MADE EASY

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

APRIL, 2023

Week-4

22-30 April, 2023

★★ *Useful for* ★★

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

22nd APRIL, 2023

Mission 50K-EV4ECO

- **Context:** Recently Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has announced a new scheme named "Mission 50K-EV4ECO" to boost the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem in the country.

Key Highlights:

- Mission 50K-EV4ECO launched by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
- Its aim is to increase the uptake of electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers through direct and indirect lending support to vehicle aggregators, fleet operators and leasing companies.
- Under the scheme, SIDBI will directly provide loans to eligible small and medium enterprises (SME) for the purchase of EVs and developing charging infrastructure, including battery swapping.
- This scheme is a positive step to support the demand side of EV adoption in India, especially in light of the Government of India's FAME 2 scheme coming to an end by March 2024.

Eat Right Food Streets Project

- **Context:** The Government of India has planned a "Eat Right Food Streets Project" across India.

Key Highlights:

- Under "Eat Right Food Streets Project" , the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has asked States and Union Territories to develop 100 food streets in 100 districts across the country.
- The aim is to encourage safe and healthy practices to reduce food-borne illnesses and improve overall health outcomes.
- The project will be implemented through the National Health Mission (NHM) in convergence with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and

with technical support from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- Financial assistance of 1 crore per food street/district will be given to States and Union Territories.
- Assistance will be provided under the NHM in the ratio of 60:40 or 90:10, with the condition that standard branding of these food streets will be done as per FSSAI guidelines.
- Street foods have traditionally been an integral part of Indian society and are present all across the country. They represent the rich local tradition of cuisine.
- They not only provide a daily diet at affordable prices to millions but also direct employment to a large number of people while supporting the tourism industry.
- However, safety and hygiene remain a matter of concern at street food outlets and hubs.
- This project can serve as a model for other such streets to be established across the country to ensure clean and safe food practices.

Operation Kaveri

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the central government had launched 'Operation Kaveri' to bring back stranded Indians from conflict-ridden Sudan.

Key Highlights:

- Operation Kaveri' is likely a coordinated effort between the Indian government, its embassy in Sudan, and various other stakeholders to ensure the safe return of Indian nationals to their home country.
- 'Operation Kaveri' is an evacuation operation launched by the Indian government to bring back its citizens from Sudan, who are stranded due to the current crisis in the country.
- The operation is named after the Kaveri river, which is one of the major rivers in India. The Indian government has deployed a team of officials to coordinate the operation, including officers from the Ministry of External Affairs, the Indian embassy in Sudan, and the Indian Air Force.

- The evacuation operation involves transporting Indian citizens from various parts of Sudan to the capital city of Khartoum, where they are then flown back to India on special flights.

23rd APRIL, 2023

Ministry of Civil Aviation Launches UDAN 5.0

- **Context:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched the fifth phase of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)-UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik).

Key Highlights:

- UDAN 5.0 aims to raise the momentum, connect new routes and bring us closer to the target of operationalizing 1000 routes & 50 additional airports, heliports and water aerodromes in the near future.
- UDAN 5.0 focuses on Category-2 (20-80 seats) and Category-3 (>80 seats).
- Viability gap funding (VGF) will be provided at a 600 km stage length for both Priority and Non-Priority areas which were earlier capped at 500 km.
- Airlines can now propose routes they want to fly under the UDAN 5.0. The move replaces the previous system in which the Ministry predetermined the routes airlines could operate on.
- The airlines would be required to submit an action/business plan after 2 months from the issuance of LoA wherein they submit their aircraft acquisition plan/availability of aircraft, crew, slots, etc. at the time of the Technical Proposal.
- The same route will not be awarded to a single airline more than once, whether in different networks or in the same network.
- Exclusivity will be withdrawn if the average quarterly Passenger Load Factor(PLF) is higher than 75% for four continuous quarters, to prevent exploitation of the monopoly on a route.
- Airlines must start up their operations no later than four months after the route has been awarded; the previous limit was six months.

About Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN) scheme:

- It was launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The scheme is a component of the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP), 2016.
- Its aim is to develop a regional aviation market. It seeks to connect under-served and unserved airports in India through the revival of existing airstrips and airports.
- The scheme would be in operation for a period of 10 years
- Under the scheme, airlines have to cap airfares for 50% of the total seats at Rs. 2,500 per hour of flight.

