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1. India-France Launch Joint Maritime Surveillance Satellite for Indian Ocean Region, Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Hindustan Times

Context: Deepening their strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific, India and France today jointly launched a high-resolution maritime surveillance satellite. The satellite, part of a new constellation dedicated to monitoring the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), was launched on board an ISRO PSLV rocket. This collaboration builds upon the existing space-cooperation framework between ISRO and the French space agency, CNES. The satellite is equipped with advanced synthetic-aperture radar (SAR) and Automatic Identification System (AIS) payloads, enabling all-weather, day-and-night monitoring of maritime traffic. The ground control stations will be located in both India and French-controlled territories in the IOR.



Significance:

- This launch significantly enhances India's Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capabilities, which is central to its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine.
- It will provide crucial, real-time data for monitoring illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, combating piracy and smuggling, and tracking suspicious vessel movements, including extra-regional naval activities.
- For France, it reinforces its status as a resident power in the Indo-Pacific. This collaboration is a prime example of strategic convergence between the two nations on ensuring a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

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Analysis:

- The joint satellite project is a sophisticated strategic move. Analytically, it serves multiple purposes.
- First, it creates a shared, high-fidelity intelligence picture of the IOR, enhancing interoperability between the Indian and French navies.
- Second, it provides a layer of surveillance that is independent of other platforms like the QUAD's Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), giving both nations more strategic autonomy.
- Third, it has a clear geopolitical dimension aimed at monitoring the increasing forays of the Chinese PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) into the Indian Ocean.
- The success of this project could pave the way for a more extensive constellation and further collaboration in advanced space-based C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) capabilities.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. **GS Paper 3:** Security challenges and their management; Awareness in the fields of Space.

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2. RBI Report Flags Inflationary Risks from Uneven Monsoon

Source: The Economic Times, The Hindu

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its monthly bulletin released today, has raised concerns over potential inflationary pressures stemming from the erratic distribution of the Southwest Monsoon. While the overall rainfall for the country is currently near the Long Period Average (LPA), the report highlights significant spatial and temporal disparities. Key agricultural belts in Northwest and Central India have received deficient rainfall, impacting the sowing of crucial Kharif crops like paddy, pulses, and oilseeds. Conversely, parts of Northeast and Southern India have experienced excessive rainfall, leading to localized flooding and crop damage.



Significance:

- The RBI's assessment is significant as it signals that the fight against inflation is far from over, despite recent moderation.
- Food inflation, a major component of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), is highly sensitive to monsoon performance.
- A shortfall in Kharif crop production could lead to a spike in food prices in the latter half of the financial year, potentially forcing the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to maintain its hawkish stance on interest rates.
- This could have a dampening effect on economic growth and consumer demand.

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Analysis:

- The core of the analysis lies in the structural vulnerabilities of Indian agriculture to climate change.
- The increasing frequency of extreme weather events—long dry spells followed by intense rainfall—is making traditional farming unviable.
- The RBI's report implicitly calls for stronger supply-side interventions from the government. This includes better procurement and buffer stock management, promoting climate-resilient crop varieties, and expanding irrigation coverage under schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana.
- For the MPC, it presents a classic dilemma: tightening monetary policy to curb food inflation could hurt non-food sectors, while an accommodative stance could risk de-anchoring inflationary expectations.
- The report underscores the urgent need for climate adaptation strategies to be integrated into mainstream economic policymaking.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment.

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3. NITI Aayog Launches 'Vision 2047' Framework for Health Sector

Source: PIB, Hindustan Times

Context: Marking a strategic push towards building a resilient and equitable healthcare system, the NITI Aayog today unveiled the 'Viksit Bharat Health Vision 2047' framework document. The vision aims to transition India's health sector from a volume-based to a value-based system, focusing on wellness and preventive care. Key pillars of the framework include universal health coverage for all citizens, the integration of digital health through the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), strengthening primary healthcare through a 'Health and Wellness for All' model, and positioning India as a global hub for medical tourism and pharmaceutical R&D.



Significance:

- This framework provides a long-term, holistic roadmap for India's health sector, moving beyond short-term-programmatic approaches.
- It's significant because it explicitly links health outcomes to economic development, recognizing that a healthy population is a prerequisite for sustained growth.
- The emphasis on digital health and public-private partnerships (PPPs) signals the future direction of healthcare delivery.
- The vision's goal to drastically reduce out-of-pocket expenditure on health addresses a major cause of poverty in India.

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Analysis:

- The 'Vision 2047' is ambitious and comprehensive, but its success hinges on implementation and financing.
- A key analytical point is the challenge of financing this vision. The document calls for increasing public health expenditure to 3% of GDP, a long-standing demand that has yet to be met.
- Secondly, the framework's success depends on addressing the severe urban-rural and interstate disparities in health infrastructure and human resources.
- While the ABDM offers a technological solution, ensuring digital literacy and last-mile connectivity remains a hurdle.
- Finally, the emphasis on PPPs needs a robust regulatory framework to ensure that private sector participation leads to affordable and quality care, not just profit-making.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 2: Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

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4. India Announces New 'National Deep Tech Startup Policy'

Source: The Economic Times, PIB

Context: The Union Cabinet today approved the 'National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP)', aimed at nurturing and scaling startups in futuristic and research-intensive sectors like Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, advanced materials, and biotechnology. The policy was formulated based on recommendations from a high-level committee chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India. It outlines a multi-pronged strategy encompassing access to patient capital, creation of dedicated R&D infrastructure, intellectual property rights (IPR) protection, and simplified regulatory pathways for deep tech products.



Significance:

- The NDTSP is a critical policy intervention to move the Indian startup ecosystem up the value chain.
- While India has a thriving startup culture, it is dominated by consumer tech and software-as-a-service (SaaS) companies.
- Deep tech startups, which are vital for building national capabilities and solving complex problems, face unique challenges like long gestation periods and high capital requirements.
- This policy provides a dedicated support structure to address these specific needs, aiming to position India as a global leader in creating new technologies rather than just adopting them.

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Analysis:

- The policy's focus on "patient capital" is its most crucial analytical component.
- Deep tech ventures often do not generate revenue for years, making them unattractive for traditional venture capitalists seeking quick returns.
- The policy proposes creating a dedicated fund-of-funds, co-investment models with the private sector, and long-term R&D grants to address this gap.
- Another key aspect is bridging the "lab-to-market" gap. The policy aims to create better linkages between academic institutions (like IITs and IISc) and the industry, facilitating the commercialization of research.
- The success of the NDTSP will be measured not just by the number of new startups, but by their ability to create globally competitive, patent-protected products that contribute to India's economic and strategic goals.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 3: Science and Technology; Indigenization of technology; arising from it.

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5. Supreme Court Collegium Recommends Record Number of Women for High Courts, Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

Context: In a significant move towards enhancing gender diversity in the higher judiciary, the Supreme Court Collegium, led by the Chief Justice of India, has recommended the names of 15 women advocates and judicial officers for appointment as judges across seven different High Courts. This is one of the largest single batches of recommendations for women judges in recent history. The recommendations now await clearance from the Union government. The move is being seen as a concerted effort to address the stark gender imbalance in the higher judiciary, where women currently constitute just over 13% of the total strength.



Significance:

- This is a landmark step towards making the judiciary more representative and inclusive.
- A more diverse bench is believed to bring varied life experiences and perspectives to judicial reasoning, potentially leading to more empathetic and just outcomes, especially in cases related to gender-based violence, family law, and discrimination.
- It sends a powerful signal to the legal fraternity and encourages more women to aspire to judicial positions.
- This action also aligns with the principles laid down in the 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life', which implicitly supports a representative judiciary.

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Analysis:

- While the recommendation is a positive development, the analysis must focus on the systemic issues that persist.
- The collegium's move is a corrective measure, but it doesn't address the root causes of the low representation of women, such as societal barriers, a lack of mentorship opportunities, and an "old boys' club" culture in the legal profession.
- Furthermore, the final appointments are subject to government approval, and the timeline for this process remains a point of friction between the executive and the judiciary.
- The ultimate success will be seen not just in the number of appointments but in the elevation of these women judges to leadership positions, such as Chief Justices of High Courts and eventually, to the Supreme Court itself.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 2: Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.



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6. Government Launches Phase-III of FAME Scheme with Focus on Commercial EVs, Source: The Economic Times, PIB

Context: The Ministry of Heavy Industries today announced the launch of the third phase of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME-III) scheme, with a significant outlay of ₹25,000 crore for three years. A key shift in FAME-III is its sharpened focus on subsidizing public and commercial electric vehicles, including e-buses, e-trucks, and vehicles for last-mile delivery. While subsidies for private electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers will continue, they will be significantly rationalized. The scheme also allocates a substantial portion of the funds to support the development and deployment of a robust charging infrastructure network along major highways and in urban centers.



The FAME Scheme



Significance:

- FAME-III is a critical policy instrument for achieving India's ambitious climate targets, including reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP and achieving its 'Panchamrit' goals.
- By prioritizing commercial and public transport, the scheme aims for the maximum "bang for the buck" in terms of reducing vehicular emissions and crude oil imports.
- This focus will also help decarbonize the logistics sector, a major contributor to pollution.
- The emphasis on charging infrastructure addresses one of the biggest bottlenecks for EV adoption in the country.

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Analysis:

- The strategic shift in FAME-III is analytically sound. The "fleet-first" approach is more effective as commercial vehicles have higher utilization rates, leading to greater aggregate emission reduction per vehicle subsidized.
- However, challenges remain. The policy needs to be tightly integrated with state-level EV policies to avoid overlaps and ensure uniform implementation.
- Another critical factor is the development of a domestic battery manufacturing ecosystem, supported by the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, to reduce dependence on imported cells and bring down the upfront cost of EVs.
- The success of FAME-III will depend on how effectively it can catalyse private investment in both manufacturing and charging infrastructure, transforming India's mobility landscape.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 3: Infrastructure: Energy; Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

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7. India and Bangladesh Inaugurate Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link for Cargo Operations, Source: Hindustan Times, Ministry of External Affairs

Context: In a major boost to sub-regional connectivity, India and Bangladesh today officially commenced full-scale cargo operations on the newly constructed Akhaura-Agartala rail link. The first freight train, carrying cement and construction materials from Bangladesh, was flagged off and received at Nischintapur, on the outskirts of Agartala. The 15-km rail line, funded by an Indian line of credit, connects Gangasagar in Bangladesh's Brahmanbaria district to Nischintapur. This project significantly reduces the travel distance and time for goods transportation between West Bengal and India's Northeast.



Significance:

- This rail link is a game-changer for the connectivity of India's landlocked Northeast region.
- It reduces the transit distance between Kolkata and Agartala from approximately 1,600 km (through the Siliguri 'chicken's neck' corridor) to just about 500 km via Bangladesh.
- This will drastically cut down logistics costs and transit times, making products from the Northeast more competitive and boosting trade and industrial development in the region.
- For Bangladesh, it enhances its position as a connectivity hub and generates revenue from transit fees. The project is a stellar example of the "Neighborhood First" policy in action.

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Analysis:

- The operationalization of this link is a testament to the deepening bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh.
- Analytically, its importance extends beyond economics to geopolitics. By providing an alternative route, it reduces the strategic vulnerability of the Siliguri corridor.
- It is a key element of the larger BIMSTEC connectivity master plan and India's 'Act East' policy, aiming to integrate the economies of South and Southeast Asia.
- The next logical step would be to facilitate passenger services and to link this route with the Chittagong and Mongla ports in Bangladesh, which India has been granted access to.
- This would provide the Northeast with direct access to the sea, unlocking its immense economic potential.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 2: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

GS Paper 3: Infrastructure

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8. National Green Hydrogen Mission: First Large-Scale Green Ammonia Plant Commissioned, Source: The Economic Times, PIB

Context: India's National Green Hydrogen Mission achieved a major operational success today with the commissioning of the country's first large-scale green ammonia production plant in Paradip, Odisha. The plant, developed by a consortium led by ACME Group, has a capacity of 1.2 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA). It will use renewable energy from a captive solar power plant to produce green hydrogen through electrolysis, which is then synthesized with nitrogen to produce green ammonia. The Prime Minister hailed it as a significant step towards making India a global hub for green hydrogen and its derivatives.



