



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

AUGUST, 2024

Week-4

22-31 August, 2024

★★ Useful for ★★

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

22nd AUGUST 2024

Prime Minister Modi's State Visit to Poland

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a State visit to Poland, it is the first Indian prime minister visit to Poland in 45 years.

Key Highlights

- The visit coincides with the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Poland and India, marking a milestone in the long-standing relationship.
- The talks between the two nations are set to cover a wide array of sectors including agriculture, information technology, security, and eco-friendly technologies, with a particular focus on India's advancements in the space industry.
- The visit signifies a deepening of political and economic ties and holds international significance.

India-Poland Relations

- Diplomatic relations were established in 1954, the two countries shared common ideological perceptions, based on their opposition to colonialism, imperialism and racism.
- The two countries share several chapters of history. During World War II, the Maharaja of Jamnagar provided refuge to several hundred Polish women and children trying to reach the West. A street and a junior high school in Warsaw have been named in his honour.
- Poland continues to be India's largest trading & investment partner in Central & Eastern Europe. Over the period 2013-2023, the total bilateral trade with Poland has witnessed an increase of 192% i.e. from US\$1.95 billion in 2013 to US\$5.72 billion in 2023. The balance of trade continues to be largely in favour of India in 2023.

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

- **Context:** India is on its way to achieve its target of blending 20% of petrol with ethanol by 2025-26.

Key Highlights

- 20% by 2025-26 would mean producing some 1,000 crore litres of ethanol for blending with petrol.
- Taking stock in December 2023, India's ethanol production capacity had already increased to 1,380 crore litres — some 875 crore litres capacity from sugarcane and 505 crore from foodgrains.
- Government policy is that maize as well as surplus rice and damaged grains will be used to feed grain-based distilleries.

About Ethanol

- Ethanol, an anhydrous ethyl alcohol having chemical formula of C_2H_5OH , can be produced from sugarcane, maize, wheat, etc. which are having high starch content.
- In India, ethanol is mainly produced from sugarcane molasses by fermentation process.
- It can be mixed with gasoline to form different blends.

About Ethanol Blending

- Ethanol blending refers to the practice of mixing ethanol with gasoline to create a fuel mixture that can be used in internal combustion engines.
- There are a few common blends:
 - **E10:** This is a mixture of 10% ethanol and 90% gasoline. It is the most common blend and is used widely in many countries.
 - **E15:** This blend contains 15% ethanol and 85% gasoline.
 - **E85:** This is a high-ethanol blend, consisting of 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline. It's used in flex-fuel vehicles designed to run on higher ethanol content.

- As the ethanol molecule contains oxygen, it allows the engine to more completely combust the fuel, resulting in fewer emissions and thereby reducing the occurrence of environmental pollution.

Hayflick Limit

- **Context:** Recently, Biomedical researcher Leonard Hayflick died at the age of 98, who discovered the Hayflick Limit.

About the Hayflick Limit

- It is a concept that fundamentally changed our understanding of ageing by showing that normal somatic cells can divide (and thus reproduce) only a certain number of times.
- It's named after Dr. Leonard Hayflick, a biomedical researcher who made a groundbreaking discovery in the early 1960s.

Key Facts

- There's an in-built cellular clock within our bodies (and in other organisms) that determines how long we can live.
- When these cells reach their division limit, they become senescent—essentially retiring from further replication.
- As these senescent cells accumulate, our bodies begin to age and decline.
- The ultimate Hayflick limit for humans is estimated to be around 125 years. No amount of diet, exercise, or genetic modification can extend life beyond this limit.

23rd AUGUST 2024

Ukraine votes to join ICC

- **Context:** Ukraine's parliament voted to join the International Criminal Court, as it seeks to bring Russia on charges over war crimes.

About International Criminal Court (ICC)

- ICC investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.
- As a court of last resort, it seeks to complement, not replace, national Courts.
- Impetus for the court came from the ad hoc international tribunals set up in the 1990s to address the atrocity crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.
- The Rome Statute laid the foundation for the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002.
- The Rome Statute was adopted in 1998 by the United Nations. It gives legal authority to investigate alleged crimes on the territory of its members or by their nationals, when domestic authorities are "unwilling or unable" to do so.
- 124 countries are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, many countries never signed the treaty, including China, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.
- In February 2024, Armenia became the latest country to join the ICC after ratifying the Rome Statute in 2023.

Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar

- **Context:** Recently, the President of India presented the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar-2024 at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

About the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2024

- It is a prestigious award that honours outstanding contributions to science and technology, and recognises exceptional scientists across various categories.

