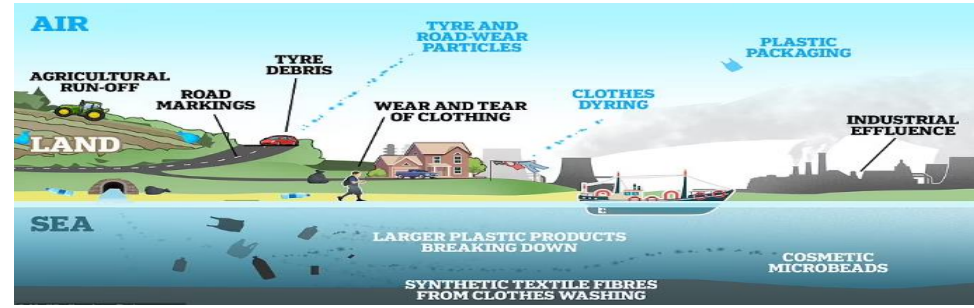


Microplastics

❖ Context

- Recently a **research** was published in a scientific journal, 'The Cryosphere' which observes that **for the first time, microplastics have been found in freshly fallen snow in Antarctica.**



- A researcher collected snow samples from **19 sites** in the Ross Island region of Antarctica and found that **all contained microplastics.**
- These particles, **due to their light weight and low density,** might have **traveled through air** from more than 6,000 km away.
- There is also a possibility that the **human presence in Antarctica created a microplastic 'footprint'.**
- Of the 13 different plastic types found, **the most common was polyethylene terephthalate (PET).**
 - PET IS a type of plastic used in everyday items such as clothes, plastic bottles, packaging etc.
- **Significance of the Discovery:**
 - It shows that the **spread of microplastics is so widespread,** that even the remotest and least habitable places in the world are now infested by these particles.
 - The presence of these particles can **pose a huge threat to Antarctica's distinctive ecosystem.**
 - It can also **worsen the impact of climate change.**

❖ Microplastics

- Microplastics are **tiny plastic debris** that are smaller than 5 mm in length, tinier than even a grain of rice.
- **There are two types of microplastics-**
 - **Primary microplastics are tiny particles:**
 - They are purposely designed as such for commercial use, like in **cosmetics, nurdles-plastic pellets** used in industrial manufacturing and in **fibers from synthetic textiles like nylon.**
 - **Secondary microplastics** are formed through the **degradation of larger plastic items** like bottles, fishing nets and plastic bags.
 - This occurs through exposure to the environment, like radiation from the sun, wind and ocean waves.
- Microplastics are **not biodegradable** and once they are found in the environment, they begin to accumulate.
- They can be **toxic for plants and animals.**

30 Years of India-ASEAN Relations

❖ Context

- India is hosting the two-day conclave to mark the 30th anniversary of its relations with the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

❖ ASEAN & India

- The ASEAN comprises Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar.



- The **ASEAN-India dialogue relations** started with the establishment of a sectoral partnership in **1992.**
- This graduated to **full dialogue partnership** in **December 1995** and **summit-level partnership** in **2002.**

- India at the 12th ASEAN India Summit and the 9th East Asia Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, in November, 2014, formally enunciated the **Act East Policy.**
- The main forum for ASEAN security dialogue is the **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).** India has been attending annual meetings of this forum since 1996 and has actively participated in its various activities.

- The **ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)** is the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN.
- The **ADMM+** brings together Defence Ministers from the 10 ASEAN nations plus Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States on a biannual basis.

❖ ASEAN India Engagements in Maritime Domain

- ASEAN lies at the very centre of the chief causes of global consternation, amidst the troubles and turmoil of the South and East China Seas.
- ASEAN's initiatives in the maritime domain involve multilateral aspects, which are deliberated upon via the **ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF)** and the **Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).**
- **India has been an integral member of the EAMF** since its inception in 2012.
- Of ASEAN's members, India obliges towards the conduct of coordinated patrols (**CORPATs**) with **Indonesia and Thailand,** aimed at inhibiting **maritime piracy.**

Face to Face Centres



Inter-State Council

❖ Context

- Recently, Tamil Nadu CM wrote to the PM of India asking that **at least three meetings of the Inter-State Council should be held every year to “strengthen the spirit of cooperative federalism”**.