Significance:

- The commissioning of this plant is a tangible outcome of the National Green Hydrogen Mission, launched in 2023.
- Green ammonia is a crucial chemical for the fertilizer industry and is also being explored as a clean marine fuel. This plant will help decarbonize the fertilizer sector, reducing its dependence on imported natural gas and LNG.
- It positions India as a potential exporter of green ammonia to markets like Japan, South Korea, and the EU, which have strong demand for clean energy.
- This project demonstrates the commercial viability of green hydrogen production at scale in India.

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Analysis:

- While a landmark achievement, the analysis must focus on the economics of green hydrogen.
- The cost of producing green hydrogen is still higher than 'grey' hydrogen produced from fossil fuels.
- The success of this plant and future projects depends on two factors: a continued decline in the cost of renewable energy and electrolyzers, and the creation of a robust demand-side ecosystem.
- The government's policy of mandating green hydrogen consumption in certain sectors (like refining and fertilizers) will be critical.
- Furthermore, developing the necessary infrastructure for storing and transporting green ammonia and hydrogen is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed for the mission to achieve its ambitious targets of 5 MMTPA production by 2030.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 3: Infrastructure: Energy; Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

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9. India's Arctic Policy: New Research Station 'Himadri-II' Inaugurated

Source: PIB, The Hindu

Context: India has expanded its scientific footprint in the polar regions with the official inauguration of 'Himadri-II', its second research station in the Arctic. Located near Ny-Ålesund in Svalbard, Norway, the new station is more advanced and larger than the existing Himadri station. It is equipped with state-of-the-art laboratories for studying glaciology, atmospheric sciences, and the impact of climate change on the fragile Arctic ecosystem. The inauguration was conducted virtually by the Minister for Earth Sciences, with Indian scientists present at the site.



Significance:

- The establishment of Himadri-II underscores India's growing strategic interest in the Arctic region.
- As an observer state to the Arctic Council, India recognizes that changes in the Arctic have a direct impact on the Indian monsoon and sea levels.
- The enhanced research capacity will allow Indian scientists to contribute more significantly to global climate change research.
- It also strengthens India's geopolitical standing in the region, which is gaining importance due to its rich deposits of natural resources and the opening up of new shipping routes like the Northern Sea Route.

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Analysis:

- India's Arctic engagement is driven by a combination of scientific, environmental, and strategic imperatives.
- Analytically, the investment in Himadri-II is a long-term strategic bet.
- The scientific data collected will be invaluable for improving India's climate models and weather prediction capabilities.
- Strategically, a sustained presence in the Arctic allows India to have a say in the governance of the region's resources and sea lanes.
- It is a part of India's broader strategy of positioning itself as a responsible global power with interests spanning from the Antarctic to the Arctic.
- The challenge will be to ensure that this scientific presence translates into tangible policy inputs for both domestic climate adaptation and international diplomacy.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India. **GS Paper 3:** Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation.

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10. Ministry of Tribal Affairs Launches 'Siksha Shakti' Portal for Tribal Students

Source: PIB

Context: The Ministry of Tribal Affairs today launched the 'Siksha Shakti' portal, a unified digital platform designed to cater to all the educational needs of Scheduled Tribe (ST) students. The portal integrates information and application processes for various government scholarships, fellowships, hostel admissions, and coaching schemes for ST students. It also features a career counseling section, information on Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), and a grievance redressal mechanism.



Significance:

- The 'Siksha Shakti' portal is a significant step towards digital governance and ensuring the last-mile delivery of educational benefits to tribal communities.
- By creating a one-stop shop, it aims to reduce information asymmetry and simplify the application process, which has often been a barrier for students in remote areas.
- This initiative is crucial for improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of ST students in higher education and reducing their dropout rates, thereby contributing to their socio-economic empowerment.

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Analysis:

- The portal's success will depend on its accessibility and user-friendliness. A key analytical point is the digital divide.
- While the portal is a great initiative, its effectiveness is contingent on the availability of internet connectivity and digital literacy in tribal hamlets and remote areas.
- The government will need to supplement this digital initiative with on-ground support through Common Service Centres (CSCs) and school administrations.
- Another critical aspect is ensuring that the portal is multilingual and provides information in various tribal dialects to maximize its reach.
- The integration of a robust tracking and grievance redressal system will be vital for accountability and ensuring that benefits reach the intended recipients promptly.

UPSC Syllabus:

GS Paper 2: Mechanisms, laws, institutions, and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.