- **Eligibility:** There are no age limits for any prizes under the award categories. These are open to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) (maximum one for Vigyan Ratna; three for the Vigyan Shri and the VY-SSB; and no award for the Vigyan Team awards).
- These awards do not include any cash component; instead, they bestow a certificate and a medallion on the awardee.
- A committee (constituted annually) under the chairmanship of the principal scientific adviser selects the awardees. However, the members of the committee are ineligible for the award during their tenure.

Award Categories and Awardees

- **Vigyan Ratna Award:** It celebrates lifetime contributions in any field of Science and Technology.
- **Vigyan Shri Awards:** These acknowledge distinguished contributions to Science and Technology.
- **Vigyan Yuva-SSB Award:** It recognises exceptional contributions by young scientists.
- **Vigyan Team Award:** Given to teams of three or more scientists for groundbreaking research.

24th AUGUST 2024

Prime Minister Modi's State visit to Ukraine

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a State Visit to Ukraine.

Key Highlights

- The "landmark" visit is the first by an Indian Prime Minister since Ukraine became independent in 1991.
- Both Leaders expressed mutual interest in working towards elevating bilateral relations from a comprehensive partnership to a strategic partnership in the future.
- The visit saw the signing of four agreements. The four agreements include humanitarian assistance

by India for high-capacity development projects, cooperation in agriculture and food industry, cultural cooperation and an agreement on drug quality and regulation.

India's Position on Russia-Ukraine War

- India chose to distance itself from the US-led Western bloc's position of imposing sanctions on Russia, but it also expressed concern at the killing of innocent children.
- India has conveyed to Russia that "this is not the era of war". This signalled that India doesn't turn a blind eye to Russian actions and that didn't go unnoticed by the Western bloc.
- India firmly believes Russia and Ukraine need to talk to each other, and not talk at each other — to put an end to the war.

India's Space Sector GDP

- **Context:** India's space sector has directly contributed about \$24 billion (20,000 crore) to India's Gross Domestic Product over the last decade.

Key facts

- India's space sector has benefitted from decades of consistent investment, with \$13 billion invested in the last decade. It is the 8th largest space economy (in terms of funding) in the world.
- In the recently announced Union Budget for 2024-25, India's space sector received a significant boost. The Central government allocated 13,042.75 crore to support space-related initiatives.
- The Sector has supported 96,000 jobs in the public and private sector.
- For every dollar produced by the space sector, there was a multiplier effect of \$2.54 to the Indian economy and India's space force was 2.5 times more productive than the country's broader industrial workforce.
- The Indian space sector was diversifying and now had 700 companies including 200 start-ups and had seen revenues grow to \$6.3 billion in 2023, which was about 1.5% of the global space market.

- Satellite communications contributed 54% to the space economy, followed by navigation (26%) and launches (11%).
- The main industries supported by the space sector were telecom (25%), information technology (10%) and administrative services (7%).

FDI in space sector

- Under the amended FDI policy, 100% FDI is allowed in the space sector. The entry route for the various activities are as follows:
 - **Up to 74% under Automatic route:** Satellites-Manufacturing & Operation, Satellite Data Products and Ground Segment & User Segment.
 - **Up to 49% under Automatic route:** Launch Vehicles and associated systems or subsystems, Creation of Spaceports for launching and receiving Spacecraft.
 - **Up to 100% under Automatic route:** Manufacturing of components and systems/ sub-systems for satellites, ground segment and user segment.

World's Second Largest Diamond

- **Context:** The world's second-largest 2,492-carat diamond has been discovered in Botswana at a mine owned by Lucara Diamond, a Canadian firm. The largest diamond – 3,106-carat – was found in South Africa in 1905, also known as the Cullinan Diamond.

About Botswana

- Botswana is situated in the Southern African region. It is a land-locked country dominated in geographical terms by the Kalahari Desert.
- It is bordered by Zambia and Zimbabwe to the northeast, Namibia to the north and west, and South Africa to the south and southeast.
- Botswana's climate is semi-arid though it is hot and dry for much of the year.
- Botswana's highest point is Tsodilo Hills
- It is home of the world's largest elephant population

25th AUGUST 2024

PM-WANI Scheme

- **Context:** Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has released a draft Telecommunication Tariff (70th Amendment) Order, 2024 on "Regulatory framework for PM-WANI scheme".

