



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FEBRUARY, 2023

Week-3

15-21 Feb., 2023

★★ Useful for ★★

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Services Exams,
SSC and Banking Exams**

15th FEBRUARY, 2023

BIMARU

- **Context:** Recently, the Prime Minister used The 'BIMARU' acronym to Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, to imply they have lagged in terms of economic growth, healthcare and education.

Key Highlights:

- BIMARU means "sickly" in Hindi. The term was used to highlight the backwardness, especially with regard to poor performance in demographic indicators and contribution to population explosion.
- These states had exceptionally high levels of mortality, morbidity, illiteracy, fertility, undernutrition, and social inequality and lagged behind in per capita income.
- It was coined by Ashish Bose in 1980 to pinpoint India's demographic malady.
- Bose mainly argued that from a family planning and population control perspective, these four states, with their high population growth rates were likely to offset the gains made elsewhere in the country.
- BIMARU states accounted for 41 percent of India's total population in 2001 and will account for 43.5 percent in 2026 which has political implications.
- Population in Indian states also dictates the delimitation process or the number of seats allotted to them in Parliament.
- Currently, the seats are proportional to the Indian population as of the 1971 census. It was frozen until 2001 (extended to 2026) to give states time to meet family planning goals.
- As per IIM Ahmedabad's study of total and rural government hospitals per million people, all the BIMARU states were below the national average of 20.74 except Rajasthan.

Wholesale inflation eases to two-year low of 4.73%

- **Context:** India's wholesale price inflation eases to two-year low of 4.73% in January. The price fall is mainly attributed to a fall in food prices, especially vegetables.

Key Highlights:

- India's annual Wholesale Price-based Inflation (WPI) eased to 4.73 per cent year-on-year in January, the eighth straight month of decline. This is the lowest figure in 24 months
- Inflation in food articles, however, rose to 2.38 per cent in January, from (-) 1.25 per cent in December 2022. In fuel and power, the inflation was 15.15 per cent during January 2023. Inflation in manufactured products was 2.99 per cent during the month, according to the latest data from the commerce and industry ministry.
- Inflation in pulses was 2.41 per cent, while in vegetables was (-) 26.48 per cent. Inflation in oil seeds was (-) 4.22 per cent in January, 2023. Fuel and power basket inflation eased to 15.15 per cent, from 18.09 per cent in December 2022. In Manufactured products it was 2.99 per cent, against 3.37 per cent in December, 2022.
- However, in contrast to this, according to the latest CPI data released the country's retail inflation jumped to a three-month high of 6.52 per cent in January 2023, mainly due to costlier food and fuel. In December 2022, the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation had eased to 5.72 per cent. In November 2022, it had fallen to 5.88 per cent. The retail inflation came under the RBI's 2-6 per cent band in November with 5.88 per cent rate after remaining beyond it for 10 months consecutively.

About WPI and CPI:

- The WPI is one of the two indices that measure inflation in India. The other is Consumer Price Inflation (CPI).

- The WPI captures prices at the level of production or manufacturing, taking into account goods traded between companies, as against the CPI that measures prices at the retail consumer level.
- Food items, which constitute a major part of the CPI, drive retail inflation, while for the WPI, it's manufactured goods

Draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics Bill

- **Context:** Recently, the draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill was notified by the Ministry of Mines.

Key Highlights:

- A draft Bill, aimed at protecting India's geological heritage that includes fossils, sedimentary rocks, natural structures, has raised alarm in India's geosciences and paleontology community.
- The central government may declare a site as a geoheritage site of national importance.
- Geoheritage Sites containing geo-relics and phenomena, stratigraphic type sections, geological structures and geomorphic landforms including caves, natural rock-sculptures of national and international interest; and includes such portion of land adjoining the site, that may be required for their conservation or to access to such sites.
- A Geo-relic is defined as: Any relic or material of geological significance or interest like sediments, rocks, minerals, meteorites or fossils. The GSI will have the power to acquire geo-relics for its preservation and maintenance
- The Bill imposes a prohibition on construction, reconstruction, repair or renovation of any building within the geo-heritage site area or utilisation of such area in any other manner, except for construction for preservation and maintenance of the geo-heritage site or any public work essential to the public.
- Offences under the Bill include : destruction or misuse of a geoheritage site, illegal construction, and damaging or illegally moving a geo-relic.

- These offences are punishable with a fine of up to five lakh rupees or imprisonment of up to six months, or both.

About Geoheritage sites:

- Geoheritage is a generic but descriptive term applied to sites or areas of geologic features with significant scientific, educational, cultural, or aesthetic value.
- Geoheritage sites serve the public interest. Such sites are critical to advancing knowledge about natural hazards, groundwater supplies, soil processes, climate and environmental changes, evolution of life, etc.
- The Geological Survey of India has declared 32 geo-heritage sites. These include –Siwalik Fossil Park, Himachal Pradesh; Stromatolite Fossil Park, Jharmarkotra Rock Phosphate deposit, Udaipur, Akal Fossil Wood Park, Jaisalmer.
- Currently, there is no legislation for the protection of geo-heritage sites in India due to this, the sites are threatened with destruction due to decay, population pressure, and changing social and economic conditions. Hence, the Ministry of Mined introduced the draft Geo-Heritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill, 2022.

Ladakh, a fragile region, needs autonomy

- **Context:** The residents of Ladakh are agitating to pursue their demand for special constitutional Status. Ladakh wants to be part of sixth schedule of Indian constitution, which would allow them to decide on a development path that safeguards ecological and cultural heritage of the region.

Key Highlights:

- In 2019, the BJP government had announced that Ladakh would get special constitutional status providing it autonomy. Before the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (AHDC) election, Sixth Schedule status was promised to the region, similar to what is seen in some parts of north-east India. This promise is yet to be fulfilled

- The Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance, two of Ladakh's most powerful religious and political organisations, rejected a committee set up by the Central government to examine the status issue. They said the committee's mandate was vague and did not consider the specific demands made by them.
- High-altitude pastoralism, agriculture, and trade have been the mainstays of Ladakhi economy and society for centuries. Administrators appointed from Delhi do not comprehend the need of such a landscape.
- Ladakh is already groaning under infrastructure development, intense armed forces presence, and excessive tourism.
- Since Ladakh became a UT, there is even more focus on an exploitative 'development' path. There is enormous commercial interest for mining, tourism, hydropower, and other natural resources.
- Ladakh already faces serious problems of landslides, erosion, solid waste and effluents, disturbance to wildlife, and cordoning of common lands for development projects.

About Sixth Schedule:

- It provides for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to safeguard the rights of the tribal population in these states.
- This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution.
- It was incorporated to protect the rights of the minority tribals living within a larger state dominated by the majority.
- It allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast.

Cyclone Gabrielle

- **Context:** A state of emergency was declared in New Zealand as Cyclone Gabrielle battered the country's North Island.

Key Highlights:

- Officials described the cyclone as the nation's most severe weather event in years. The state of emergency will apply to Northland, Auckland, Tairāwhiti, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Hawke's Bay. It's the third time in the country's history that a state of emergency has been declared
- As Cyclone Gabrielle approaches the coast of the nation, residents of Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, and the surrounding area are being warned to prepare for more intense rain, flooding, and gale-force winds. Some homes are also being evacuated.
- This cyclone is the second significant weather event to recently affect Auckland and the upper North Island
- It is a tropical cyclone.
- It is a Severe Tropical Cyclone and belongs to Category 3; Speed of the cyclone ranges between 119 km/hr to 157 km/hr.

About Cyclones:

- Cyclones are rapid inward air circulation around a low-pressure area whereas anti-cyclones are circulation of winds around a high-pressure area.
- **There are two types of cyclones:**
 - Tropical cyclones (also called typhoon or hurricane, an intense circular storm that originates over warm tropical oceans).
 - Extra Tropical cyclones (also called temperate cyclones or middle latitude cyclones or Frontal cyclones or Wave Cyclones).

16th FEBRUARY, 2023

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR): The silent pandemic

- **Context:** As the current G-20 president, and as a vulnerable country, India has a key role in ensuring that AMR remains high on the global health agenda.

Key Highlights:

- While the world is emerging from the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the very harmful but invisible pandemic of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is unfortunately here to stay.
- The rapidly rising AMR rates also need an accelerated, multi-sectoral, global and national response.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified AMR as one of the top ten threats to global health.
- Microorganisms that develop antimicrobial resistance are sometimes referred to as “superbugs”.
- Global public health response has been threatened due to rising misuse and overuse of antibiotics in humans and animals.
- Microbial resistance to antibiotics makes it harder to treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis (TB), blood-poisoning (septicaemia) and several food-borne diseases.
- In 2019, AMR was associated with an estimated 4.95 million human deaths. A 2018 report by OECD warned of a phenomenal increase of resistance to antibiotics by 2030.
- AMR adds to the burden of communicable diseases and strains the health systems of a country. ICMR study in 2022 showed that the resistance level increases from 5% to 10% every year for broad-spectrum antimicrobials.
- An Indian Network for Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance study indicated a high rate of resistance to commonly used drugs such as ciprofloxacin, erythromycin and clindamycin.
- Microbial resistance to antibiotics has made it harder to treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and several food-borne diseases.
- AMR also imposes a huge health cost on the patient in the form of longer hospitalisation, health complications and delayed recovery.
- It puts patients undergoing major surgeries and treatments, such as chemotherapy, at a greater Risk.
- Third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance (Nov 2022) held in Muscat

- The Muscat Manifesto recognised the need to accelerate political commitments in the implementation of One Health action for controlling the spread of AMR.

Steps taken by the Indian government to overcome AMR:

- The National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (2017-21) emphasised the effectiveness of the government’s initiatives for hand hygiene and sanitation programmes such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Kayakalp and Swachh Swasth Sarvatra.
- The government has also attempted to increase community awareness about healthier and better food production practices, especially in the animal food industry.
- The National Health Policy 2017 also offered specific guidelines regarding use of antibiotics, restricting the use of antibiotics for growth promotion in livestock. It also called for scrutiny of prescriptions to assess antibiotic usage in hospitals and among doctors.
- The various G-20 health summits spread through 2023 offer an opportunity for India to ensure that all aspects of AMR are addressed and countries commit to progress.

HARBINGER 2023

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank announced its second global hackathon – ‘HARBINGER 2023 – Innovation for Transformation’.

Key Highlights:

- The theme of the hackathon is “Inclusive Digital Services”. Competitors from 22 different countries will participate in the hackathon. The hackathon will conduct in four segments namely Digital Banking, regulations, transactions, and the use of blockchain in transactions.
- The central bank invited fintech to participate in the Hackathon. They will develop solutions that will aid the differently abled to access digital financial services. Also, the fintech will work on increasing the reach of digital currencies of the central bank.

- Participants of the HACKATHON will get opportunities to interact with industrial experts. Some of them will be mentored by them. Also, new fintech can exhibit their innovative solutions
- The Global Hackathon was first started in 2021. The results of this hackathon were announced in 2022. This is the second hackathon being conducted by RBI. The theme of the first hackathon was “Smarter Digital Payments”.
- RBI chooses the theme based on its current activities and requirements. In 2021, RBI was promoting its BHIM app. International recognition of the app just began. And thus “Smarter Digital Payments”. RBI now focusing on its digital currency, thus Inclusive Digital Services.

Mental Healthcare Act

- **Context:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in a recent report flagged the “inhuman and deplorable” condition of all 46 government-run mental healthcare institutions across the country

Key Highlights:

- Mental health care refers to the range of services and treatments provided to individuals who are experiencing mental health challenges or disorders.
- Mental health care can take many different forms, including therapy, medication, support groups, hospitalization, and other interventions.
- The report flagged the inhuman and deplorable condition of healthcare institutions that are keeping patients illegally long after their recovery which is an infringement of the human rights of mentally ill patients.
- The shortage of doctors, lack of infrastructure, and inhuman handling of mental patients were also highlighted.
- Long-term institutionalisation thus not only violates Article 21 of the Constitution which protects personal liberty, but also indicates a “failure of the State Government(s) to discharge the obligation under various international Covenants [such as the United

Nations Convention] relating to rights of persons with disabilities which have been ratified by India.

- It is estimated that 6-7 % of the population suffers from mental disorders in India.
- **In 2022, WHO launched the World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All.**
- Mental Health is included in Sustainable Development Goals.

About Mental Healthcare Act (NHA), 2017 :

- The act provides for the rights of persons with mental illness, including the right to access mental healthcare and treatment, the right to make decisions about their treatment, the right to confidentiality, and the right to legal aid.
- It establishes mental health services at the district level to provide access to mental healthcare and Mental Health Review Boards (MHRBs) to oversee the treatment of persons with mental illness and to protect their rights.
- It decriminalizes attempted suicide, recognizing that suicide is often a symptom of mental illness, and provides care and treatment for persons who attempt suicide.
- It establishes a Central Mental Health Authority and State Mental Health Authorities to regulate mental healthcare and services and to promote mental health.
- The act prohibits the use of Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT) without anesthesia and the use of seclusion and restraint in mental health establishments, except in exceptional circumstances.
- The act provides for advance directives, which allow individuals to express their preferences for treatment and care in the event that they are unable to make decisions for themselves.

Government of India Initiatives:

- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982:** To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future.

- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** It provides mental healthcare and services for persons with mental illness in India.
- **National Tele-Mental Health Programme:** To improve access to quality mental health counselling and care services in the country.
- **Kiran Helpline:** It provides for suicide prevention and can help with support and crisis management.

17th FEBRUARY, 2023

Marburg Disease

- **Context:** Equatorial Guinea has confirmed its first-ever outbreak of Marburg virus disease after at least nine people died in the country.

Key Highlights:

- Marburg virus disease (MVD), formerly known as Marburg hemorrhagic fever, is a severe, often fatal illness in humans.
- Marburg and Ebola viruses are both members of the Filoviridae family (filovirus). Though caused by different viruses, the two diseases are clinically similar.
- *Rousettus aegyptiacus*, fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family, are considered to be natural hosts of the Marburg virus.
- The Marburg virus is transmitted to people from fruit bats and spreads among humans through human-to-human transmission via direct contact with the blood, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials contaminated with these fluids.
- There are no authorized vaccines or drugs to treat Marburg, but rehydration treatment to alleviate symptoms can improve the chances of survival.

WINDFALL TAX

- **Context:** The Finance Ministry has lowered Windfall Profit Tax levied on domestically-produced crude oil as well as on the export of diesel and ATF, in line with softening international oil prices.

Key Highlights:

- Windfall tax on crude petroleum cut to Rs 4,350 from Rs 5,050/tonne while special additional excise duty on ATF cut to Rs 1.50/L from Rs 6/litre. The special additional excise duty on diesel has been cut to Rs 2.50/L from Rs 7.50/L.
- The government levies a windfall tax on business entities due to abnormal gains from financial windfalls.
- The main objective of such a tax is reallocating abnormal profits favourably in one sector for social causes.
- Taxes on winnings from game shows and horse racing lottery tax, gambling or betting are examples of the same.
- In July 2022, the government of India enacted windfall taxes amid domestic crude producers making exceptional gains due to the global impact of the Russia-Ukraine war. Domestic players gained tremendous profit by selling crude to refiners at internationally bench-marked pricing

About WINDFALL Tax:

- A windfall tax refers to the tax levied against certain industries by the government when economic conditions permit those industries to experience significantly above-average profits.
- Such economic conditions come from a sudden windfall gain to a certain business or industry, typically as a result of a geopolitical disruption, natural disaster, or war that causes unusual spikes in demand or supply interruptions. A good example is a confrontation between Russia and Ukraine.
- A tax imposed on such an unexpected rise in profits is called a windfall tax. They are usually imposed when there is a sudden increase in profits in a particular sector. They are also imposed if there is an acute need for a temporary spurt in public spending at the same time.

National Strategic Plan and Roadmap for Leprosy 2023-2027

- **Context:** India accounts for 52% of world's new leprosy patients. The Union Health Ministry has formulated the National Strategic Plan and Roadmap for Leprosy 2023-2027 for achieving zero cases of leprosy infection by 2030.

Key Highlights:

- According to the Union Health Ministry, despite India being declared "Leprosy Eliminated" in 2005, the country still accounts for about 52% of the world's new leprosy patients.
- It is noted that earlier gains made in the leprosy programme in India were reversed during the COVID-19 pandemic as case detection dropped significantly and the decline in detection has led to an increase in patients with grade 2 disabilities.
- States such as Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman Diu have either one or more districts (total 82 districts) which are yet to achieve leprosy elimination target and account for over 90% of cases in the country.
- India has a high burden of leprosy cases and most of it stems from patients' lack of awareness and challenges pertaining to accessibility for diagnosis and treatment. Timely detection of this condition is critical as delayed detection can cause severe long-term nerve damage in patients

About Leprosy :

- Leprosy is a chronic bacterial infection, which affects the skin, nerves, lungs and eyes.
- Also known as Hansen's disease, it is caused by the Mycobacterium leprae bacteria.
- It can be recognized by the appearance of patches of skin that may look lighter or darker than the normal skin.
- Sometimes the affected skin areas may be reddish. Loss of feeling in these skin patches is common.

- It is a communicable infection, which means it may spread from person to person. The most common route of transmission is, however, through nasal secretions
- It is easily treated with a combination of antibiotics like Dapsone, Clofazimine, and Rifampicin.
- World Leprosy Day is observed globally on the last Sunday of January each year.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) announced "Act Now. End Leprosy." as its theme for World Leprosy Day 2023

About National Leprosy Eradication Programme:

- The National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) is a Centrally Sponsored Health Scheme.
- It has been implemented with the major objective of reducing the disease burden, preventing disability and improving awareness among the mass about Leprosy and its curability.
- "Leprosy-free India" is the vision of the NLEP.

18th FEBRUARY, 2023

Omorgus Khandesh

- **Context:** Recently, A new beetle species named Omorgus Khandesh has been discovered in India by a scientist from the Zoological Survey of India, Western Regional Centre (WRC), Pune

Key Highlights:

- Omorgus Khandesh is a beetle species.
- It is necrophagous and is, therefore, also called a keratin beetle.
- This species belongs to the Trogidae family. With the addition of this new species, now there are a total of 14 extant species of this family in India.
- The beetles of this group are sometimes called hide beetles as they tend to cover their body under the soil and hide.
- They are not photogenic; they are usually black or grey and encrusted in the dirt.

- Their bumpy appearance is distinct, with short, dense setae all over the body.
- The beetle is important for forensic science as it helps detect the time of death of an animal or human.

About necrophagous:

The arthropods which feed directly on dead remains and constitute are called necrophagous

Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP)

- **Context:** Recently, Cabinet approves Centrally Sponsored Scheme- “Vibrant Villages Programme” for the Financial Years 2022-23 to 2025-26 with financial allocation of Rs. 4800 Crore.

Key Highlights:

- The schemes will enable cooperative societies to setup and modernize necessary infrastructure. "It will provide farmer members with requisite forward and backward linkages and enhance their income and will generate employment opportunities in rural area,.
- The programme will help encourage people to stay in their native locations in border areas and reverse the out-migration from these villages, thus adding to improved security of the border
- Vibrant Village Action Plans will be created by the district administration with the help of Gram Panchayats. 100 % saturation of Central and state schemes will be ensured
- The scheme will provide funds for development of essential infrastructure and creation of livelihood opportunities in 19 Districts and 46 Border blocks 4 states and 1 UT along the northern land border of the country which will help in achieving inclusive growth and retaining the population in the border areas. In the first phase 663 Villages will be taken up in the programme.
- The scheme aids to identify and develop the economic drivers based on local natural human and other resources of the border villages on northern border and development of growth centres on “Hub

and Spoke Model” through promotion of social entrepreneurship, empowerment of youth and women through skill development and entrepreneurship, leveraging the tourism potential through promotion of local cultural, traditional knowledge and heritage and development of sustainable eco-agribusinesses on the concept of “One village-One product” through community based organisations, Cooperatives, SHGs, NGOs etc.

Aadi Mahotsav

- **Context:** The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated Aadi Mahotsav, the mega National Tribal Festival at Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium in Delhi.

Key Highlights:

- Aadi Mahotsav is an attempt to showcase tribal culture on the national stage and it celebrates the spirit of tribal culture, crafts, cuisine, commerce and traditional art.
- It is an annual initiative of the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Limited (TRIFED) under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The PM emphasized that the Aadi Mahotsav is giving strength to the unity in diversity of India while giving impetus to the idea of development with heritage.
- The special focus will be on showcasing Shree Anna, a recent government nomenclature for millets grown by tribals since 2023 is being celebrated as the International Year of Millets.
- 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas' has shown us the path to ensure the overall development of the tribal people in a transparent and ideal manner.
- Aadi Mahotsav celebrates the contributions of our tribal ancestors, the culture of the various unique tribal communities, their sustainable lifestyles and the tribals themselves who have provided indigenous solutions to our modern problems such as Global Warming and shed light on the significance of living in peace and harmony with our natural environment.

Exercise 'Dharma Guardian'

- **Context:** The 4th edition of joint military exercise 'DHARMA Guardian-2023' was held between India and Japan at Belgaum, Karnataka.

Key Highlights:

- The exercise was held to share experiences gained during operations, in order to enhance interoperability in the planning and execution of various operations in jungle & semi-urban/ urban terrain.
- The Year 2022 also marks 70 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- This joint exercise will enable the two armies to share best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting tactical operations under a UN Mandate, It will also help develop inter-operability, bonhomie, camaraderie and friendship between the two armies.
- The training will focus primarily on a high degree of physical fitness and sharing of drills at the tactical level. During the exercise, participants will engage in a variety of missions, ranging from joint planning, joint tactical drills, and basics of establishing integrated surveillance grids, including employment of aerial assets
- "Exercise Dharma Guardian" will further enhance the level of defence co-operation between the Indian Army and the Japanese Ground Self Defence Forces, furthering the bilateral relations between the two nations.

19th FEBRUARY, 2023

Marine Spatial Planning framework

- **Context:** Puducherry has launched the country's first Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) framework as part of a pact under the Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative.

Key Highlights:

- It is a public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities

in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives that have been specified through a political process.

- It seeks to balance growth alongside sustainable management of ocean resources and coastal environment preservation.
- Puducherry and Lakshadweep were chosen as coastlines to pilot the MSP initiative that grew out of a 2019 memorandum of understanding that envisaged India and Norway collaborating on implementing MSP in the oceanic space.
- The beta version of the MSP for the Union Territory was put together in a collaborative exercise involving the Norwegian Environment Agency, the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management, the Puducherry Coastal Zone Management Authority and Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Puducherry.
- The World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have expressed interest in supporting MoES in conducting MSP, a societal-beneficial initiative for India's coastal regions.
- It is said that the MSP would serve as a vital governance tool in ensuring the emergence of a blue economy characterised by a sustainable and equitable ocean resource management, instead of an environmentally unsustainable "brown economy."
- The blue economy concept is a lens by which to view and develop policy agendas that simultaneously enhance ocean health and economic growth in a manner consistent with principles of social equity and inclusion.
- The MSP is an enabler of the blue economy as it helped identify sites for new and emerging uses following an ecosystem-based approach, and it also mitigates inter-sectoral conflicts, and creates multi-use spaces for coexistence and synergies.

About Marine Spatial Planning:

- MSP is an ecosystem-based spatial planning process for analysing current and anticipated ocean and coastal uses and identifying areas most suitable for various activities.

- It provides a public policy process for society to better determine how the ocean and coasts are sustainably used and protected - now and for future generations.

DHARA: River Cities Alliance

- **Context:** The annual meeting of the members of the River Cities Alliance (RCA) is organized by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMGC), partnered with the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA).

Key Highlights:

- DHARA which stands for Driving Holistic Action for Urban Rivers, is a platform to co-learn and discuss solutions for managing local water resources.
- River Cities Alliance (RCA) was launched in 2021 as a dedicated platform for river cities across India to discuss & exchange information for sustainable management of urban rivers.
- It includes cities from both the Ganga basin and non-Ganga basin states.
- River Cities Alliance is a first-of-its-kind Alliance in the world, symbolising the successful partnership of the two Ministries i.e., the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The Alliance focuses on three broad themes- Networking, Capacity Building and Technical Support.

20th FEBRUARY, 2023

Avian Influenza

- **Context:** Recently, the head of the World Health Organisation, warned that the world had to prepare for a possible bird-flu pandemic.

Key Highlights:

- The bird flu outbreak has killed 15 million domestic birds, while 193 million others have been culled since October 2021. It has spread from Europe and Asia to North America, South and Central America.

- The US Department of Agriculture has confirmed avian flu cases in mammals such as skunks, a raccoon and a red fox. These mammals were suspected to have consumed infected birds.
- The mutation is a signal that this virus is trying to cross the barrier between species and adapt to the mammalian population.
- The latest major avian flu outbreak in India around 2020-2021 swept through many States causing mass mortality of wild birds

About Avian Influenza:

- Depending on the origin host, influenza A viruses can be classified as avian influenza (bird flu, subtypes A H5N1 and A H9N2), swine influenza (swine flu, subtypes A H1N1 and AH3N2).
- They are distinct from human influenza viruses and do not easily transmit among humans.
- The "H" and "N" in the name of a flu virus stand for hemagglutinin and neuraminidase, two proteins on the surface of the virus that allow it to enter and exit host cells.
- Hemagglutinin and neuraminidase were the first aspects of the flu virus to be identified hence it was named so.
- Reservoir of Virus: Aquatic birds are the primary natural reservoir, most cause asymptomatic or mild infection in birds.

Jal-Jan Abhiyan

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Jal Jan Abhiyan virtually on Abu Road in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan.

Key Highlights:

- The Jal Jan Abhiyan will be implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Brahma Kumaris organization.
- PM Modi noted that the 21st-century world is realizing the seriousness of limited water resources on earth and pointed out that water security is a huge question for India due to its large population. He informed that in the Amrit Kaal, India is looking towards the water as the future.

- The main objective of the campaign is water conservation. During the campaign, the volunteers from the organization will conduct public awareness campaign on preserving water.
- The campaign is to run for eight months. They will focus on building new water bodies and also on preserving more than 5,000 water bodies. The target of the campaign is to reach at least ten crore people and organize 10,000 programs.

Chandrayaan-3

- **Context:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has recently confirmed that the lander of Chandrayaan-3 has completed the crucial EMI-EMC test.

Key Highlights:

- Chandrayaan-3 is India's third moon mission and is slated to be launched later this year by Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LMV3) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota.
- The lander of the mission has recently successfully completed the crucial EMI-EMC (Electro - Magnetic Interference/ Electro - Magnetic Compatibility) test at the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru.
- The test has ensured the functionality of the satellite subsystems in the space environment and their compatibility with the expected electromagnetic levels.

About Chandrayaan Mission:

- Chandrayaan is India's lunar exploration program consisting of a series of robotic missions that aims to explore the Moon and its resources.
- It puts India in the coveted league of being only the 4th country in the world after the United States, Russia and China to have successfully landed on the moon.

Chandrayaan-1 mission :

- It was launched in October 2008 and it orbited the Moon and performed a number of scientific experiments and observations.
- It was India's first lunar mission and the first to discover water on the Moon.
- Involved an orbiter and an impactor, both built by Isro
- It was launched by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle and made more than 3,400 orbits around the Moon.
- It carried 11 scientific instruments on board, five of which were Indian while the others were from the European Space Agency (ESA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.
- It was operational for 312 days till August 29, 2009.

Chandrayaan-2 mission:

- It was launched in July 2019, and involves an orbiter, a lander (Vikram), and a rover (Pragyaan), all built by ISRO.
- It was India's first to attempt a soft landing near the south pole of the Moon.
- It was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh by the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk-III.
- It aimed to land the Vikram lander on the lunar surface and deploy the Pragyaan rover.
- It carried eight scientific payloads for mapping the lunar surface and studying the exosphere (outer atmosphere) of the Moon.
- It's lander Vikram crashed into the lunar surface apparently because of an issue with its braking rockets.

Chandrayaan-3 mission:

- It is planned for launch by the end of 2023.
- It is expected to cost around 615 crore INR (\$82 million USD).and aims to land a rover on the Moon's surface.

21st FEBRUARY, 2023

India and china to contribute more than half of global growth this year: IMF

- **Context:** The International Monetary Fund recently said that India and China will contribute more than 50% of the global growth in 2023. Another 25% will be contributed by other Asian countries. The Indian economy has also shown positive signs, with its growth being amongst the highest in the world over the last two years.

Key Highlights:

- IMF added that the central banks across Asia need to stay 'alert' as the core inflation is still high, and the re-opening of China's economy may push inflation up due to higher demand
- The Asian countries are back to their pre-pandemic growth. Especially countries like Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia are in full operation.
- The inflation will reach the targets set by the central banks of respective countries by the end of 2023. In the recent MPC, RBI increased the interest rate and repo rate. RBI has increased the repo rate by 250 points in 2022 alone. Still, the inflation is 6.25%, which is higher than the target inflation of 6% set by RBI.
- Food and oil processes are coming to stable conditions
- Asia is expected to grow by 4.7% in 2023 and by 4.5% in 2024. In 2022, the growth rate of Asian countries was 3.8%.

Sagar Parikrama Program Phase III

- **Context:** Recently, Sagar Parikrama Program Phase III was initiated by the Department of Fisheries from Surat, Hazira Port, Gujarat.

Key Highlights:

- Sagar Parikrama is an initiative of Government of India in the sea across the coastal belt demonstrating solidarity with all fisherfolk, fish farmers and concerned stakeholders as a spirit of 75th Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- Objective is to resolve the issues of the fishers and other stakeholders and to facilitate their economic upliftment through various fisheries schemes and programs being implemented by the Government of India such as PMMSY.
- It focus on sustainable balance between the utilization of marine fisheries resources for the food security of the nation and livelihoods of coastal fisher communities.
- The Phase –I and Phase- II programmes of 'Sagar Parikrama' have been organized in March 2022 and September 2022 respectively.
- Sagar Parikrama program shall be celebrated in all coastal States/UTs through a pre-decided sea route from Gujarat, Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar, and Lakshadweep Islands.
- The Parikrama shall be accompanied by the State Fisheries officials, Fishermen representatives, Fish-Farmers entrepreneurs, stakeholders, professionals, officials and Scientists from across the nation.
- The programme will have an interaction with fishermen, fisher communities and stakeholders in order to know the problems of Coastal Fisher folk and to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of people in rural areas.
- It will also help to create more livelihood opportunities, a holistic approach has been adopted by the Government of India to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).