National Policy on Education covers university education only, in urban as well as rural India.
3. The first NPE was based on the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-66)

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Q5. Consider the following statements about Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)
1. It was formed after recommendations made by the Group of Ministers on 'Reforming the National Security System' in 2001, post-Kargil war.
2. It is the highest decision-making body for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services.
3. It is headed by the PMO

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?
A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Q6. Consider the following statements with reference to Galactic tides
1. They are caused by gravitational forces within a galaxy, arising in the interactions between celestial objects like stars and gas clouds.
2. These tidal forces influence various aspects of a galaxy's evolution.
3. They can reshape a galaxy structure by creating tidal tails and bridges, promoting star formation, and disrupting smaller star systems.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Q7. Consider the following statements with reference to National Investigation Agency

1. Jurisdiction of NIA extends to the whole of India and also applies to Indian citizens outside the country.
2. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act (UAPA), allows an NIA officer to conduct raids, and seize properties that are suspected to be linked to terrorist activities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q8. Consider the following statements about Global Debt

1. It refers to the borrowings of governments as well as private businesses and individuals.
2. Governments may also borrow to pay interest on the money that they have already borrowed to fund past expenditures.
3. The private sector borrows predominantly to make investments.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

Q9. Consider the following statements about Artificial Reefs (AR)

1. These are engineering technology interventions used to rehabilitate and/or improve natural habitats,

increase productivity, and manage aquatic resources,

2. Materials used to construct it have included rocks, cinder blocks, and even wood and old tyres, which come in an infinite number of shapes and styles.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

A. Only 1
B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q10. Consider the following statements with reference to Hoysalas dynasty

1. The Hoysalas, which began as provincial governors under the Western Chalukyas, held power in Karnataka from the 10th century to the 14th century.
2. The dynasty came to power when the two dominant empires of the South, the Western Chalukyas and the Cholas crumbled.
3. The capital of the Hoysalas was initially located at Belur, but was later moved to Halebidu(or Dwarasamudra).
4. It was an important period in the development of South Indian art, architecture, and religion.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. Only three
D. All four

Prelims Track Answer

Ans. 1 Option C is correct
Explanation

- Under the FMR, all the hill tribes, whether they are citizens of India or Myanmar, can travel within 16 km on either side of the Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- They can cross the border by producing a border pass with a one-year validity issued by the competent authority and can stay up to two weeks per visit. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The FMR was implemented in 2018 as part of the Central government's Act East policy. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- FMR is implemented by both governments for the people living along the IMB.
- This helps locals to get more culturally assimilated with trans-border villages through weddings, celebrating common festivals together and trans-border trade.
- It is a reflection of the physical, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and fraternal linkages among the trans-border villagers.

Ans.2 Option A is correct
Explanation
About Fund

- It is a fund to promote sustainable development projects across the developing world. **Hence, statement 1 is incorrect.**
- Launched by India and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- It will be utilised to carry out country-level projects that would be catalytic towards achieving the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda
- The Partnership fund would be managed by UNOSSC

Ans. 3 Option C is correct
Explanation

- A blockchain is a distributed database or ledger that is shared among the nodes of a computer network. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- As a database, a blockchain stores information electronically in digital format.
- Blockchains are best known for their crucial role in cryptocurrency systems, such as Bitcoin, for maintaining a secure and decentralized record of transactions. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**

- The innovation of a blockchain is that it guarantees the fidelity and security of a record of data and generates trust without the need for a trusted third party.

Ans. 4 Option B is correct
Explanation

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development formed a Committee chaired by Dr K. Kasturirangan for preparing the National Education Policy. The Committee was constituted in June 2017. The Committee submitted its report on May 31, 2019. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The National Policy on Education covers elementary and university education in urban as well as rural India. **Hence statement 2 is incorrect.**
- The very first policy for education was promulgated in 1968 with the second one following in 1986. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- The first NPE was based on the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-66). This policy sought to have a 'radical restructuring' of India's educational system and equalizing opportunities for education for all, to accomplish national integration and better economic and cultural development.
- The NPE also called for the realization of compulsory education for every child until the age of fourteen, as mentioned in the Indian Constitution.
- It also aimed at providing enhanced training and improving teachers' qualifications.

Ans. 5 Option B is correct
Explanation

- It was formed after recommendations made by the Group of Ministers on 'Reforming the National Security System' in 2001, post-Kargil war. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- DAC is the highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services – Army, Navy and Air Force, and the Indian Coast Guard. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Defence Acquisition Council is headed by the Defence Minister. **Hence statement 3 is incorrect.**
- The decision of Raksha Mantri on DAC deliberations flows down from

implementation to Defence Procurement Board, Defence Production Board and Defence R&D Board.

Ans. 6 Option C is correct
Explanation

- They are caused by gravitational forces within a galaxy, arising in the interactions between celestial objects like stars and gas clouds. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- These tidal forces influence various aspects of a galaxy's evolution. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- They can reshape a galaxy structure by creating tidal tails and bridges, promoting star formation, and disrupting smaller star systems. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- Effect of Galactic tides
- Over aeons, galactic tides also disrupt the orbits of stars, leading to long-term changes in galactic structure.

Ans. 7 Option C is correct
Explanation

- Jurisdiction of NIA extends to the whole of India and also applies to Indian citizens outside the country. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act (UAPA), also passed in 2019, allows an NIA officer to conduct raids, and seize properties that are suspected to be linked to terrorist activities. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The NIA does not have to take permission from the Director General of Police of a state.
- The investigating officer only requires sanction from the Director General of NIA.

Ans. 8 Option C is correct
Explanation

- Global debt refers to the borrowings of governments as well as private businesses and individuals. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Governments borrow to meet various expenditures that they are unable to meet through tax and other revenues.
- Governments may also borrow to pay interest on the money that they have already borrowed to fund past expenditures. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The private sector borrows predominantly to make investments. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**

- Both global debt in nominal terms and global debt as a share of GDP have been rising steadily over the decades.
- The rise came to a halt during the pandemic as economic activity turned sluggish and lending slowed down.
- But global debt levels have started to rise again in the last few quarters. During the first half of 2023, total global debt rose by $10 trillion.

Ans. 9 Option D is correct
Explanation

- An artificial reef is a manmade structure that may mimic some of the characteristics of a natural reef.
- These are engineering technology interventions used to rehabilitate and/or improve natural habitats, increase productivity, and manage aquatic resources, including habitat enhancement (FAO, 2015). **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- Materials used to construct artificial reefs have included rocks, cinder blocks, and even wood and old tyres, which come in an infinite number of shapes and styles. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The projects are being implemented with the technical support of the Fisheries Survey of India (FSI) and ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

Ans. 10 Option D is correct
Explanation

- The Hoysalas, which began as provincial governors under the Western Chalukyas, held power in Karnataka from the 10th century to the 14th century. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The dynasty came to power when the two dominant empires of the South, the Western Chalukyas and the Cholas crumbled. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The capital of the Hoysalas was initially located at Belur, but was later moved to Halebidu(or Dwarasamudra). **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- It was an important period in the development of South Indian art, architecture, and religion. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**
- The empire is remembered today primarily for Hoysala architecture - ~100 surviving temples are scattered across Karnataka.

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