Phases Under the Scheme:

- UDAN 1.0 and 2.0: During RCS-UDAN version 1.0 & 2.0, 66 airports were identified and 31 heliports (28 unserved heliports and 3 unserved airports).
- UDAN 3.0: During UDAN version 3.0, to increase the tourism potential at the coastal areas, Tourism routes in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism and Seaplanes for connecting Water Aerodromes were included.
- UDAN 4.0: The focus of UDAN 4.0 is on priority areas like North East Region, Hilly States, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Islands.

Waterbody Census

- **Context:** The Ministry of Jal Shakti has released the report of the first census of water bodies.

Key Highlights:

- The census defines a waterbody as "all natural or man-made units bounded on all sides with some or no masonry work used for storing water for irrigation or other purposes (example industrial, pisciculture, domestic/drinking, recreation, religious, groundwater recharge etc).
- The water bodies census was conducted along with the 6th Minor Irrigation Census for 2017-18.

- India has 24.24 lakh water bodies like ponds, tanks and lakes.West Bengal accounts for most of the water bodies and Sikkim the least.

- West Bengal's South 24 Parganas has been ranked as the top district having the highest (3.55 lakh) number of water bodies across the country.

- Around 59.55% of water bodies are ponds, followed by tanks(15.7%), reservoirs(12.1%), water conservation schemes/percolation tanks/check dams (9.3%), lakes (0.9%) and others (2.5%).

- West Bengal has the highest number of ponds and reservoirs whereas Andhra Pradesh has the highest number of tanks.

- Tamil Nadu has the highest number of lakes and Maharashtra is the leading state with water conservation schemes.

- The census also collected data on the encroachment of water bodies for the first time, revealing that 1.6% of all enumerated water bodies are encroached, with 95.4% of encroachments in rural areas and the remaining 4.6% in urban areas

- The objective of waterbody census is to develop a national database for all water bodies by collecting information on all important aspects of the subject including their size, condition, the status of encroachments, use, storage capacity, the status of filling up of storage etc.

- The census provides a comprehensive overview of the distribution of water bodies in India, highlighting the states and districts with the highest number of water bodies.

- The data on the encroachment of water bodies can help in identifying areas where conservation efforts are needed to protect these valuable resources.

Abhilekh patal

- **Context:** The Prime Minister of India has praised "Abhilekh patal" a portal with over 1 Crore Pages of Historical Records of the National Archives.

Key Highlights:

- Abhilekh is a Sanskrit term used in India for records since ancient times and Patal is a Sanskrit word meaning a board, platform, or a surface.A combination of both these words has been adopted as an acronym for Portal for Access to Archives and Learning.

- It is a full-featured web portal to access the National Archives of India's reference media and its digitized collections through the Internet.

- It contains the reference media of more than 2.7 million files held by the National Archives of India.

24th APRIL, 2023

World Bank's Logistic Performance Index (LPI) 2023

- **Context:** The World Bank has released the Logistics Performance Index 2023.

Key Highlights:

- According to World Bank's Logistic Performance Index (LPI) 2023, India has climbed six places, now ranking 38th in the 139 countries index, as a result of significant investments in both soft and hard infrastructure as well as technology.

- India's performance has drastically improved from 2014 when it was ranked 54th on the LPI.

- It is an interactive benchmarking tool created to help countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their performance on trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.

- The index measures the ease of establishing reliable supply chain connections and structural factors that make it possible, such as the quality of logistics services, trade and transport-related infrastructure, as well as border controls.

- LPI 2023 allows for comparisons across 139 countries.It measures for the first time the speed of trade with indicators derived from big datasets tracking shipments.

Initiatives taken by India:

- In 2021, the Government of India launched the PM Gati Shakti initiative, a national master plan for multimodal connectivity, aimed at lowering logistics costs and stimulating the economy by 2024-25.

- The National Logistics Policy (NLP) was introduced in 2022 to solve transport issues, optimize manufacturing efficiency, and speed up last-mile delivery in the logistics sector.

- India implemented a supply chain visibility platform under a public-private partnership, leading to significantly reduced delays.

- NICDC Logistics Data Services provides RFID (radio frequency) tagging on containers. This enables end-to-end tracking for supply chain consignees.