About PM-WANI Scheme

- Prime Minister's WiFi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) was launched by the Department of Telecommunication in 2020.
- The scheme aims to enhance the proliferation of public WiFi hotspots to create robust digital communications infrastructure in the country, especially in rural areas.
- The government aims to increase employment for small and micro-entrepreneurs and provide low-cost internet to the underserved urban poor and rural households.
- The scheme encourages local shops and establishments to provide Wi-Fi for last-mile internet delivery which does not require a license or charge a registration fee.

Deen Dayal SPARSH Yojana

- **Context:** The Department of Posts has launched a philately scholarship scheme, Deen Dayal SPARSH Yojana, to promote and bring philately into the mainstream of the education system.

Key Highlights

- The scheme proposed to grant a scholarship of 6,000/- per annum to those meritorious students whose academic records are good as well as who have adopted Philately as a hobby.
- Scholarships will be provided at all India levels and each Postal circle will provide a maximum of 40 scholarships to 10 students of class 6, 7, 8, and 9 each.
- The selection for scholarship will be done on the basis of performance in a Philately written Quiz.

- One should be a student of a recognized school in India. The concerned school should have a Philately club and the candidate should be a member of the club.
- In case the school does not have a Philately Club, the name of a student of that school who has his/her own Philately Deposit account can also be considered.
- The candidate must have secured at least 60 percent marks or equivalent grade/grade points in the last final examination. There will be a relaxation of 5% for SC/ST candidates.

PM-JANMAN Mission

- **Context:** The Union government has launched a nationwide campaign to inform and deliver benefits to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN).

About PM-JANMAN

- Launched on Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas (15th November, 2023), from the Khunti District of Jharkhand, it aims to provide essential services like housing, clean water, sanitation, education, healthcare, and better road and telecom connectivity to PVTG families.
- The mission focuses on 11 critical interventions related to 9 key aligned Ministries/Departments, with budgetary outlay of Rs. 24,104 crores (Central Share: Rs.15,336 crore and State Share: Rs.8,768 crore) from FY 2023-24 to 2025-26, under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST).

26th AUGUST 2024

Unified Pension Scheme

- **Context:** Recently, the Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, approved the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) by replacing the National Pension System (NPS).

Key Facts

- Based on the recommendations of T. V. Somanathan Committee (2023), it will be effective from April 1, 2025.
- The UPS proposes to amalgamate advantages of both Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and New Pension Scheme (NPS).
- It represents a forward-looking approach to retirement planning in India, aiming to provide a secure and sustainable pension system for all eligible employees.
- It aims to provide long-term financial security to government employees while maintaining flexibility and choice.

Key Features of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)

- Under the UPS, eligible employees are assured a pension equal to 50% of their average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months prior to superannuation. For service periods between 10 and 25 years, the pension will be proportional.
- Employees with a minimum qualifying service of 25 years will receive the full assured pension. In case of an employee's demise, their family will receive an assured pension equal to 60% of the employee's pension before their demise.
- Upon superannuation after a minimum of 10 years of service, employees will receive an assured minimum pension of Rs 10,000 per month. It ensures a safety net for retirees.
 - The UPS promises central government employees who have completed at least 25 years of service a guaranteed pension.
 - It is calculated as half of their average basic salary over the 12 months preceding superannuation.
- The UPS applies inflation indexation to the assured pension, assured family pension, and assured minimum pension.
 - In the form of Dearness Relief based on All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (AICPI-IW), similar to service employees.

- In addition to gratuity, 1/10th of monthly salary+ Dearness Allowance for every completed six months of service.
- Employees choosing the UPS will continue to contribute 10% of their salary.
 - The government's contribution will increase from 14% to 18.5%.
 - It ensures that employees do not face any additional financial burden.

South China Sea Dispute

- **Context:** The Philippine accused China of carrying out "repeated aggressive, unprofessional and illegal" actions in the South China Sea.

Background

- The South China Sea, located south of China, is bordered by Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.
- The tensions between China and other nations have escalated in recent years, largely due to China's rise as a global power.
- The South China Sea is of immense strategic importance, and China seeks to control it to assert dominance in the region.

About Nine-Dash Line

- China's territorial claims in the South China Sea are marked by the "nine-dash line," which was first issued in 1947.
- This line encompasses nearly 90% of the South China Sea, including waters and islands.
- China argues that its claims are based on "historical maritime rights," though it has not provided clear coordinates for the line.
- To reinforce its claims, China has engaged in activities such as constructing artificial islands, military installations, and ports, particularly in the Paracel and Spratly Islands.

