

## European Political Community

### ❖ Context

- During the conference on the future of Europe in Strasbourg, **France has proposed a new political organisation for non-EU countries** of the continent that share EU values but are not part of the bloc.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- The new union or political organisation will be **opened to those who haven't joined the EU or who have left it**, like the UK.
- The proposal is with reference to wide acceptance of the fact that it may take years or even decades for Ukraine to meet the criteria to join the EU while the lowering of standards or conditions, to fasten the process, may not be acceptable to many members.

### ❖ Criteria For Becoming An EU Member

- It is known as the **Copenhagen criteria**.
- The main criteria are:
  - Free-market economy.
  - Stable democracy and the rule of law.
  - Acceptance of all EU legislation, including the euro.

### ❖ Procedure

- **First Stage:** a country is granted the status of an official **candidate** for membership.

- **Second Stage:** Negotiations between the EU and the candidate country start. It includes:
  - Adoption of EU law into national law.
  - The preparation for the implementation of this law in judicial, administrative economic areas and other reforms.
- **Third Stage:** The candidate country has met all accession criteria and is ready to become part of the EU. The accession treaty is signed and then ratified by the candidate country and the representatives of the existing EU countries.
- There are **Special EU Accession Procedures for Western Balkan countries** as the same have to undergo stabilisation and association process as well.

### ❖ Current Status

- **Candidate countries:** Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and the Republic of North Macedonia. **Potential candidate countries:** Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- **Eastern Partnership:** Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova; EU intends to help these three countries to gradually adopt democratic and legal reforms that would bring them closer to the EU.
- **Last country to become a member of the EU:** Croatia in 2013.

## Use Of Aadhar Data In Crime Investigations

### ❖ Context

- UIDAI has opposed a petition by Delhi police seeking directions from Delhi HC to allow investigators to match a suspect's picture and latent fingerprints from the crime scene with Aadhar database to help identify the accused.

### ❖ Protection Of Information In The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery Of Financial And Other Subsidies, Benefits And Services) Act, 2016

- **Section 28(2):** UIDAI shall ensure confidentiality of identity information and authentication records of individuals.
- **Section 28(5):** UIDAI, or its officers/employees shall not reveal information stored in **Central Identities Data Repository** or authentication record to anyone, whether during or after the service.
- **Section 29:**
  - It restricts the sharing of **core biometric information** with anyone.
  - The **core information can only be used for generation of Aadhaar numbers and authentication records**.
- Identity information, other than core information, can only be shared, as per provisions of the Act.

- **Section 33:** The identity information and authentication records (**other than core biometric information**), can be disclosed.
  - In pursuant to an **HC order** after giving the opportunity to UIDAI of being heard.
  - Authorised by **officer of rank of Secretary to the Government of India**, in the interest of national security subject to following conditions:
    - Such direction would be reviewed by an **oversight committee** which will consist of:
      - Cabinet Secretary.
      - Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs.
      - Secretary, Department of Electronics and IT.
    - The direction will be **valid for 3 months**, which can be extended for further 3 months after a review by the oversight committee.

## Naming Of The Tropical Cyclones And Cyclone Asani

### ❖ Context

- Recently, **IMD has predicted cyclone Asani**, the severe cyclone developing over the Bay of Bengal, will come closest to the east coast near Odisha and Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday before recurving off land.

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## ❖ Key Highlights

- The Asani cyclone storm originated in the Bay of Bengal. It is moving towards the Indian Eastern Coast (Odisha and Andhra Pradesh). It will most likely cause heavy rains and storm-like conditions in the two states.
- The name Cyclone Asani has been given by Sri Lanka. It means 'wrath' in Sinhalese.
- Previous Cyclones that Hit India in 2020-21- Tauktae, Yaas, Nisarga, Amphan. The next storm that would hit the coasts would be named by Thailand and later by India.
- Ghurni, Probaho, Jhar and Murasu are the upcoming names from India.



## ❖ Naming of the Tropical Cyclones

- In 2000, a group of nations called WMO/ESCAP (World Meteorological Organization / United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) decided to start naming cyclones in the region.
  - This group of nations comprises Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
- After each country sent in suggestions, the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones (PTC) finalized the list.
- The WMO/ESCAP expanded to include five more countries in 2018 - Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The list of 169 cyclone names released by IMD in April 2020 were provided by these countries: 13 suggestions from each of the 13 countries.
- **Significance:** It becomes easier for people to remember, as opposed to numbers and technical terms. It is easy to identify individual cyclones, create awareness of its development, and rapidly disseminate warnings to increase community preparedness.

## MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

### ❖ Context

- Parliamentarians cannot utilize interest accrued on MPLADS funds for development works with the Center revising the norms for utilization of money under various central sector schemes.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- According to the revised procedure for flow of funds under the CSS, including MPLADS, of the Finance Ministry, all interest earnings should be compulsorily remitted to the Consolidated Fund of India. Earlier, the interest accrued on the fund used to be added to the MPLADS account and could be used for the development projects.
- The proposed changes are aimed at timely and efficient utilization of funds.

### ❖ About MPLADS

- It is a programme 1<sup>st</sup> launched during the Narasimha Rao Government in 1993. It was aimed towards providing funds for developmental works recommended by individual MPs. The MPs were entitled to recommend works to the tune of Rs 1 crore annually between 1994-95 and 1997-98,. Later on the annual entitlement was enhanced to Rs 2 crore.
- In 2011-12, the annual entitlement was raised to Rs 5 crore per MP. The MPLADS is a Central Sector Scheme fully funded by the Government of India. The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable.

- **Features:** MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 percent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population. Lok Sabha Members can recommend works within their Constituencies. Elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works within the State of Election (with select exceptions). Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.
- **Nodal Ministry:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme.
- **Implementation:** The District Authority is responsible for overall coordination and supervision of works under scheme at district level. At least 10% of the projects under implementation in the district are to be inspected every year by the district authority.

## News in Between the Lines

### Bond Yields

#### ❖ Context

- Indian government bond yields have risen steadily in recent days, with the benchmark 10-year yield spiking to a three-year high of 7.47 % on May 9.

#### ❖ Key Highlights

- **The reasons:** A surge in global oil prices, high inflation and a large government borrowing programme.

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$$\text{Bond Yield Formula} = \frac{\text{Annual Coupon Payment}}{\text{Bond Price}}$$

- The government reportedly wants the central bank to buy back government securities (G-Secs), a move that might lead to tempering of yields from the current levels.

### ❖ Bond

- A bond is an instrument to borrow money.
- A bond could be floated/issued by a country's government or by a company to raise funds. Since government bonds (referred to as G-secs in India, Treasury in the US, and Gilts in the UK) come with the sovereign's guarantee, they are considered one of the safest investments.

### ❖ Bond Yields

- A bond's yield is the return an investor expects to receive each year over its term to maturity. If the investor holds the bond to maturity, she/he will be guaranteed to get the principal amount back plus the interest. However, a bond does not necessarily have to be held to maturity by the investors. Instead, investors may sell them for a higher or lower price to other investors. Bond yields are inversely correlated to bond prices. When prices rise, yields fall & vice versa. If interest rates were to fall in value, the bond's price would rise.

## PM-WANI



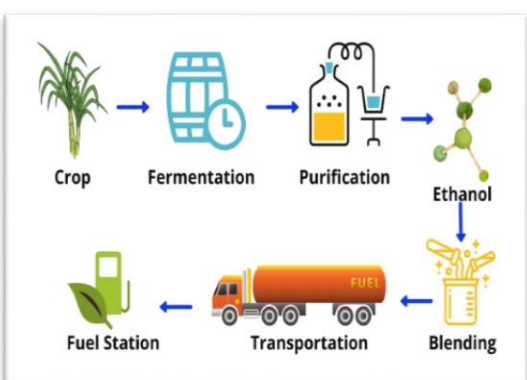
### ❖ Context

- Recently, RailTel launched Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) scheme based access to its Public WiFi services across 100 railway stations having 2,384 WiFi hotspots in 22 states. RailTel is a mini Ratna PSU.

### ❖ About PM-WANI

- PM WANI (Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) is a scheme meant to increase Wi-fi access throughout the country.
- It was announced by the Department of Telecommunications. This was first recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in 2017. It aims to increase internet connectivity across the country by implementing a decentralized system of public access points. The objective is to provide public Wi-Fi service through Public Data Offices (PDOs) spread across the length and breadth of the country just like what PCOs (Public Call Offices) did for telephone spread in India. The Public Wi-Fi Networks will be set up by Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs). The Public Data Offices (PDOs) will be there with no requirement of the license, registration, or any other fees.
- **Significance:** Through this initiative, a boost in ease of doing business would be given to the entrepreneurs and employment opportunities in the country.
  - This move would also expedite the process of proliferation of broadband internet services through a public Wi-Fi network.
  - It is another step towards Digital India.

## Ethanol Blending



### ❖ Context

- The level of ethanol blending in petrol in India has reached 9.99 per cent.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- India had targeted 10 percent ethanol blending in petrol by the end of 2022 and 20 per cent blending by 2030. The Center has also targeted 5 percent blending of biodiesel with diesel by 2030. The ethanol blending programme is aimed at reducing the country's dependence on crude oil imports, cutting carbon emissions and boosting farmers' incomes.

### ❖ Ethanol Blending

- Ethanol, an anhydrous ethyl alcohol having chemical formula of C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH, 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. As the ethanol molecule contains oxygen, it allows the engine to more completely combust the fuel, resulting in fewer emissions & thereby reducing the occurrence of environmental pollution.
- Since ethanol is produced from plants that harness the power of the sun, ethanol is also considered as renewable fuel.

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## Europe Day



### ❖ Context

- A wide range of activities - online and on-site - are held across the EU member states, as well as in the home of the EU institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg & Strasbourg, marking the celebration of Europe Day on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- It commemorates the signing of the '**Schuman Declaration**' on 9 May 1950 which ultimately laid the foundation of the EU.
- Presented by **French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman**, it made war between the historic rivals, France and Germany, materially impossible, and thus led to the peace and unity in the continent.
- **To prevent any war in the future**, European governments concluded that the **merging of economic interests would be the first step** towards a more united Europe. It proposed the creation of a **European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)**, whose members would pool coal and steel production.
- The ECSC was established with the signing of the **Treaty of Paris** on 18 April 1951. The founding members of ECSC include **France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg**. However, the membership was left open to other countries.

## AIM PRIME



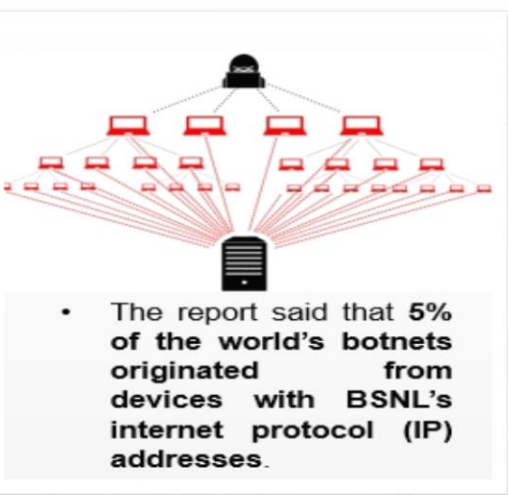
### ❖ Context

- The **AIM-PRIME** Playbook was launched at an event marking the culmination of the nationwide **AIM-PRIME program**, an initiative of **Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog**.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- PRIME stands for **Program for Researchers in Innovation, Market Readiness & Entrepreneurship**.
- The program was designed to address the **key challenge** today that is to **convert the publicly funded R&D capabilities into products and services** in the market.
- It was aimed at promoting early-stage science-based, deep technology ideas to market through **training and guidance** over a period of 12 months using a blended learning curriculum.
- It was being implemented by Venture Centre, Pune and was supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Office of Principal Scientific Advisor. Venture Centre is a non-profit incubator hosted by the CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory, Pune.

## Distributed Denial Of Service (DDoS) Attack



### ❖ Context

- According to a report published by US-based cyber security firm A10 Networks last week, **India hosts 10% of the world's bot networks, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the world after China**.
- Russian cyber security firm Kaspersky's quarterly DDoS tracker also highlighted that 12.8% of global botnets found in Q4 2021 were in India.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- A botnet comprises a **swarm of connected machines**, which are typically exploited by cyber attackers operating from a remote location.
- **Unpatched computers, prevalence of legacy software and misconfigured smart and connected devices** help hackers to convert machines into botnets.
- They install malware on these systems to get **administrator access** to them, and use them for various purposes.
- Botnets can be used to **ping websites and overload servers** with heavy traffic, bringing them down, in what is called a DDoS attack. Globally, target sectors for DDoS attackers include **telecom firms, government infrastructure, healthcare providers and even big technology firms**.
- A10 Networks' report noted that state-run telco **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) was the fourth most exploited company** in the world, in terms of their cyber infrastructure being used for botnets.

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DELHI MUKHERJEE NAGAR: 9205274741, 42 | LAXMI NAGAR : 9205212500, 9205962002 | RAJENDRA NAGAR: 9205274743 | UTTAR PRADESH PRAYAGRAJ: 0532-2260189, 8853467068 | LUCKNOW (ALIGANJ): 0522-4025825, 9506256789 | LUCKNOW (GOMTI NAGAR): 7234000501, 7234000502 | GREATER NOIDA: 9205336037, 38 | KANPUR: 7887003962, 7897003962 | GORAKHPUR : 7080847474, 9161947474 | ODISHA BHUBANESWAR: 9818244644/7656949029