- From May to October 2022, India and Singapore had an average dwell time of three days for containers — better than some developed countries. The United States had a seven-day dwell time, while Germany's was 10. Dwell time refers to the amount of time a ship or cargo spends at a port or terminal before being loaded or unloaded onto a vessel. Any delays in a port can disrupt shipping schedules, affecting the entire service.

LockBit ransomware

- **Context:** Recently reports have emerged that LockBit ransomware was found to be targeting Mac devices.

Key Highlights:

- LockBit ransomware was first reported in 2019. It has been dubbed as the "abcd" virus due to the file extension used when encrypting victims' files.

- It is designed to infiltrate victims' systems and encrypt important files. The virus is categorized as a "crypto virus" due to its requests for payment in cryptocurrency to decrypt files on the victim's device.

- The ransomware is therefore typically deployed against victims who feel hindered enough by the disruption to pay heavy sums in exchange for access to the files and can afford to do so.

- It works as a self-spreading malware, not requiring additional instructions once it has successfully infiltrated a single device with access to an organizational intranet.

- It is also known to hide executable encryption files by disguising them in the .png format, thereby avoiding detection by system defences.

- Attackers use phishing tactics and other social engineering methods to impersonate trusted personnel or authorities to lure victims into sharing credentials.

- Once it has gained access, the ransomware prepares the system to release its encryption payload across as many devices as possible.

- It then disables security programs and other infrastructures that could permit system data recovery. The goal is to ensure that data recovery without assistance from the LockBit gang is impossible.

- After this, they leave behind a ransom note, with instructions to restore the system, and has reportedly also included threatening blackmail messages.

- Victims are then left with no choice but to contact the LockBit gang and pay up for the data, which the gang may sell on the dark web whether the ransom is paid or not.

Markets in Crypto Assets (MiCA) regulations

- **Context:** The European Parliament has approved the Markets in Crypto Assets (MiCA) regulations. These are the world's first set of comprehensive rules to bring largely unregulated crypto currency markets under the ambit of regulation by government authorities.

Key Highlights:

- MiCA aims to protect investors and ensure financial stability while allowing innovation and fostering the attractiveness of the crypto-asset sector.

- The regulations will not only apply to traditional cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum but also to newer ones like stablecoins.
- However, it will not regulate digital assets that would qualify as transferable securities and function like shares or their equivalent and other crypto assets that already qualify as financial instruments under existing regulation. It will also exclude non fungible tokens (NFTs).
- The regulations will impose a number of requirements on crypto platforms, token issuers and traders around transparency, disclosure, authorization, and supervision of transactions,
- The rules require every crypto asset service provider (CASPs) to get incorporated as a legal entity in the EU. They can get authorized in any one member country and will be allowed to conduct their services across the 27 countries.
- They will then be supervised by regulators like the European Banking Authority and European Securities and Markets Authority, who will ensure that the companies have the required risk management and corporate governance practices in place.
- The rules also address environmental concerns surrounding crypto, with firms forced to disclose their energy consumption as well as the impact of digital assets on the environment.
- India is yet to have a comprehensive regulatory framework for crypto assets. A draft legislation on the same is reportedly in the works.
- A full-fledged regulation aside, the Indian government has taken certain steps to bring crypto currencies under the ambit of specific authorities and taxation.
- In the Union Budget for 2022, the Finance Ministry said that crypto currency trading in India has seen a phenomenal increase and imposed a 30% tax on income from the transfer of any virtual digital asset.
- In March 2023, the government placed all transactions involving virtual digital assets under the purview of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

25th APRIL, 2023

Ponzi Schemes
- **Context:** The Finance Minister has said that the central government is taking steps to clamp down on Ponzi apps to protect investors' hard-earned money.

Key Highlights:
- A Ponzi scheme is an investment fraud that pays existing investors with funds collected from new investors.
- Ponzi scheme organizers often promise to invest your money and generate high returns with little or no risk.
- But in many Ponzi schemes, the fraudsters do not invest the money. Instead, they use it to pay those who invested earlier and may keep some for themselves.
- With little or no legitimate earnings, Ponzi schemes require a constant flow of new money to survive. When it becomes hard to recruit new investors, or when large numbers of existing investors cash out, these schemes tend to collapse.
- Ponzi schemes are named after Charles Ponzi, who duped investors in the 1920s with a postage stamp speculation scheme.
- In India, Ponzi schemes are banned under the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Act, 2019

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in environment
- **Context:** Artificial Intelligence(AI) has been touted as a powerful tool to help tackle environmental challenges such as climate change.

