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1. Economy & Technology: RBI Announces Phase-II of Digital Rupee with Offline and Programmability Features, Source: The Hindu

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) today announced the second phase of its Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or 'e-Rupee' pilot. This phase expands the retail e-Rupee (e₹-R) project to 50 more cities and introduces two key functionalities: offline transactions and programmability. The offline feature will allow users to make payments in areas with limited or no internet connectivity, while programmability will enable government agencies to disburse benefits for specific purposes, such as fertiliser subsidies that can only be used to pay for fertilisers.



Significance:

- The introduction of offline capability is a game-changer for financial inclusion, potentially bringing digital payments to the most remote parts of India.
- It makes the e-Rupee a more resilient and accessible alternative to physical cash.
- Programmability represents a major innovation in public service delivery, allowing for targeted, leakage-proof distribution of subsidies and welfare payments.
- This can significantly enhance the efficiency and transparency of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes.

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Analysis:

- While promising, both features come with challenges. Implementing secure and fool-proof offline transactions without the risk of 'double-spending' is a complex technical problem that the RBI will need to solve robustly.
- Programmability, on the other hand, raises questions about user autonomy and privacy.
- Critics argue that it could restrict the economic freedom of beneficiaries and lead to intrusive monitoring.
- The RBI will need to establish a strong regulatory framework that balances the benefits of targeted payments with the fundamental rights of individuals.
- The success of Phase-II will determine the final architecture of India's CBDC and its timeline for a full-scale national launch.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3 (Economy & S&T): Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources; Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers; Inclusive growth.

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2. Defence & Security: INS Vagsheer, Last of the Kalvari-class Submarines, Commissioned into the Indian Navy, Source: Hindustan Times

Context: INS Vagsheer, the sixth and final submarine of the French-designed Kalvari-class (Scorpène-class), was commissioned into the Indian Navy at a ceremony in Mumbai's Naval Dockyard. The commissioning marks the successful completion of Project-75, a critical programme for the modernisation of the Navy's conventional submarine fleet. Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in collaboration with Naval Group of France, Vagsheer is a diesel-electric attack submarine equipped with advanced stealth features, long-range guided torpedoes, and anti-ship missiles.



Significance:

- The induction of INS Vagsheer completes a vital capacity-building project for the Indian Navy, significantly enhancing its underwater combat capability and deterrence potential in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The successful indigenous construction of all six submarines under a technology-transfer agreement is a major boost for the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative in defence manufacturing.
- These submarines are crucial for intelligence gathering, surveillance, mine-laying, and anti-submarine warfare, acting as a potent force multiplier against adversaries.

Analysis:

- With Project-75 concluded, the Navy's focus now shifts urgently to the follow-on Project-75 (India) or P-75I, which envisages the construction of six more advanced submarines equipped with Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) technology.
- The AIP system allows submarines to remain submerged for much longer periods, drastically increasing their operational stealth and endurance.
- Delays in finalising the P-75I project remain a concern, as the Navy's older Kilo-class and HDW-class submarines are nearing the end of their service life.
- The timely execution of P-75I is critical to maintaining the desired force level of at least 24 conventional submarines to counter growing maritime challenges in the IOR.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3 (Security): Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate; Security challenges and their management in border areas; Linkages of organised crime with terrorism; Indigenisation of technology.

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3. Health & Social Justice: Sickle Cell Anaemia Mission Shows 40% Screening Target Met in Tribal Areas, Source: PIB

Context: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, released a progress report on the National Mission to Eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia. Launched in 2023 with a target to eliminate the disease by 2047, the report states that over 2.8 crore people out of a targeted 7 crore in the 0-40 age group have been screened across 17 high-prevalence states. This represents a 40% achievement of the screening target. The mission focuses on awareness creation, universal screening, and counselling through a "hub and spoke" model in affected tribal areas.



Significance:

- The progress is a positive indicator of the government's commitment to addressing this genetic blood disorder, which is disproportionately prevalent among tribal populations.
- Early screening is crucial for disease management and for preventing the birth of children with sickle cell disease through genetic counselling.
- The mission's success is vital for improving the health indicators of tribal communities and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure on chronic disease management, contributing to the goals of Ayushman Bharat.

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Analysis:

- While the 40% screening figure is commendable, the real challenge lies in the post-screening phase: ensuring continuous care, access to medication like hydroxyurea, and providing comprehensive counselling services.
- Stigma associated with the disease and logistical hurdles in reaching remote hamlets remain significant barriers.
- Integrating the mission with the existing primary healthcare infrastructure of Health and Wellness Centres is key to its long-term success.
- The use of point-of-care testing devices has accelerated screening, but ensuring the quality and accuracy of these tests across diverse field conditions is an ongoing task.
- The 2047 target is ambitious and will require sustained political will, community participation, and robust healthcare delivery.