❖ Key Highlights

- Stalin has flagged the **lack of regular meetings**.
- He observed that :
 - The Council has **met only once in the last six years**.
 - There has been **no meeting since July 2016**.
 - Since its constitution in 1990, **the body has met only 11 times**.
 - Although its procedure states it should meet at least three times every year.
- **Reconstitution of the Council** was carried out last month.
 - The body will now have **10 Union Ministers as permanent invitees**.
 - The **standing committee of the Council** has been reconstituted with the Home Minister as Chairman.
 - Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, UP, and Gujarat are some of the other standing committee members.

❖ Inter-State Council

- **About:**
 - It is a mechanism that was constituted **“to support Center-State and Inter-State coordination and cooperation in India”**.
 - It serves as a **forum for discussions** among various governments.
- **Constitutional Provision:**
 - It was established under **Article 263** of the Constitution.

- It states that the **President may constitute such a body if a need is felt for it**.
- **Composition of the Inter-State Council:**
 - PM as chairman.
 - CM of all the states.
 - CM of UTs having legislative assemblies
 - Administrators of UTs not having legislative assemblies .
 - Governors of states under President’s rule.
 - Six Central cabinet ministers, including the home minister, to be nominated by the PM.
 - Five ministers of the cabinet rank are permanent invitees of the council.
- **Meetings:**
 - The council meetings are **supposed to be held thrice a year**.
 - Its **decisions** on all questions are **decided by consensus**.
- **Functions:**
 - **Inquiring into and advising** on disputes between states.
 - **Investigating and discussing** subjects in which two states or states and the Union have a common interest.
 - **Making recommendations** for the better coordination of policy and action.
 - **Deliberating** upon other matters of general interest to the States that may be referred by the Chairman to the Council.

News in Between the Lines

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2022



❖ Context

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) organised Desertification and Drought Day on **17 June**.

❖ Key Highlights

- The theme this year is - **Rising up from drought together**.
- In **December 1994**, the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** decided on a resolution to **observe 17 June** as World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.
- This day is commemorated by the MoEFCC every year, with an aim to generate large-scale awareness.
- The Ministry also released the Forest Stewardship Council’s **Forest Stewardship Standard** for India. This **India-specific, voluntary forest management standard** will give impetus to **third-party auditing** of forest owners for various principles, criteria and indicators.
- Forest certification is an important tool to combat desertification and promote forest sustainability.
- India is striving towards achieving the national commitments of **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** and **restoration of 26 Mha of degraded land by 2030**.

Face to Face Centres



UAE Bans Re-export of Indian Wheat



❖ Context

- The United Arab Emirates has decided to “suspend” re-export of wheat and flour from grain originating in India.

❖ Background

- According to some estimates, **UAE’s annual wheat consumption** is 15 lt, which is **entirely imported**. **More than 50 per cent of UAE’s wheat imports are from Russia**, followed by Canada, Ukraine and Australia.
- The **UAE is a major hub for re-exports**. It resells wheat to **Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Ethiopia, Taiwan and the Philippines**. Such exports amount to about **1 lt every year**, according to reports.

❖ About Moratorium

- **India exported 4.71 lakh tonnes (lt)** of wheat valued at \$136.53 million to the UAE in 2021-22.
- The UAE’s Ministry of Economy has called the restriction ‘moratorium’, which has been put into place because of “the international developments that have affected trade”.
- India doesn’t want its wheat to go out to other countries. Instead, it wants that wheat to be consumed locally, including the migrant Indian workers in UAE.
- This will allow India to provide an exception to its wheat export ban, imposed in May 2022 to curb domestic high prices, and ship out some quantities to the Gulf federation.

Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme



❖ Context

- The **Ministry of Finance** has decided to issue the two tranches of **Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme (SGBs)** for 2022-23.