Key Highlights:
- **Saving trees with AI:** Deforestation and land use changes cause more than 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions.A Non-profit organization's "Guardian" devices attach acoustic monitoring sensors to trees to detect sounds associated with illegal logging.

- **Shrinking the carbon footprint of steel:** Materials such as steel and cement are important components in construction. But they're also heavy CO2 emitters, making decarbonizing these industries a priority. Fero Labs' AI-driven optimization software learns from historical data to recommend the minimum amount of mined ingredients or alloys required in steel production.

- **Cutting energy waste in buildings:** In Hong Kong, energy use in buildings is responsible for about 60% of the city's carbon emissions. A Design firm has come up with an app called Neuron that uses 5G and Internet of Things sensors to gather real-time data from a building's energy management system. It then uses an algorithm to analyze this data and optimize the heating and cooling system, as well as make predictions for the building's future energy demand.

- Fighting poaching : Poaching and habitat destruction caused rhino numbers to dwindle throughout the 20th century. A South Africa-based company has developed AI-enabled bracelets that fit around rhinos' ankles to help conservation teams easily locate the animals and monitor their behavior in real time.

- **Smart farming:** A Germany-based startup has developed an AI system that draws on data from solar-powered sensors monitoring the microclimate around crops. This data can be used to make precise recommendations about plant health and exactly how much water and fertilizer to use. This can both boost yields and reduce wasted resources.

- **Using computers to plot clouds:** Renewable energy is a crucial step in transitioning away from fossil fuels. Solar makes up a bigger share of this energy mix. But when clouds move over solar panels, the power supply can suddenly drop off. To overcome this problem, a nonprofit organization has teamed up with the UK's National Grid to use AI to provide a precise picture of how clouds develop — the goal being to reduce the reliance on fossil-powered reserves.

IIT-M researchers develop non-invasive device to assess heart vessel health

- **Context:** The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) have developed a device called 'ARTSENS' to assess the health and age of blood vessels and thereby provide early screening for cardiovascular diseases.

Key Highlights:

- ARTSENS is a novel, non-invasive device to assess the health and age of blood vessels and thereby provide early screening for cardiovascular diseases.
- It is developed by Healthcare Technology Innovation Centre at IIT Madras.
- The device comprises pressure cuffs that need to be attached on the upper arm and thighs and a probe applied on the surface of the neck to detect the carotid artery.
- It measures carotid artery stiffness, aortic pulse wave velocity and central blood pressure, all three being important markers of cardiovascular health.
- The device is intended for regular medical check-ups, even by non-experts, to evaluate and anticipate vascular health.

26th APRIL, 2023

BMC to launch eco-friendly device to curb vector-borne diseases

- **Context:** Recently, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) announced the launch of a pilot project called 'Eco Biotraps'. The project aims to prevent the spread of vector-borne infections in the city.

Key Highlights:

- It is an eco-friendly trap with 'attractants' that attract female mosquitoes and lay eggs in the biotrap water. These traps are made from recycled cardboard.

- Eco Biotraps consists of a small bag containing a mixture of attractant and insecticide. These traps are filled with water and placed in mosquito-infested areas.

- The attractant and insecticide (Insect Growth Regulator granules) in the trap bag are immediately mixed with water. After which, the attractant in the water attracts the female mosquito to lay her eggs there. The insecticide present in the water destroys the mosquito eggs.

- The attractants and insecticides used in this trap are safe for human

- The Eco Biotraps is the world's first 'passive' and eco-friendly device and has been patented in 50 countries including India.

Genome sequencing and the Genome India Project

- **Context:** The Department of Biotechnology has said that the exercise to sequence 10,000 Indian human genomes and create a database under the Genome India Project is about two-thirds complete.

Key Highlights:

- The human genome is the entire set of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) residing in the nucleus of every cell of the human body. It carries the complete genetic information responsible for the development and functioning of an organism.

- The DNA consists of a double-stranded molecule built up by four bases. While the sequence of base pairs is identical in all humans, there are differences in the genome of every human being that make them unique.

- The process of deciphering the order of base pairs, to decode the genetic fingerprint of a human is called genome sequencing.

- Genome sequencing has been used to evaluate rare disorders, preconditions for disorders and even cancer from the viewpoint of genetics, rather than as diseases of certain organs.

- Nearly 10,000 diseases including cystic fibrosis and thalassemia are known to be the result of a single gene malfunctioning.

- In public health, sequencing has also been used to read the codes of viruses. One of its first practical usages was in 2014 when a group of scientists sequenced samples of Ebola from infected African patients to show how genomic data of viruses could reveal hidden pathways of transmission.

About Genome India Project:

- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has initiated the ambitious "Genome India Project" (GIP) in 2020.

- The GIP aims to collect 10,000 genetic samples from citizens across India, to build a reference genome.

- This project is led by the Centre for Brain Research at the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science, which acts as the central coordinator between a collaboration of 20 leading institutions.

PM inaugurates Kochi Water Metro

- **Context:** The Prime Minister has inaugurated the first phase of the Kochi Water Metro.

Key Highlights:

- Kochi Water Metro is a first of its kind public boat service in India integrated with a metro rail network.

- It is being implemented by Kochi Metro Rail Corporation Limited (KMRL) with the assistance of a German funding agency.

- The water metro boat service will operate in the backwaters of Kochi, connecting 10 nearby islands with the mainland of Kochi, the commercial hub of Kerala. It includes boats that are hybrid, battery-powered, air-conditioned and disabled-friendly among other features.

- The project is envisaged with 38 jetties, and 78 boats, covering a distance of 76 km. The non-polluting, battery-powered boats are noise-free and produce low waves, unlike traditional ferries.

- Kochi Water metro has been envisaged as a feeder service of the Kochi metro rail, which has been operational since 2017.
- While boats have been designed as coaches of Kochi Metro, boat terminals, passenger entry and exit gates, ticket counters and safety measures mirror the features of the metro rail service.

27th APRIL, 2023

SUPREME Initiative

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Science and Technology has launched the SUPREME initiative to provide financial support for the upgradation and maintenance of analytical instrumentation facilities (AIFs).

Key Highlights:

- It is Launched by Ministry of Science and Technology
- Its full form is Support for Up-gradation Preventive Repair and Maintenance of Equipment (SUPREME)
- Its aim is to extend financial support for repair, upgradation, maintenance, retrofitting, or acquiring additional attachments to increase the functional capabilities of existing analytical instrumentation facilities.
- Different facilities created under the projects/ Analytical instrumentation facilities (AIFs) with the support of DST only will be considered for funding support under this Scheme.
- UGC recognized Central Universities/ State Funded Universities/Deemed Universities /Private Universities among others are also eligible to apply under this scheme.
- The duration of support will be for a period not exceeding 3 years.
- The funding pattern in the scheme would be 75:25 for all private and government-owned institutions (except for state-funded institutions for which 100% funding would be considered).

Mahila Samman Saving Certificate Account

- **Context:** The Union Minister for Women and Child Development and Minority Affairs opened a Mahila Samman Savings Certificate (MSSC) account.

Key Highlights:

- It is a new small savings scheme launched specifically for female investors and was announced in Budget 2023 to promote investment among women.
- Accounts opened under this scheme will be single-holder accounts that can be opened at the Post Office or any registered bank.
- Any woman can open a Mahila Samman account that can be opened for herself or on behalf of a little girl. A time gap of three months shall be maintained between the existing account and the opening of other account.
- The minimum investment amount is Rs 1000, and the maximum investment authorised under the plan is Rs 2 lakh.

NITI Aayog Releases Report: Promoting Millets in Diets

- **Context:** NITI Aayog has released a report titled "Promoting Millets in Diets: Best Practices across States/UTs of India".

Key Highlights:

- **State Missions and Initiatives to Promote Millets:** Odisha Millet Mission launched in 2017 with the aim to revive millets on farms and plates have been the flag bearer in this regard as it simultaneously focuses on production, processing, consumption, marketing and inclusion of millets in government schemes.
- Other State Mission worth highlighting are Comprehensive Revival Of Millet Cultivation by Tribals in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh Millet Mission, and Bhavantar Bharpayee Yojana of Haryana among others.

- **Millet Production in India:** India produces all the nine commonly known traditional millets viz. Sorghum, Pearl Millet, Finger Millet, Foxtail Millet, Proso Millet, Little Millet, Barnyard Millet, Browntop Millet and Kodo Millet.

- Millets are also the most secure crops for small farmers as they are resilient and climate adaptable in both hot and drought environments.

- However, the area under cultivation of various millets in India has been declining. For instance, the total area of cropland harvesting the three major millet crops i.e. jowar, bajra and ragi grew in India has almost halved across the country since 1966.

- The report presents a set of good and innovative practices adopted by state governments and organizations in various aspects of millet value-chain, especially production, processing and consumption.

28ᵗʰ APRIL, 2023

Right to marry is not absolute

- **Context:** The Supreme Court has continued to hear a batch of pleas seeking legal recognition for same-sex marriages.

Key Highlights:

- The Central Government has opposed same-sex marriage. It has argued that the right to marry is not an "absolute right" and petitioners cannot compel the state to grant legal status to same-sex marriage through a judicial declaration.

- It reiterated its humble request to the Supreme Court not to rewrite the Special Marriage Act (SMA) for legal validation of same-sex marriages.

- It also said that the legal recognition of same-sex marriage by making the Special Marriage Act gender-neutral should ideally be debated in Parliament and not the court.

- This is because the debate in Parliament will be assisted by national views, views of experts, and

views on impact, effects and what are implications of several laws.

- For instance, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 was the Parliament's response to the decriminalization of homosexuality by the Supreme Court in 2018. The term 'transgender person' in the act is widely defined to include all spectrums of the LGBTQIA+ community.

National Medical Devices Policy, 2023

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet approved the National Medical Devices Policy, 2023.

Key Highlights:

- National Medical Devices Policy, 2023 objective is to accelerate the growth path of the medical devices sector with a patient-centric approach;

- To emerge as the global leader in the manufacturing and innovation of medical devices by achieving a 10-12% share in the expanding global market over the next 25 years;

- To help the Medical Devices Sector grow from the present $11 Bn to $50 Bn by 2030.

- The policy is expected to provide the required support and directions to strengthen the medical devices industry into a competitive, self-reliant, resilient and innovative industry that caters to the healthcare needs of not only India but also of the world.

- **Medical devices sector will be facilitated and guided through a set of strategies that will be cover six broad areas of policy interventions:**

  1. Creation of a Single Window Clearance System for Licensing of Medical Devices; coordination between all the stakeholder departments/ organizations such as AERB, MeitY, DAHD, etc., Enhancing the role of Indian Standards like BIS; Designing a coherent pricing regulation.

  2. Developing medical device parks and clusters in line with the National Industrial Corridor Program and the proposed National Logistics Policy 2021 under the ambit of PM Gati Shakti.

3. Supporting R&D and innovation through the establishment of Centres of Excellence in academic and research institutions, innovation hubs, 'plug and play' infrastructures and support to start-ups.

4. Along with recent schemes and interventions like Make in India, Ayushman Bharat program, Heal-in-India, Start-up mission, the policy encourages private investments, series of funding from Venture Capitalists and Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

5. Skilling, reskilling, and upskilling of professionals in the medical device sector; Supporting dedicated multidisciplinary courses for medical devices in existing institutions; Developing partnerships with foreign academic/industry organizations.

6. The policy envisages the creation of a dedicated Export Promotion Council for the sector under the Department which will be an enabler to deal with various market access issues.

29th APRIL, 2023

India-UK 'NET Zero' Innovation Virtual Centre

- **Context:** The India-UK Science & Innovation Council meeting was recently held.

Key Highlights:

- India and the UK decided to create an India-UK "NET Zero" Innovation Virtual Centre which will provide a platform to bring stakeholders from both countries together to work in some of the focus areas including Decarbonization of manufacturing process & transport systems and Green Hydrogen as renewable source.

- The two countries will also join hands for launching the first ever UK-India scientific 'deep sea voyage (for carrying out scientific studies) and 'space parks' (manufacturing hub for space-related technology) partnership.

- India has been named as a partner for the UK's International Science Partnerships Fund, carrying forward the UK-India science partnership built through the Newton-Bhabha fund. International

Science Partnerships Fund has been set up by the UK to support collaborations between UK researchers and innovators and their peers from around the world.

Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET) Initiative

- **Context:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched the Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET) Initiative.

Key Highlights

- The PRET Initiative aim is to be better prepared for future outbreaks of a similar scale and devastation as the COVID-19 pandemic.

- To provide guidance on integrated planning for responding to any respiratory pathogen such as influenza or coronaviruses.

- The three-pronged approach of PRET includes: Updating preparedness plans that affirm priority actions, Increase connectivity among stakeholders in pandemic preparedness planning through systematic coordination and cooperation and dedicate sustained investments and Financing and monitoring of pandemic preparedness with a special focus on bridging the lacunes highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The PRET Initiative ushers in a new era for pandemic preparedness and represents an evolution of WHO's core activities to support all member states in strengthening health emergency preparedness, prevention, and response capacities and capabilities.

- The initiative can also serve to operationalize the objectives and provisions of the Pandemic Accord, which is currently being negotiated by WHO Member States.

Conflict in Sudan

- **Context:** At least 56 civilians have been killed and 595 people including combatants have been wounded in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, since fierce fighting broke out between the country's army and paramilitary forces.

Key Highlights:

- The roots of the ongoing conflict in Sudan go back to April 2019, when Sudan's long-serving authoritarian President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown. He was overthrown by military generals following a countrywide uprising against him.

- This led to an agreement between the military and protesters, under which a power-sharing body called the Sovereignty Council was established to lead Sudan to elections at the end of 2023.

- However, the military overthrew the transitional government led by Abdalla Hamdok in October 2021, with Burhan becoming the de-facto leader of the country and Dagalo his second-in-command

About Sudan:

- Sudan is a country in Northeast Africa bordering the Red Sea.

- It is bordered by the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, Egypt to the north, Eritrea to the northeast, Ethiopia to the southeast, Libya to the northwest, South Sudan to the south and the Red Sea.

- It is Africa's third-largest country by area. Its capital city is Khartoum, and its most populous city is Omdurman (part of the metropolitan area of Khartoum).

- The population of Sudan is predominantly Muslim and the country's official languages are Arabic and English.

30th APRIL, 2023

Index of Eight Core Industries increases by 3.6 percent in March 2023

- **Context:** The combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 3.6 percent (provisional) in March 2023 as compared to the Index of March 2022.
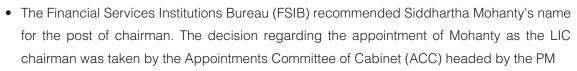
Key Highlights:

- The production of Coal, Fertilizers, Steel, Natural Gas, and Refinery Products increased in March 2023 over the corresponding month of last year.

- ICI measures combined and individual performance of the production of eight core industries viz. Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, and Electricity.

- The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 percent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

- The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) releases the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI).

- Base year taken 2011-2012

Index of Eight Core Industries :

- Coal production (weight: 10.33 percent) increased by 12.2 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

- Crude Oil production (weight: 8.98 percent) declined by 2.8 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

- Natural Gas production (weight: 6.88 percent) increased by 2.8 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

- Petroleum Refinery production (weight: 28.04 percent) increased by 1.5 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

- Fertilizer production (weight: 2.63 percent) increased by 9.7 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

- Steel production (weight: 17.92 percent) increased by 8.8 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

- Cement production (weight: 5.37 percent) declined by 0.8 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

- Electricity generation (weight: 19.85 percent) declined by 1.8 percent in March 2023 over March 2022.

Appointment of LIC Chairman

- **Context:** The government has named Siddhartha Mohanty as the first chief executive of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) for the term beginning in June 2024 to June 2025.

Key Highlights:

- The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) recommended Siddhartha Mohanty's name for the post of chairman. The decision regarding the appointment of Mohanty as the LIC chairman was taken by the Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC) headed by the PM

- Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is an Indian public sector life insurance company headquartered in Mumbai. It is India's largest insurance company as well as the largest institutional investor.

- It was established in 1956, when the Parliament of India passed the Life Insurance of India Act, nationalizing the insurance industry in India.

- There are a total of 8 zonal offices, located in Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Kolkata, Bhopal and Patna.