BioE3 Policy

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet cleared a proposal to bolster biotechnology-based manufacturing, called BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) Policy.

Key Highlights

- To address the national priorities, the BioE3 Policy would broadly focus on the following strategic/thematic sectors:
 - high value bio-based chemicals, biopolymers & enzymes;
 - smart proteins & functional foods;
 - precision biotherapeutics;
 - climate resilient agriculture;
 - carbon capture & its utilisation;
 - marine and space research.
- The policy includes innovation-driven support to R&D and entrepreneurship across thematic sectors.
- **Significance:**
 - The policy will accelerate technology development and commercialization by establishing Biomanufacturing & Bio-AI hubs and Bio-foundry.
 - Along with prioritizing regenerative bioeconomy models of green growth, this policy will facilitate expansion of India's skilled workforce and provide a surge in job creation.
 - The Policy will further strengthen Government's initiatives such as 'Net Zero' carbon economy & 'Lifestyle for Environment' and will steer India on the path of accelerated 'Green Growth' by promoting 'Circular Bioeconomy'.
 - It will foster an advanced future that is more sustainable, innovative, and responsive to global challenges and lays down the Bio-vision for Viksit Bharat.

27th AUGUST 2024

Vigyan Dhara

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet approved continuation of the three umbrella schemes, merged into a unified central sector scheme namely 'Vigyan Dhara' of Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Key Facts

- DST acts as the nodal department for organising, coordinating and promoting S&T activities in the country.
- Three central sector umbrella schemes were being implemented by DST towards promoting Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in the country:
 - Science and Technology (S&T) Institutional and Human Capacity Building,
 - Research and Development and
 - Innovation, Technology Development and Deployment.
- These three schemes have been merged into the unified scheme 'Vigyan Dhara'.

About Vigyan Dhara

- The objective was to focus scientific energies on some specific areas that were key to India's sustainable growth and development in the coming decades.
- Implementation of the scheme will strengthen the S&T infrastructure of the country by fostering well-equipped R&D labs in the Academic Institutions.
- The scheme endeavours to promote research in areas such as basic research with access to the international mega facilities, translational research in sustainable energy, water, etc. and collaborative research through international bilateral and multilateral cooperation.
- All the programs proposed under the 'Vigyan Dhara' scheme would be aligned with the 5-year goals of DST towards realising the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

- The research and development component of the scheme will be aligned in line with the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).
- Internships would be arranged for students in the 11th and 12th grades and fellowships for research at the graduate and postgraduate level.

Lakhpati Didi Yojana

- **Context:** Recently, the Prime Minister participated in 'Lakhpati Didi Sammelan' at Jalgaon, Maharashtra.

Key Highlights

- It is an inspiring gathering that recognises and celebrates the achievements of women who have become 'Lakhpati Didis' – those who earn an annual sustainable income of at least 1 lakh (approximately \$1,350).
- This income is calculated for at least four agricultural seasons and/or business cycles, with an average monthly income exceeding Rupees Ten Thousand (Rs. 10,000), so that it is sustainable.

About Lakhpati Didi Yojana

- It aims to uplift women in rural areas by providing them with skill development, training programmes, and financial support, organised under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).
- It facilitates diversified livelihood activities, by ensuring convergence across all Government departments/ Ministries, Private sector and Market players. The strategy includes focused planning, implementation and monitoring at all levels.
- The government disburses funds to self-help groups (SHGs) through a revolving fund.
- Since the inception of the Lakhpati Didi Yojana, one crore women have already achieved Lakhpati status, and the government has set a target of three crore Lakhpati Didis, reflecting its commitment to women's economic empowerment.

Tanager-1 Satellite

- **Context:** NASA has recently launched the Tanager-1 satellite to track methane emissions.

Key Facts

- The satellite will use imaging spectrometer technology to track methane and carbon dioxide emissions.
- It will do so by measuring hundreds of wavelengths of light that are reflected by Earth's surface.
 - Different compounds in the planet's atmosphere — including methane and carbon dioxide — absorb different wavelengths of light, leaving spectral "fingerprints" that the imaging spectrometer can identify.
 - These infrared fingerprints can enable researchers to pinpoint and quantify strong greenhouse gas emissions.

About Methane

- Methane is an invisible but strong greenhouse gas, and the second largest contributor to global warming after carbon dioxide, responsible for 30 percent of global heating since the Industrial Revolution.
- According to the United Nations Environment Programme, over a period of 20 years, methane is 80 times more potent at warming than carbon dioxide.
- It also contributes to the formation of ground-level ozone that causes around one million premature deaths annually.