❖ About the Scheme

- **To be sold by** - Scheduled commercial banks, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL), designated post offices, and recognised stock exchanges viz., NSE and BSE.
- **Issued by** - Reserve Bank of India on behalf of the Indian government.
- **Restricted for sale to** - Resident individuals, HUFs, trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- **Denomination** - Multiples of gram(s) of gold with a basic unit of one gram.
- **Tenor** - 8 years with an option of premature redemption after 5th year to be exercised on the date on which interest is payable.
- **Minimum permissible investment** - 1 gram of gold,
- **Maximum permissible investment** - 4 KG for individuals, 4 Kg for HUF and 20 Kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal year. In case of joint holding, the investment limit of 4 KG will be applied to the first applicant only.
- **Pricing** - Fixed in Indian Rs, on the basis of simple average of closing price of gold of 999 purity, published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association Limited (IBJA) for the last three working days of the week preceding the subscription period.
- **Form of holding** - A certificate of holding for the same will be issued which is eligible for conversion into demat form.

First Official Standard For a Grassroots Innovation



❖ Context

- The first official standard for a grassroots innovation has been set up for the clay cooling cabinet **Mitticool** developed by an innovator from Wankaner, in Gujarat.

❖ Key Highlights

- The standard set up by the **Bureau of India Standards**.
- It is necessary for scaling up the product and entering the cross-border markets.
- **National Innovation Foundation (NIF)** – India, an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, **put forward this idea** at the Innovations Scholars In-residence Programme held at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Face to Face Centres

Press Council of India (PCI)



- BIS subsequently engaged with NIF to develop a new Indian Standard - IS 17693: 2022 'Non-electric cooling cabinet made of clay'.
- The **standard helps in the endeavour of BIS to fulfil 6 out of 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, namely 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 5 (Gender equality), 7 (Affordable and clean energy), 9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure), and 12 (Responsible consumption and production).

❖ Context

- Recently, **Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai**, a former judge of the Supreme Court, has been selected for the post of the **Press Council of India (PCI)** Chairperson.

❖ Key Highlights

- Justice Desai had **recently headed the Delimitation Commission on J&K** which was set up to redraw the Assembly constituencies of the Union Territory.
- The post was lying vacant since Justice Chandramauli Kumar Prasad (retd.) completed his term in November 2021.

❖ Press Council of India (PCI)

- **The Press Council Act of 1978** created the Press Council of India (PCI).
- It's a **statutory organization**.
- It is the **highest body** to maintain the standards of the Print Media in India.
- **Structure:** PCI comprises a **Chairman and other 28 members** who are:
 - 3 Lok Sabha members and 2 Rajya Sabha Members.
 - 6 Editors of Newspapers, 7 Working Journalists (other than editors of newspapers), 3 people with specialised knowledge of public life, 1 person who handles the news agencies and 6 persons in the business of handling newspapers.
- The Speaker of Lok Sabha, Chairman of Rajya Sabha and a member selected by the PCI choose the chairman of PCI through its procedure.
- **Functions:**
 - It helps the newspaper to **maintain its independence**.
 - It **builds a code of conduct** for the newspapers in accordance with the high professional standards.
 - It works to **promote technical and other research** areas related to the news.
 - It helps **provide proper training to new journalists**.

Cost Inflation Index (CII)



❖ Context

- Recently, the **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** notified the **cost inflation index (CII)** for FY 2022-23 via a notification.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Cost Inflation Index for FY 2022-23 relevant to AY **2023-24 is 331**.
- For the previous year, i.e., FY 2021-22, CII was notified as 317.

❖ About Cost Inflation Index (CII)

- CII or Cost Inflation Index is **notified under the Income Tax Act, 1961's Section 48**. CII is a **way to calculate inflation**, that is, an **estimated increase in the price of a good or service** over the years.
- In other words, It is an index that is used to calculate the inflation-adjusted rise in the value of an asset.
- The **Central Government takes care of** and publishes the index in the official gazette. Usually, for the calculation of CII, **gains on long term capital are taken into account**.
- Capital gains are capital assets like property, plot, agricultural land, bonds, stocks, etc. sold at a profit.
- Cost Inflation Index = 75% average increase in CPI (Consumer Price Index) for the immediate previous year.

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Face to Face Centres

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