



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH, 2023

Week-2

8-14 March, 2023

★★ Useful for ★★

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

8th MARCH, 2023

Raisina Dialogue 2023

- **Context:** Recently, the eighth edition of the Raisina Dialogue was held in New Delhi. This year saw the participation of intelligence and security chiefs from over 26 countries.

Key Highlights:

- India's Minister of State for External Affairs highlighted the importance of multilateralism in the context of changing geopolitics at the ongoing Raisina Dialogue and added that India would work towards reforming multilateralism.
- There is a better methodology for resolving conflicts and not letting them happen in the first place in the interest of maintaining social order.
- The minister of State for External Affairs stressed on the need of shaping the New World on the pillars of multilateralism, security and prosperity, alleviation of poverty, sustainable development, equal opportunities, human rights, democracy and commitment to a peaceful and just international order.
- India's theme of VasudhaivaKutumbakam- One Earth, One Family, One Future for its G20 Presidency, signals the need for unity of purpose and unity of action.
- Minister of State for IT speaking at a panel discussion on 'Democracy's Eleven: Protecting our Technology Future', said there is a fundamental reset underway in semiconductor, electronics and innovation world order post-COVID, and like-minded nations need to work together on a cooperative framework to shape the future of technology.
- The Chief of Navy Staff said working in smaller groups and regional frameworks is helpful in building trust, interoperability and overall outcome. He also highlighted the vision of SAGAR or security and growth for all in the region.
- Speaking at the Raisina Dialogue, Finance Minister said that the country will have government-owned professionally run companies in four broad strategic

sectors - atomic energy, space and defence; Transport and telecommunication; Power, Petroleum, Coal and other minerals; and Banking, Insurance and Financial Services.

About Raisina Dialogue:

- The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier foreign policy conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- The first session was held in 2016.
- It is organized on the lines of the Shangri La Dialogue (which takes place annually in Singapore) & the Munich Security Conference (the 59th edition of which took place in February 2023).
- It is co-hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

Bio-Computers

- **Context:** Recently scientists have taken initial steps to create an 'organoid intelligence' which aims to create "biocomputers".

Key Highlights:

- "Organoid intelligence" like Artificial intelligence is an area of study to create independent decision-making units using organoids.
- Brain organoids are 3D cultures of brain tissue prepared in the lab using human stem cells. These capture many structural and functional features of a developing human brain.
- The scientists ultimately aim to create "biocomputers": which are brain cultures grown in the lab and coupled to real-world sensors and input/output devices.
- These biocomputers like human brains can be used for complex information processing.
- These organoids can reveal the biological basis of human cognition, learning, and memory.
- They can help in drug development and in decoding the pathology of degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's disease and microcephaly.

9th MARCH, 2023

Prevention of Money Laundering Act

- **Context:** The Union Finance Ministry's move to bring in virtual digital assets under the money laundering law is aimed at widening the taxation and regulatory net and giving teeth to agencies.

Key Highlights:

- The Finance Ministry said the anti-money laundering legislation has been applied to crypto trading, safekeeping and related financial services.
- The notification said exchange between virtual digital assets and fiat currencies, Exchange between one or more forms of virtual digital assets, Transfer of virtual digital assets, safekeeping or administration of virtual digital assets or instruments enabling control over virtual digital assets, and participation in and Provision of financial services related to an issuer's offer and sale of a virtual digital asset". All of the above will now be covered by the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002.
- Virtual digital assets were defined as any code or number or token generated through cryptographic means with the promise or representation of having inherent value.
- After this, Indian crypto exchanges will have to report suspicious activity to the Financial Intelligence Unit India (FIU-IND).
- The move is in line with the global trend of requiring digital-asset platforms to follow anti-money laundering standards similar to those followed by other regulated entities like banks or stock brokers.
- Digital currency and assets like NFTs (non-fungible tokens) have gained traction globally over the last couple of years. Trading in these assets has increased manifold with cryptocurrency exchanges being launched.
- However, India, till last year, did not have a clear policy on either regulating or taxing such asset classes.

About Cryptocurrency:

- It is a digital currency that can be used in place of conventional money.
- In cryptocurrencies, cryptography is used to secure and verify transactions. It is also used to control the supply of cryptocurrencies.
- It is supported by a decentralized peer-to-peer network called the blockchain.
- The first cryptocurrency: Bitcoin, was launched in 2009 by Satoshi Nakamoto.

Indian Government's stand on Cryptocurrency:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has long recommended a complete ban on all crypto, warning that it has the potential to destabilize the country's monetary and fiscal stability.
- Despite having no regulatory framework for crypto, the Indian government had introduced a new tax regime last year, taxing crypto income at 30% and a 1% tax deducted at source (TDS) on crypto transactions.

About Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) 2002:

- It was enacted in January 2003 and the Act along with the Rules framed thereunder has come into force with effect from 1st July 2005.
- The Parliament enacted the PMLA as a result of international commitment to sternly deal with the menace of money laundering of proceeds of a crime having transnational consequences and on the financial systems of the countries.

The Pritzker Architecture Prize, 2023

- **Context:** Sir David Chipperfield Selected as the 2023 Laureate of the Pritzker Architecture Prize

Key Highlights:

- Civic architect, urban planner and activist, Sir David Alan Chipperfield has been selected as the 2023 Laureate of The Pritzker Architecture Prize, the award that is regarded internationally as architecture's highest honor.

- Chipperfield's storied career spans more than 40 years and includes 100-plus projects, ranging from civic, cultural, and academic buildings to residences and urban master planning throughout Asia, Europe, and North America.
- His built works, spanning over four decades, are expansive in typology and geography, including over one hundred works ranging from civic, cultural and academic buildings to residences and urban master planning throughout Asia, Europe and North America.
- The Pritzker Architecture Prize is the highest international honour for architects.
- The prize was designed to honour architects for their complete body of built work.
- The Prize was founded in 1979 by Jay A. Pritzker and is funded by the Pritzker family and sponsored by the Hyatt Foundation.
- Sir David Chipperfield was involved in famous projects like the 2012 Architecture Venice Biennale, The Neues Museum in Berlin and Procuratie Vecchie in Venice's iconic St Mark's Square.
- According to the Defence Ministry, this exercise provides an opportunity to test the combat readiness of the combined fleets of the Indian Navy to operate in a multi-threat environment. The maritime exercise also facilitates operational-level interaction with the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and the Coast Guard.

10th MARCH, 2023

'Safe Harbor' Clause in IT Law

- **Context:** Recently, the Union government formally outlined the Digital India Act, 2023.

Key Highlights:

TROPEX 2023

- **Context:** Indian Navy's operational level exercise TROPEX 2023 culminates in Arabian Sea.

Key Highlights:

- Indian Navy's major Operational level exercise TROPEX for the year 2023, conducted across the expanse of IOR for four months from Nov 22 - Mar 23, culminated this week in the Arabian Sea.
- Full form: Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX 2023).
- Indian Navy said, the TROPEX exercise witnessed the participation of approximately 70 Indian Navy ships, six submarines, and over 75 aircraft.
- As part of the final joint phase, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh spent a day at sea onboard the newly commissioned Indigenous Aircraft Carrier Vikrant. He reviewed the Indian Navy's operational preparedness wherein the Navy demonstrated operational manoeuvres and various facets of combat operations.
- The Digital India Act, 2023 is a broad overhaul of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- The Digital India Act would cover provisions such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), deepfakes, cybercrime, competition issues among internet platforms, and data protection.
- The new law would seek to address "new complex forms of user harms" that have emerged in the years since the IT Act's enactment, such as catfishing, doxing, trolling, and phishing.
- The government is reconsidering a key aspect of cyberspace 'safe harbour', which is the principle that 'intermediaries' on the internet are not responsible for what third parties post on their website.
- This is the principle that allows social media platforms to avoid liability for posts made by users.
- Safe harbour has been reined in recent years by regulations like the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which require platforms to take down posts when ordered to do so by the government, or when required by law.
- Platforms for which safe harbour was applied as a concept "have now morphed into multiple types of participants and platforms on the internet, functionally very different from each other, and requiring different types of guardrails and regulatory requirements."

- Social media platforms' own moderation policies may now take a backseat to constitutional protections for freedom of expression.
- Amendment to the IT Rules, 2021 says that platforms must respect users' free speech rights. Three Grievance Appellate Committees have been established to take up content complaints by social media users.
- A slew of such digital legislation is now likely to be subsumed into the Digital India Act.
- It would be one of the prongs of the Digital India Act, with the National Data Governance Policy and amendments to the Indian Penal Code, are part of the rules formulated under the Digital India Act.
- A new "adjudicatory mechanism" for criminal and civil offences committed online would come into place
- Its governance structure will comprise a General Assembly consisting of all member countries, a council of at least seven.
- It will be limited to less than 15 member countries elected by the General Assembly for a term of 5 years, and a Secretariat.

Steps taken by Government to protect big cats:

International Big Cat Alliance

- **Context:** India has recently proposed to launch global alliance for big cats with an investment of \$100 million.

Key Highlights:

- The proposed alliance will provide assured support over five years with guaranteed funding of over Rs 800 crore.
- The group will work towards the protection of the seven big cats — tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar and cheetah.
- Membership to the alliance will be open to 97 "range" countries, which contain the natural habitat of these big cats, as well as other interested nations, international organisations, etc.
- The IBCA will engage in advocacy, partnership, knowledge e-portal, capacity building, eco-tourism, partnerships between expert groups and finance tapping.
- The alliance will disseminate information on benchmarked practices, capacity building, resources repository, research and development, and awareness creation.
- **Project Tiger:** It is the flagship program of the Indian government for tiger conservation launched in 1973 to protect tigers and their habitats by creating protected areas, improving law enforcement, and involving local communities in conservation efforts.
- **National Tiger Conservation Authority:** This is a statutory body established in 2005 to ensure the effective implementation of Project Tiger and other conservation programs. It oversees the management of tiger reserves, provides technical support, and coordinates with other government agencies and stakeholders.
- **Wildlife Protection Act:** This is a national law enacted in 1972 to protect wildlife in India by prohibiting hunting, poaching, and trade of wildlife and their derivatives. The law also provides for the establishment of protected areas, including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and biosphere reserves.
- **National Wildlife Action Plan:** This is a comprehensive plan for wildlife conservation in India that outlines strategies and actions to protect and manage wildlife and their habitats. The plan includes specific targets for big cat conservation, including the recovery of tiger populations and the establishment of new protected areas.
- **Eco-Development Programme:** This program aims to involve local communities in conservation efforts by providing them with alternative livelihood opportunities and promoting sustainable resource use practices. The program aims to reduce human-wildlife conflict and increase community participation in conservation efforts.

- **M-STRIPES:** This is a mobile-based monitoring system developed by the Wildlife Conservation Trust for monitoring and managing tiger populations. The system uses GPS and mobile technology to collect data on tiger movements and habitat use, which is then used to inform conservation decisions.

11th MARCH, 2023

India-US pact on semiconductor

- **Context:** India and the US signed a pact on setting up a semiconductor supply chain and innovation partnership, and established a semiconductor sub-committee under the framework of the India-US Commercial Dialogue

Key Highlights:

- The Semiconductor Sub-Committee is part of India-US efforts to increase private-sector cooperation in the area of semiconductors with a view to reducing their dependence on China and Taiwan.
- It is led by the Department of Commerce for the US side and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for the Indian side.
- Setting up of the Semiconductor Sub-Committee comes after India and US signed an MoU to build a resilient supply chain in the semiconductor sector.
- The MoU aims to leverage the complementary strengths of both countries and facilitate commercial opportunities and the development of semiconductor innovation ecosystems through discussions on various aspects of the semiconductor value chain.
- Semiconductors are the building blocks of almost every modern electronic device from smartphones to connected devices in the Internet of Things (IoT).
- The chip-making industry is a highly-concentrated one, with the big players being Taiwan, the U.S. and China.
- The global chip shortage coupled with the U.S.-China tensions over Taiwan, and the supply chain blockages owing to the Russia-Ukraine conflict have

made major economies realise the importance of the chip-making sector.

- In 2021, the MeitY launched the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme to nurture at least 20 domestic companies involved in semiconductor design
- India has also launched the Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECES) for manufacturing electronic components and semiconductors.
- India announced an outlay of Rs 76,000 crore (around \$10 billion), under the PLI scheme for the development of a semiconductor and display manufacturing electronics ecosystem.

Terran-1: World's first 3D-printed rocket

- **Context:** Relativity Space, a startup company based in California, made history with the launch of Terran 1, the world's first 3D-printed rocket.

Key highlights:

- The launch is part of the "Good Luck, Have Fun" (GLHF) mission. Terran 1 will be the largest 3D-printed object to attempt an orbital flight, weighing 9,280 kilograms and standing 110 feet tall and 7.5 feet wide. 85% of the rocket was manufactured using 3D-printing technology.
- Terran 1 is a two-stage satellite, which means the fuel burns in two different stages to give the required escape velocity to the satellite.
- Terran 1 is an expendable launch system, which means can be launched only once. Satellites like Falcon 9 are reusable and can be launched multiple times. Terran 1 is a small lift launch vehicle, that is, it can carry loads of up to 2000 kg.
- Terran 1 has two stage engines. The first stage uses nine Aeon 1 engines. This engine is powered by a mixture of methane and oxygen. The second stage is powered by the AeonVac engine.
- This first launch of Terran 1 did not carry any payloads. However, it is capable of carrying payloads up to 1,500 kg to the low earth orbit. The low earth orbit lies at a distance of 1000 km from the earth's surface. It was built using aluminium alloy.

MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme

- **Context:** The Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises launched the MSME Competitive (LEAN) scheme.

Key Highlights:

- The Scheme is a business initiative to reduce "waste" in manufacturing.
- It provides for building awareness of lean manufacturing practices in MSME clusters as well as cost sharing of consultant's fees with MSME units who opt for such interventions.
- Under the scheme, the Centre's contribution will be 90 per cent of the implementation cost for handholding and consultancy fees as against 80 per cent previously.
- **Lean Manufacturing Techniques are adopted with the objective of**
 - Reducing waste,
 - Increasing productivity,
 - Introducing innovative practices for improving overall competitiveness,
 - Inculcating good management systems and imbuing a culture of continuous improvement.
- The Pilot Phase of Lean Manufacturing Competitiveness Scheme (LMCS) was approved in 2009 for 100 Mini Clusters.
- Under the scheme, MSMEs will implement LEAN manufacturing tools like 5S, Kaizen, KANBAN, Visual workplace, Poka Yoka etc. under the guidance of trained and competent LEAN Consultants to attain LEAN levels like Basic, Intermediate and Advanced.
- Its nodal agency is National Productivity Council (NPC).
- The Scheme is open to Micro, Small or Medium as per the definition of the MSME Act. (The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006.) The units are required to form a Mini Cluster of 10 or so units.
- Under the Scheme, MSMEs are assisted in reducing their manufacturing costs, through proper personnel

management, better space utilization, scientific inventory management, improved processed flows, reduced engineering time and so on.

- LMCS (Lean Manufacturing Competitiveness Scheme) also brings improvement in the quality of products and lowers costs, which are essential for competing in national and international markets.

12th MARCH, 2023

Saudi Arabia, Iran agrees to restore diplomatic ties

- **Context:** Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to resume diplomatic ties that have been severed for years, Recently, China-Brokered Talks have led to the normalcy of diplomatic relations between the middle-eastern countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia

Key Highlights:

- Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to restore ties and reopen diplomatic missions after a seven-year-long rift that has fuelled tensions in the Gulf and deepened conflicts from Yemen to Syria.
- The agreement was reached recently during talks in Beijing between top security officials from the two rival Middle East powers.
- While the rivalry between predominantly Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia has dominated Middle East politics in recent years, spreading into Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.
- The execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr in Tehran in 2016 was the most recent incident which led to protests and the cutting of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia.
- Iran and Saudi Arabia have agreed to respect state sovereignty and not interfere in each other's internal affairs.
- Both countries have also agreed to activate a security cooperation agreement signed in 2001.
- The foreign ministers of both nations will meet to prepare for the exchange of ambassadors.

Lunar Time Zone

- **Context:** The European Space Agency (ESA) wants to give the moon its own time zone (Lunar Time Zone).

Key Highlights:

- At present, the lunar missions have operated at the time of the country that launched them.
- The aforesaid lunar missions will not only be on or around the moon at the same time, but they will often be interacting as well — potentially relaying communications for one another.
- For all those interactions to happen smoothly, the current system is unsustainable and the missions will need to operate on a standardized time.
- Objective is to streamline contact among the various countries and entities, public and private, that are coordinating trips to and around the moon.
- The idea of timekeeping on the moon is important because it shows the international development of the moon.
- In future, the Martian time zone might be developed along the lines of lunar time.

Several lunar exploration missions are planned by various countries and private operators:

- **M1 lunar lander:** It is built by the Japanese company Ispace. It will try to deploy a rover built by the United Arab Emirates; a robot built by Japan's space agency, JAXA.
- **Nova-C lander:** It is expected to land on the South Pole of the moon.
- **NASA's manned mission:** NASA prepares to send four astronauts into orbit around the moon next year. That mission will pave the way for the first crewed moon landing since Apollo 17 in December 1972.
- **ESA:** It is contributing to NASA's effort to build the Gateway lunar station, which will serve as a way station for future crews on their way to the lunar surface.
- **China:** China completed the construction of its own space station and previously hinted that Chinese astronaut would be on the moon by 2030.

- **South Korea:** It has launched its own lunar spacecraft, Danuri. It also joined India's Chandrayaan-2 mission, as well as lunar missions from NASA and China.

13th MARCH, 2023

NASA-Italian Space Agency to Monitor Air Pollution

- **Context:** Recently, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that it is partnering with the Italian Space Agency to build and launch the Multi-Angle Imager for Aerosols mission (MAIA Mission).

Key Highlights:

- Its aim is to investigate the health impacts of air pollution in the world's most populated cities. Its primary goal is to benefit societal health.
- The MAIA observatory is set to launch before the end of 2024
- The mission will consist of the PLATiNO-2 satellite, which will be provided by ASI, and a science instrument that will be built at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). The mission will collect and analyse data from the observatory, sensors on the ground and atmospheric models.
- The JPL hosts a pointable spectropolarimetric camera which captures images from multiple angles in the ultraviolet, visible, near-infrared and shortwave infrared portions of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- Primary target areas include major urban centres across the world: Los Angeles, Atlanta, Boston, Rome, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Barcelona, Spain, Beijing, Johannesburg, New Delhi, Taipei, Taiwan; and Tel Aviv.

Har Payment Digital Mission

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched the 'Har Payment Digital' mission during Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) 2023.

Key Highlights:

- Under this, the payment system operators (PSOs) will adopt 75 villages across the country and conduct two camps in each of these villages. This is to convert them into digital payment-enabled villages in observance of 75 years of independence.
- PSOs (currently there are 67 PSOs) are entities authorised by RBI to set up and operate a payment system.
- Aim of the mission is to improve awareness and onboard merchants for digital payments.
- The Har Payment Digital campaign aims at reinforcing the ease and convenience of digital payments and facilitating the on boarding of new consumers into the digital fold.

14th MARCH, 2023

Mimeusemia ceylonica

- **Context:** Rare moth species *Mimeusemia ceylonica* has been spotted recently after 127 years.

Key Highlights:

- *Mimeusemia ceylonica* is a moth species belonging to the subfamily Agaristinae and family Noctuidae.
- The species was last sighted 127 years ago at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka in 1893.
- It was first described in 1893 by George Hampson, an English entomologist.
- It was rediscovered during a moth survey conducted at the Agasthyamalai Community-based Conservation Centre (ACCC) situated in the buffer zone of KMTR, Tirunelveli district in 2020.
- It was again spotted at the Vallanaadu Blackbuck Sanctuary in the Thoothukudi district in 2022.

About Kalakkad–Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR):

- The Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) is in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu
- It was declared as the “First Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu” and the 17th Tiger Reserve of the country.

- It was established in 2010.
- It is registered under Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act 1975.
- Objective: focusing on the management of Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve for the conservation of biodiversity.
- KMTR consists of the core area consisting of two adjacent sanctuaries namely Kalakad Wildlife Sanctuary, Mundanthurai Tiger Sanctuary in Tirunelveli District, and part of Veerapuli and Kilamalai Reserve Forests in Kanyakumari District.
- Mundanthurai Tiger Sanctuary was declared as Nation’s first Tiger Sanctuary in 1962.
- Kalakad Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1976 primarily for the conservation of Lion Tailed Macaque
- The river Thamirabarani originates from this tiger reserve.
- The reserve is also known as the “River Sanctuary” with as many as 14 rivers originating from this Tiger Reserve.
- Vegetation: This region has got vegetation types that gradually change from dry thorn forest to dry deciduous.

WHO Report on Sodium Intake Reduction

- **Context:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed the report to monitor progress and identify areas for action in the implementation of sodium reduction policies and other measures.

Key Highlights:

- The world is off-track to achieve its global target of reducing sodium intake by 30 percent in the next two years (by 2025).
- Reducing sodium intake is one of the most cost-effective ways to improve health and reduce the burden of noncommunicable diseases, as it can avert a large number of cardiovascular events and deaths at very low total programme costs.

- The global burden of unhealthy diets constitutes a major public health and development challenge worldwide. Urgent action is required to modify the production and consumption of foods and beverages, including industry manufactured (pre-packaged) food.
- Only 5% of WHO Member States are protected by mandatory and comprehensive sodium reduction policies and 73% of WHO Member States lack full range of implementation of such policies.

India at Academy Awards, 2023

- **Context:** The Elephant Whisperers and RRR became the first ever Indian productions to win the Academic Awards.

Key Highlights:

- Indian documentary The Elephant Whisperers emerged as the winner in the Best Documentary Short category
- The film also highlights the stunning beauty of Tamil Nadu's Mudumalai National Park and gives a peek into the lives of the Kattunayakan, an indigenous community that inhabits parts of South India.
- It also became the first Indian production that has won an Academy Award for the Documentary Short category.
- The 40-minute documentary, directed by Kartiki Gonsalves and produced by Guneet Monga, is based on the life and work of Bomman and his wife Bellie who foster orphaned elephant calves. Bomman and Bellie are both from the Kattunayakan tribe.
- Kattunayakans, one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in India, are settled in parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- SS Rajamouli's RRR became the first Indian feature film to win an Oscar. The film's 'Naatu Naatu' soundtrack by MM Keeravani was awarded the Best Original Song Award
- The song was composed by MM Keeravaani and penned by Chandrabose.