28th AUGUST 2024

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

- **Context:** Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched in 2014 under the Ministry of Finance has completed a decade of successful implementation.

Key Features of the Jan Dhan Yojana

- PMJDY being the largest financial inclusion initiative to provide support to the marginalised and economically backward sections through its financial inclusion interventions.
- Under the PMJDY, individuals can open a basic savings bank deposit (BSBD) account at any bank branch or through a Business Correspondent ('Bank Mitra').
- **Key benefits of the scheme include:**
 - No requirement to maintain a minimum balance in PMJDY accounts
 - Interest earned on deposits in PMJDY accounts
 - Provision of a RuPay Debit card to account holders
 - Accident insurance cover of Rs 100,000 (increased to Rs 200,000 for new accounts opened after August 28, 2018) with the RuPay card
 - Overdraft facility of up to Rs 10,000 for eligible account holders
 - Eligibility for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), and Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Bank (MUDRA) scheme.

Right to Disconnect

- **Context:** Recently, Australia has implemented a regulation known as the "right to disconnect," which permits employees to disregard communications from their employers after hours.

About the Right to Disconnect of Australia

- It allows employees to ignore communications from their employers after regular working hours.
- The primary goal of this policy is to alleviate the stress associated with being constantly available and responsive outside of work hours.
- It recognises that employees need dedicated downtime to recharge and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

- The Australian government joins more than 20 other countries in adopting similar rules, mostly in Europe and Latin America.

Minimum Age of Marriage for Women

- **Context:** In a significant move towards gender equality and promoting higher education, the Himachal Pradesh State Assembly recently passed the 'Prohibition of Child Marriage (Himachal Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2024'.

Key facts

- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 was enacted to prevent the solemnisation of child marriages and address related matters.
- The Bill proposes raising the minimum age of marriage for girls from 18 to 21 years. It aims to provide gender equality and create opportunities for girls to pursue higher education and personal development.
- Himachal Pradesh proudly claims the title of being the first state in India to enact legislation increasing the marriage age of girls to 21.

29th AUGUST 2024

National Industrial Corridor Development Programme

- **Context:** Government has approved 12 new industrial smart cities under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP).

Key Highlights:

- The projects span across ten states and are strategically planned along six major corridors. These are Khurpia in Uttarakhand, Gaya in Bihar, Rajpura-Patiala in Punjab, Zaheerabad in Telangana, Dighi in Maharashtra, Orvakal and Kopparthi in Andhra Pradesh, Palakkad in Kerala, Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan, and Agra and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh.

- NICDP is designed to foster a vibrant industrial ecosystem by facilitating investments from both large anchor industries and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These industrial nodes will act as catalysts for achieving \$2 trillion in exports by 2030, reflecting the government's vision of a self-reliant and globally competitive India.
- The new industrial cities will be developed as greenfield smart cities of global standards, this approach ensures that the cities are equipped with advanced infrastructure that supports sustainable and efficient industrial operations.

About National Industrial Corridor Development Programme

- It is India's most ambitious infrastructure programme aiming to develop new industrial cities as "Smart Cities" and converging next generation technologies across infrastructure sectors.
- These are aimed at development of futuristic industrial cities in India which can compete with the best manufacturing and investment destinations in the world.
- The same will create employment opportunities and economic growth leading to overall socio-economic development.
- 32 Projects in 4 Phases under 11 Corridors forming part of National Infrastructure Pipeline

Satish Kumar: New Chairman of Railway Board

- **Context:** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved the appointment of Satish Kumar as the Chairman and CEO of Railway Board.

Key Facts

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) is a high-level committee headed by the PM responsible for appointing senior officials to key positions in the central government and public sector undertakings.

- The Railway Board was established in 1905 as a part of the British Indian government's efforts to better manage the expanding railway network.
- It serves as the apex body responsible for the administration, operation, and policy formulation of Indian Railways.

30 AUGUST 2024

INS Arighaat

- **Context:** India's second nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, the INS Arighaat, was commissioned into service at Visakhapatnam

About INS Arighaat

- It features several technological upgrades compared to its predecessor, INS Arihant.
- Both submarines share the same reactor and dimensions but Arighaat incorporates advanced design and manufacturing technology.
- The submarine involved advanced technology, special materials, and skilled workmanship. It includes indigenous systems and equipment developed by Indian scientists and industry.
- INS Arighaat enhances India's nuclear triad, which includes land-based missiles, aircraft, and nuclear-powered submarines (SSBNs) with ballistic missiles. It strengthens India's nuclear deterrence and contributes to maintaining regional strategic balance.

SHe-Box

- **Context:** The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched SHe-Box, a centralised portal for registering and monitoring complaints of sexual harassment of women at the workplace.

Key highlights

- It serves as a centralized repository of information related to Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) formed, encompassing both the government and private sectors.

- It offers a common platform to file complaints, track their status, and ensure a time-bound processing of complaints by ICs.
- It also provides assured redressal of complaints and a streamlined process for all stakeholders.
- The portal through a designated nodal officer will enable real-time monitoring of complaints.

31st AUGUST 2024

Cyclone Asna

- **Context:** As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Cyclone Asna has formed over the Kutch coast in Gujarat and adjoining areas of Pakistan.

Key facts

- This is the first cyclonic storm in the Arabian Sea in August since 1976.
- The name Asna, which means "the one to be acknowledged or praised", has been given by Pakistan.
- Between 1891 and 2023, only three cyclonic storms formed in the Arabian Sea in August (in 1976, 1964, and 1944).

About Cyclones

- The word Cyclone is derived from the Greek word Cyclos meaning the coils of a snake. It was coined by Henry Peddington because the tropical storms in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea appear like coiled serpents of the sea.
- Cyclones are caused by atmospheric disturbances around a low-pressure area distinguished by swift and often destructive air circulation. The air circulates inward in an anticlockwise direction in the Northern hemisphere
- **Cyclones are given many names in different regions of the world:** They are known as typhoons in the China Sea and Pacific Ocean; hurricanes in the West Indian islands in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean; tornados in the Guinea lands of West Africa and southern USA.; willy-willies in north-western Australia and tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean.

T.V. Somanathan: India's New Cabinet Secretary

- **Context:** Recently, Dr. T.V. Somanathan assumed as the Cabinet Secretary after the superannuation of his predecessor, Rajiv Gauba.

About the Cabinet Secretary

- He is the administrative head of the Cabinet Secretariat who is also the ex-officio Chairman of the Civil Services Board, and serves as the head of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).
- He plays a critical role in coordinating policy implementation, inter-ministerial communication, and administrative matters at the highest level.

Roles and Functions

- **Coordinating Cabinet Meetings:** It ensures smooth functioning of Cabinet meetings, where crucial decisions are made. These meetings involve discussions on policy matters, legislative proposals, and administrative issues.
- **Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** It acts as a bridge between various ministries and departments by facilitating communication, resolves conflicts, and ensures effective implementation of government policies.
- **Advising the Prime Minister:** It provides expert advice to the Prime Minister on administrative matters, policy formulation, and governance. Its insights are invaluable in shaping the country's direction.
- **Administrative Leadership:** As the senior-most civil servant, the Cabinet Secretary leads the bureaucracy. His decisions impact the functioning of the entire administrative machinery.

Samudra Pratap

- **Context:** The indigenously built pollution control vessel of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), Samudra Pratap, was launched in Goa.

Key Highlights

- The Ship has been built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).

- The vessel will help to check the oil spillage in the country's sea coast. It contains specialized equipment for the containment, recovery, separation, and dispersal of pollutants.
- Samudra Pratap can recover oil at a rate of 300 tonnes per hour and has a storage capacity for 300 tonnes or 1,000 tonnes in inflatable barges.

Vulture Count 2024

- **Context:** The World Wide Fund for Nature-India has launched Vulture Count 2024.

Key Highlights

- It is a nationwide citizen-science initiative designed to monitor and conserve the country's rapidly declining vulture populations
- The launch of the initiative coincides with International Vulture Awareness Day on September 7, 2024.

About Vulture

- Vultures are one of the 22 species of large carrion-eating birds that live mostly in the tropics and subtropics.
- India is home to nine species of Vulture namely the Oriental white-backed, Long-billed, Slender-billed, Himalayan, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon.
- They serve as nature's clean-up crew by feeding on the infected carcass which kills the Pathogens and breaks the chain of infections.
- Vultures are critically important to the Parsi community as it leaves its dead bodies atop the Towers of Silence to be consumed by vultures.
- Use of toxic non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like Diclofenac, Lack of Nesting Trees, Electrocution by power lines, Food Dearth and Contaminated Food, Pesticide poisoning etc. threaten vultures across the country.
- India has lost 99 percent of the population of the three species — Oriental White-Backed Vulture, Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture.