1. Gaganyaan: ISRO Successfully Completes Final Unmanned Test Flight (G3 Mission), Source: Indian Express

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved a landmark milestone today with the successful launch and recovery of the final unmanned test vehicle for the Gaganyaan mission. The G3 mission, launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, saw the orbital module orbit the Earth at an altitude of 400 km before successfully re-entering the atmosphere and splashing down in the Bay of Bengal. The crew module was recovered by the Indian Navy, and all mission parameters, including life support systems, thermal protection, and deceleration mechanisms, performed flawlessly.

Significance:

- This successful test is the final green light for India's first-ever human spaceflight mission.
- It validates the end-to-end capability of the launch vehicle (LVM3), the orbital module's life support systems, and the crucial re-entry and recovery procedures.
- This achievement solidifies India's position in the elite club of nations with human spaceflight capabilities, opening up new avenues for space exploration, scientific research, and technological development.
- It is a massive boost for the 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives in the high-technology space sector.

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Analysis:

- With the G3 mission's success, ISRO is now on track for the historic manned launch, tentatively scheduled for early 2026.
- The mission's success is not just a technological triumph but also a strategic asset. It enhances India's global standing and provides a platform for future interplanetary missions, space tourism, and participation in international space stations.
- The challenges ahead involve the rigorous training of the 'Vyomanauts' (Indian astronauts) and ensuring their safety during the actual mission.
- The Gaganyaan program is expected to create a robust ecosystem for aerospace manufacturing and research, inspiring a new generation of scientists and engineers in the country.
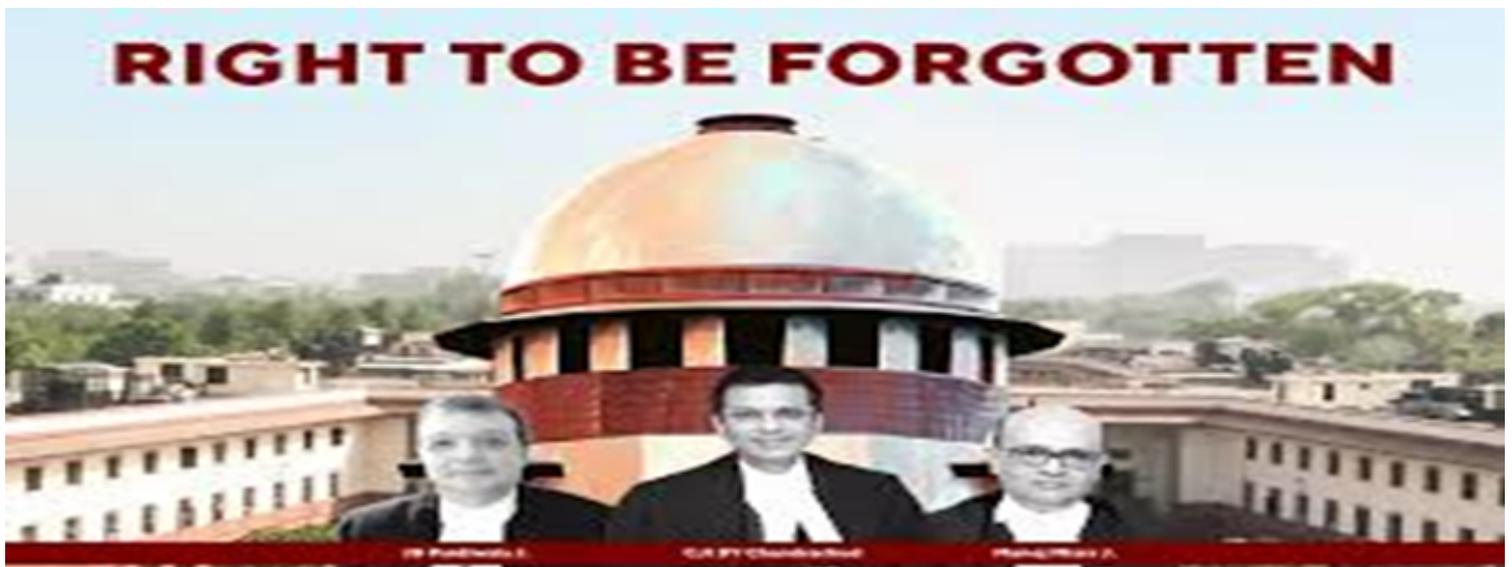
UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Science and Technology - Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

2. Supreme Court Upholds 'Right to be Forgotten' in Landmark Privacy Judgment
Source: The Hindu

Context: In a landmark verdict, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has upheld the 'Right to be Forgotten' (RTBF) as an intrinsic part of the Right to Privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by individuals seeking the removal of their personal information—related to past criminal acquittals or sensitive personal events—from internet search results and public databases. The judgment lays down a framework for adjudicating RTBF claims.

Significance:

- This judgment provides a legal basis for individuals to reclaim control over their digital past.
- It empowers them to seek the de-linking or removal of personal information that is irrelevant, inadequate, or no longer necessary.
- The ruling is a significant evolution of privacy jurisprudence in India, building upon the K.S. Puttaswamy (2017) judgment.
- It directs the government to frame specific rules under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, to create a mechanism for processing such requests.

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Analysis:

- The Court has balanced the individual's Right to be forgotten against the public's Right to Information and the freedom of speech.
- The judgment clarifies that RTBF is not an absolute right and will be subject to reasonable restrictions, especially when the information pertains to public figures, matters of historical record, or is necessary for legal proceedings.
- The challenge now lies in implementation. Creating a robust and efficient mechanism to evaluate RTBF requests without censoring legitimate information will be complex.
- It will require clear guidelines for search engines and data fiduciaries and an effective adjudicatory body to handle disputes.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Judiciary; Fundamental Rights.

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3. India-UK FTA Talks Enter Final Phase; Focus on Services and Investment
Source: Economic Times

Context: In a landmark verdict, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has upheld the 'Right to be Forgotten' (RTBF) as an intrinsic part of the Right to Privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by individuals seeking the removal of their personal information—related to past criminal acquittals or sensitive personal events—from internet search results and public databases. The judgment lays down a framework for adjudicating RTBF claims.

Significance:

- A successful FTA with the UK would be a major diplomatic and economic victory for both nations.
- For India, it would provide enhanced market access for its goods (like textiles and agricultural products) and, more importantly, for its skilled professionals in sectors like IT and healthcare.
- For the post-Brexit UK, an agreement with the world's fastest-growing large economy is a key pillar of its "Global Britain" strategy.
- The FTA is projected to more than double bilateral trade from its current level of around $40 billion by 2030.

Analysis:

- The final hurdles are proving to be the most difficult. India is pushing for greater mobility for its professionals and a data-secure status, which would benefit its IT services industry.
- The UK, on the other hand, is seeking deeper market access for its financial services (like insurance and banking), legal firms, and is also pushing for stronger IPR protections, particularly for pharmaceuticals.
- Reaching a compromise that is a "win-win" for both sides requires immense political will.
- The success of these final negotiations will set the template for India's future trade deals with other developed economies like the EU.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India.

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4. 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047': NITI Aayog Releases Sectoral Roadmaps
Source: Indian Express

Context: NITI Aayog today released a series of detailed sectoral roadmaps as part of the overarching 'Viksit Bharat @ 2047' vision document. These roadmaps outline specific policy actions, investment requirements, and reform agendas for key sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, infrastructure, and the social sector. The release follows extensive consultations with state governments, industry experts, and academic institutions over the past year. The document aims to provide a clear pathway for India to become a developed nation by its 100th year of independence.

Significance:

- This release moves the 'Viksit Bharat' vision from a broad ambition to a more actionable plan.
- It provides a structured framework for all government ministries and departments to align their policies and programs.
- For the private sector, it offers clarity on the government's long-term priorities, potentially boosting investor confidence.
- The document emphasizes next-generation reforms, focusing on improving competitiveness, adopting new technologies like AI and blockchain, and ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.

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Analysis:

- The success of this ambitious plan hinges on effective implementation and cooperative federalism.
- While NITI Aayog can provide the strategic direction, the onus of execution lies with the central ministries and, crucially, the state governments.
- Key challenges include mobilizing the massive financial resources required, undertaking difficult structural reforms (e.g., in land, labour, and agriculture), and building the necessary human capital through education and skill development.
- The roadmaps will need to be dynamic and adaptable to changing global and domestic realities.
- Continuous monitoring and course correction will be essential to stay on track towards the 2047 goal.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning.

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5. India Launches New Diplomatic Initiative for West Asian Peace
Source: The Hindu

Context: The Ministry of External Affairs has announced a new diplomatic initiative, the 'Delhi Dialogue for West Asian Stability,' aimed at fostering peace and de-escalation in the volatile West Asia region. The External Affairs Minister is set to embark on a tour of key regional capitals, including Riyadh, Tehran, Abu Dhabi, and Jerusalem, to build consensus for the dialogue. The initiative aims to leverage India's historical ties and neutral standing with all major players in the region to create a platform for constructive engagement.

Significance:

- This marks a more proactive and assertive foreign policy approach by India in a region that is critical to its energy security, trade, and the welfare of its large diaspora.
- By positioning itself as a potential mediator, India is seeking to play a larger role in regional security architecture, moving beyond its traditional economic-focused engagement.
- The initiative is a reflection of India's growing ambition to be a 'leading power' rather than just a 'balancing power'.

Analysis:

- India's initiative comes at a time of shifting geopolitical alignments in West Asia.
- While the Abraham Accords and the Iran-Saudi rapprochement have altered dynamics, underlying tensions persist.
- India's strength lies in its ability to talk to all sides—Israel, Arab states, and Iran.
- However, the path is fraught with challenges. The deep-seated historical and sectarian rivalries in the region cannot be easily overcome. Furthermore, India will have to navigate the complex interests of external powers like the US, China, and Russia, who have their stakes in the region.
- The success of the 'Delhi Dialogue' will depend on India's diplomatic skill in building trust and creating a modest but meaningful agenda focused on common interests like counter-terrorism, maritime security, and economic cooperation.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

 GS Paper 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests.

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6. CBDC Update: RBI to Launch Wholesale Digital Rupee for Inter-bank Borrowing
Source: Economic Times

Context: The Reserve Bank of India has announced the next phase of its Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) pilot program. The new pilot will focus on the use of the wholesale digital rupee (e₹-W) for the inter-bank call money market, where banks lend to each other for short durations to manage liquidity. This expands the use of e₹-W beyond its current application in the government securities market. Several major public and private sector banks are participating in this pilot.

Significance:

- This is a significant step in testing the capabilities of India's CBDC.
- Using the digital rupee for inter-bank borrowing could make the process more efficient, instantaneous, and secure compared to the existing system, which relies on real-time gross settlement (RTGS).
- It could reduce transaction costs and settlement risks for banks. This pilot will provide valuable data on the scalability and resilience of the CBDC infrastructure in handling high-volume, time-sensitive transactions.

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Analysis:

- The RBI is following a calibrated and phased approach to CBDC implementation, starting with wholesale use cases before a full-scale retail launch.
- The success of this pilot could pave the way for using the e₹-W for other wholesale transactions, such as cross-border payments, which could drastically reduce settlement times and costs.
- However, challenges related to cybersecurity, interoperability with existing payment systems, and data privacy need to be thoroughly addressed.
- The learnings from the e₹-W pilots will be crucial in designing a robust and user-friendly retail digital rupee (e₹-R) for the general public in the future.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Indian Economy, Basics of Cyber Security, Money-laundering.

7. PM Modi Chairs High-Level Meeting on Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence
Source: PIB (Press Information Bureau)

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi today chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative in the defence sector. The meeting was attended by the Defence Minister, the National Security Advisor, the Chief of Defence Staff, and the three service chiefs. The review focused on the status of indigenous manufacturing projects, the progress made on the positive indigenisation lists, and the role of DRDO, defence PSUs, and the private sector in achieving self-reliance.

Significance:

- The high-level review underscores the government's sustained focus on reducing India's defence import dependency, which has been historically high.
- The 'Aatmanirbhar' policy in defence is critical for both strategic autonomy and economic growth.
- It aims to build domestic capacity, create jobs, foster innovation, and turn India into a net exporter of defence hardware.
- The positive indigenisation lists, which ban the import of certain items, have given a major push to local industry.

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Analysis:

- Significant strides have been made, with defence exports crossing the ₹25,000 crore mark and several indigenous platforms like the Tejas aircraft and Prachand helicopter being inducted.
- However, challenges remain. The private sector still seeks a more level playing field and long-term order commitments to invest in R&D and manufacturing.
- A critical area of focus is the development of high-end, critical technologies (like aero-engines and advanced semiconductors) where India is still heavily import-dependent.
- Streamlining procurement processes and fostering a vibrant defence-industrial ecosystem that encourages startups and MSMEs will be key to achieving true 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Indigenization of technology, Defence

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8. New Education Policy: National Assessment Centre 'PARAKH' Becomes Fully Operational, Source: Indian Express

Context: The National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), a key component of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, is now fully operational across all states and union territories. PARAKH has been set up as a standard-setting body to advise school boards regarding new assessment patterns and the latest research, and to promote collaboration between them. It has released its first set of guidelines for shifting from rote learning to competency-based assessment.

Significance:

- PARAKH is a transformative reform in Indian school education. Its primary goal is to bring uniformity and standardization to assessments across the diverse school boards in the country (CBSE, ICSE, and state boards).
- By setting norms and guidelines, it aims to end the emphasis on high-stakes board exams that encourage rote memorization.
- The focus on holistic, 360-degree, and competency-based assessment is intended to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students.

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Analysis:

- The operationalization of PARAKH is a crucial step in implementing the vision of NEP 2020.
- However, its success will depend on the capacity building of teachers and the willingness of state boards to adopt its recommendations.
- Shifting the mindset of students, parents, and teachers away from a purely marks-based evaluation system is a significant cultural challenge.
- PARAKH will also conduct the National Achievement Survey (NAS) to periodically check the health of the education system.
- The data generated will be vital for evidence-based policymaking and for identifying learning gaps that need to be addressed at the grassroots level.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

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9. Centre Releases Report on Left-Wing Extremism; Incidents at All-Time Low
Source: Hindustan Times

Context: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has released its annual report on Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in the country. The report states that incidents of LWE-related violence have dropped by over 80% compared to their peak in 2010. The geographical spread of Maoist influence has also shrunk significantly, now being confined to a few pockets in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and the Andhra-Odisha border region. The report attributes this success to a multi-pronged strategy combining security action and development initiatives.

Significance:

- The dramatic decline in LWE violence is a major internal security achievement.
- It indicates the success of the government's 'SAMADHAN' doctrine, which focuses on smart leadership, aggressive strategy, motivation and training, actionable intelligence, and a concerted push on development projects in affected areas.
- Improved road and communication connectivity, skill development centers, and the implementation of social welfare schemes have helped in weaning away locals from the influence of extremists.

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Analysis:

- While the data shows a clear victory in containing LWE, security experts caution against complacency.
- The Maoist leadership, though weakened, still retains the capacity to carry out sporadic, high-impact attacks, particularly in the core areas of Bastar in Chhattisgarh.
- The focus must now shift to eliminating the remaining pockets of influence and preventing any resurgence.
- This requires sustained security operations, addressing governance deficits, and ensuring that the benefits of development reach the most marginalized tribal communities.
- Winning the "hearts and minds" of the local population remains the ultimate key to a lasting solution.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Linkages between development and spread of extremism; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

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10. National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm: Northeast Sees Major Plantation Drive, Source: Economic Times

Context: Under the National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam have reported the successful cultivation of oil palm in over 50,000 hectares of newly identified land. The government's push, which includes providing financial assistance and price assurance to farmers, is showing significant results in its goal to reduce India's heavy reliance on imported palm oil. This marks the most significant expansion of the crop outside its traditional belts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Significance:

- India is the world's largest importer of edible oils, with palm oil constituting a major share.
- The NMEO-OP mission is critical for achieving self-reliance ('Aatmanirbharta') in edible oils and saving billions of dollars in foreign exchange.
- Expanding cultivation to the Northeast leverages the region's suitable climate and land availability.
- For farmers in the region, oil palm offers a lucrative alternative to traditional crops, potentially doubling their incomes.

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Analysis:

- While the mission's progress is promising, it is accompanied by serious ecological and social concerns.
- Environmental groups have warned that large-scale monoculture of oil palm could lead to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and stress on water resources, drawing parallels with the environmental damage seen in Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and Malaysia.
- The expansion must be carried out sustainably, focusing on wastelands and fallow lands rather than clearing forests.
- Ensuring that the benefits flow to small and marginal farmers and that they are not exploited by large corporations is another key challenge that requires robust regulatory oversight from the government.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country; Public Distribution System.

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