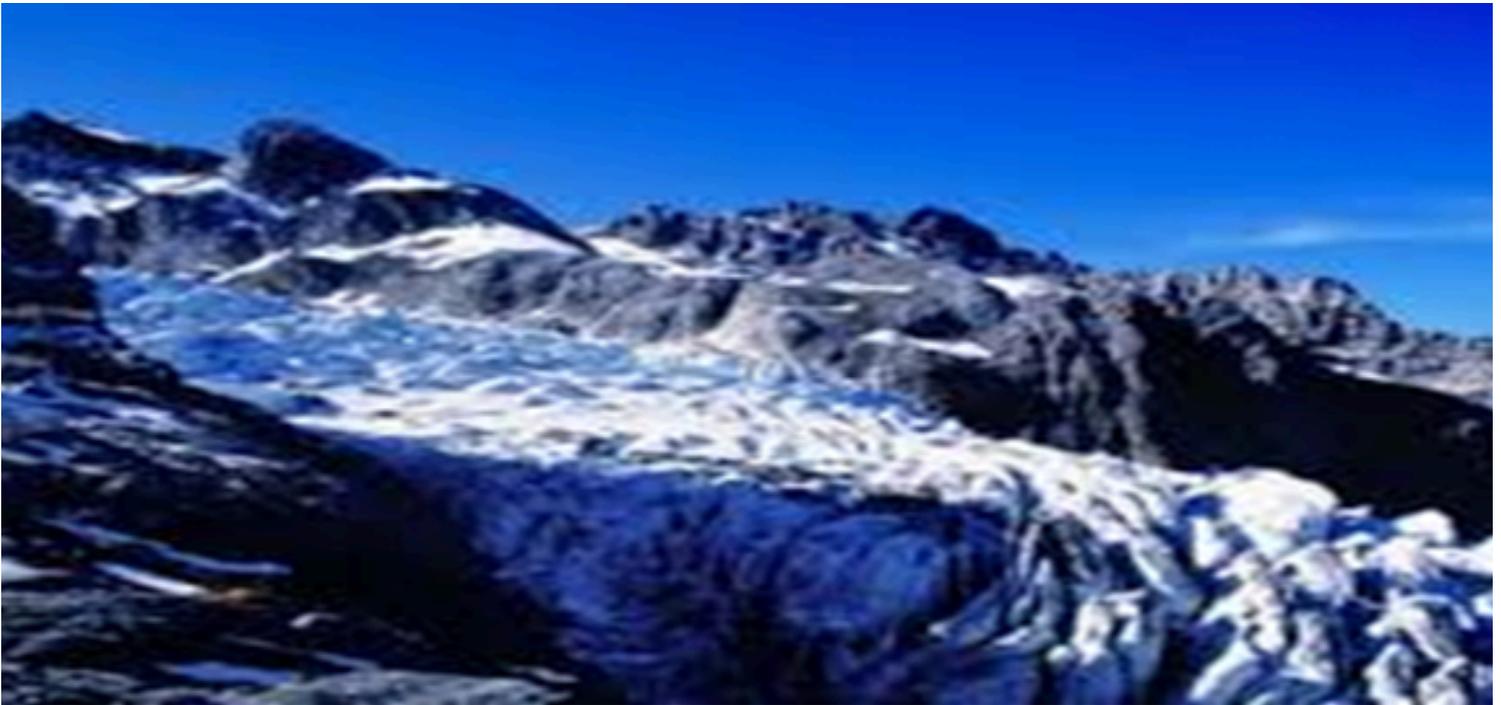
UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2 (Social Justice): Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources; Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States.

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4. Environment: IPCC Special Report Warns of Accelerated Himalayan Glacier Melt, Source: The Hindu

Context: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) today released a special report titled "Water, Ice, and Ecosystems of the High Mountain Asia," providing a dire warning about the accelerated melting of glaciers in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. The report, synthesising the latest scientific data, concludes that the glaciers are now melting 65% faster than in the previous decade. It projects that at the current rate of global emissions, the region could lose up to 80% of its ice volume by 2100, severely impacting water security for over two billion people in downstream river basins like the Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra.



Significance:

- This report provides the most conclusive scientific evidence to date on the devastating impact of climate change on "the Third Pole."
- The findings have profound implications for India's water, food, and energy security.
- The accelerated melt will initially lead to increased river flows and a higher risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), followed by a drastic reduction in water availability in the long term.
- This threatens agriculture, hydropower generation, and drinking water supplies for hundreds of millions.

Analysis:

- The report is a clarion call for urgent and drastic global emissions cuts, as well as for enhanced regional cooperation among Himalayan countries.
- For India, it necessitates a fundamental rethinking of its water management and disaster preparedness strategies.
- Key policy imperatives include developing advanced GLOF early warning systems, constructing climate-resilient infrastructure in the Himalayas, promoting water-efficient agriculture (e.g., micro-irrigation) in the plains, and diversifying the energy mix away from an over-reliance on Himalayan hydropower.
- The report underscores that climate adaptation in the Himalayas is no longer a choice but a critical necessity for regional stability.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 1 (Geography): Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, tsunamis, Volcanic activity, cyclones, etc., geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps).

GS Paper 3 (Environment): Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment; Disaster and disaster management.

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5. Agriculture & Economy: Cabinet Approves Expansion of PM-KISAN to Include Tenant Farmers, Source: PIB

Context: The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, today approved a proposal to expand the scope of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme. The landmark decision will now include tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and oral lessees as beneficiaries, who were previously excluded due to the scheme's land-ownership criterion. A new digital framework, linked with state land records and Aadhaar, will be created to identify and verify these "landless cultivators" for the transfer of ₹6,000 per year.



Significance:

- This is a major reform aimed at making India's flagship agricultural income support scheme more inclusive.
- A vast majority of actual cultivators in India are tenant farmers who bear the costs of cultivation but are ineligible for PM-KISAN benefits.
- This move directly addresses this inequity and acknowledges the ground reality of Indian agriculture.
- It is expected to provide a crucial financial cushion to some of the most vulnerable sections of the farming community, potentially alleviating rural distress.

Analysis:

- The biggest challenge in implementing this expansion will be the identification and verification of beneficiaries in the absence of formal tenancy records in most states.
- The success of the scheme will heavily depend on the robustness of the digital framework and the cooperation of state governments and local panchayats.
- There is a risk of inclusion and exclusion errors. However, the move is a significant step towards recognising tenancy and could pave the way for further reforms, such as providing tenant farmers with access to formal credit and crop insurance.
- It signals a policy shift from focusing solely on land ownership to supporting the actual "tiller of the land."

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3 (Economy): Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

GS Paper 2 (Social Justice): Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections.



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6. Judiciary: Supreme Court Collegium Recommends 5 Judges, Emphasises Regional and Gender Diversity, Source: The Indian Express

Context: The Supreme Court Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud II, has recommended the names of five High Court judges for elevation to the Supreme Court. The recommendations, if accepted by the government, will fill all current vacancies and bring the court to its full sanctioned strength of 34 judges. In its official statement, the Collegium highlighted that its choices were guided by considerations of merit, seniority, and the need to ensure diversity and inclusion on the Bench, specifically mentioning regional representation and the elevation of a woman judge.



Significance:

The move is significant for ensuring the efficient functioning of the apex court by bringing it to full strength, which can help in tackling the large backlog of cases. The explicit emphasis on diversity is a positive step towards making the higher judiciary more representative of India's pluralistic society. The elevation of more women judges is particularly important for promoting gender justice and bringing diverse perspectives to judicial reasoning.

Analysis:

- The recommendations once again bring the 'Collegium system' of judicial appointments into focus.
- While the Collegium has become more transparent in recent years by publishing its resolutions, the system continues to face criticism for its perceived opacity and lack of accountability, often described as a "judges-appointing-judges" system.
- The government's speed in processing these recommendations will be closely watched, as delays have been a point of friction between the executive and the judiciary in the past.
- The debate over a potential National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) or another alternative mechanism for appointments remains a key issue in the discourse on judicial reforms.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2 (Polity and Governance): Structure, organisation and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

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7. International Relations: India Hosts Inaugural Physical Summit of 'Voice of Global South', Source: The Hindu

Context: New Delhi is today hosting the first-ever physical summit of the 'Voice of Global South' (VOGS), a platform initiated by India during its G20 Presidency in 2023. Leaders and representatives from over 100 developing nations across Asia, Africa, and Latin America have gathered to discuss pressing global challenges, including climate finance, debt distress, food and energy security, and reform of multilateral institutions. The summit aims to consolidate the perspectives of the developing world and present a unified voice on the global stage.



Significance:

- This summit solidifies India's role as a self-proclaimed leader and "bridge" for the Global South.
- It is a significant diplomatic initiative to carry forward the momentum generated during India's G20 Presidency, where it successfully advocated for the inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member.
- The summit provides a platform for countries often marginalised in global decision-making to coordinate their strategies and demand a more equitable international economic and political order.

Analysis:

- The VOGS initiative is a key pillar of India's foreign policy, distinguishing its global posture from that of both the Western bloc and China.
- It is seen as a diplomatic counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by offering a more consultative and demand-driven model of cooperation.
- The success of the summit will be measured by its ability to produce a concrete "Delhi Declaration" with actionable outcomes, particularly on issues like a new collective quantified goal for climate finance and a framework for sovereign debt restructuring.
- India's challenge will be to manage the diverse interests within the Global South and translate this collective voice into tangible influence in institutions like the UN, WTO, and IMF.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2 (International Relations): Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

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8. Urban Development: AMRUT 3.0 Launched with Focus on Circular Economy in Cities, Source: PIB

Context: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) today launched the third iteration of its flagship urban rejuvenation scheme, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT 3.0). With a projected outlay of ₹3.5 lakh crore over five years, this phase introduces a paradigm shift by integrating the principles of a circular economy into urban planning. The mission's primary goals are to ensure universal coverage of water supply and sewerage, and to make cities 'Water Secure' by focusing on wastewater treatment, recycling, and the rejuvenation of urban water bodies.



Significance:

- AMRUT 3.0 represents a significant evolution in India's urban policy, moving from merely providing infrastructure to creating sustainable and resilient urban systems.
- The emphasis on a circular economy—treating used water as a resource—is critical for cities facing acute water stress.
- This approach will reduce the dependency on fresh water sources, mitigate urban flooding, and create economic value from waste.
- The mission aims to make Indian cities self-sufficient in their water management.

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Analysis:

- The implementation of AMRUT 3.0 will be more complex than its predecessors.
- It requires Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to develop sophisticated capabilities in water resource management, digital monitoring, and public-private partnership structuring.
- A key challenge will be financing, as the mission relies heavily on ULBs generating their own revenue and attracting private investment.
- Capacity building at the municipal level and creating a viable market for treated wastewater will be crucial for success.
- The mission's performance will be a key determinant of India's progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2 (Governance): Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors. **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Environment):** Infrastructure; Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

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9. Internal Security: MHA Report Claims 70% Reduction in LWE Violence Since 2015, Source: PIB

Context: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has released its annual report, which states a 70% decline in incidents of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) violence and a 75% reduction in resultant deaths across the country between 2015 and 2024. The report attributes this success to the government's multi-pronged strategy, combining resolute security operations, development initiatives in affected areas, and ensuring the rights of local communities. The geographical spread of LWE influence has also shrunk significantly, with only 25 districts now considered 'most affected'.



Significance:

- The reported decline represents a major success in India's internal security management.
- It suggests that the long-standing challenge of Maoist insurgency is being effectively contained.
- This improvement in the security situation allows for the acceleration of development projects like road construction, mobile connectivity, and the establishment of schools and hospitals in previously inaccessible areas, thereby creating a virtuous cycle of development and peace.

Analysis:

- While the statistics are encouraging, experts caution against complacency.
- The LWE movement has historically shown resilience, often retreating to core forest areas to regroup.
- The security forces' challenge now is to consolidate their gains and prevent a resurgence.
- The government's focus must remain on the 'development' prong of its strategy—addressing the root causes of the insurgency, such as land alienation, forest rights, and lack of livelihood opportunities for tribal communities.
- Winning the trust of the local population and strengthening local governance institutions are paramount to achieving a lasting solution and completely eradicating the LWE influence.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3 (Internal Security): Linkages between development and spread of extremism; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; Security challenges and their management in border areas.

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10. Economy & Infrastructure: NITI Aayog Chairs High-Level Review of National Infrastructure Pipeline, Source: The Economic Times

Context: The CEO of NITI Aayog today chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), which has a projected investment of over ₹111 lakh crore. The meeting, attended by secretaries of key infrastructure ministries and state representatives, focused on identifying and removing bottlenecks in project implementation, particularly in the transport, energy, and urban sectors. A key agenda item was to re-evaluate project viability and timelines in light of evolving economic conditions and technological advancements.



Significance:

- The NIP is the backbone of India's ambition to become a \$7 trillion economy by 2030.
- This high-level review is crucial for maintaining the momentum of infrastructure creation, which is a key driver of economic growth and employment.
- By proactively addressing inter-ministerial coordination issues and financing gaps, the government aims to improve the pace and quality of project execution.
- The review also helps in re-prioritising projects to maximise economic impact.

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Analysis:

- Despite progress, the NIP faces challenges, primarily in attracting private investment, which is slated to contribute a significant portion of the total funding.
- Issues like land acquisition delays, regulatory hurdles, and disputes in PPP contracts continue to slow down projects.
- The review meeting likely focused on streamlining approval processes through the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan and exploring innovative financing models like asset monetisation and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).
- Ensuring a stable and predictable policy environment is critical to boosting investor confidence.
- The ability to effectively execute the NIP will determine the long-term competitiveness of the Indian economy.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3 (Economy): Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, etc.; Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment.