



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY, 2023

Week-4

22-31 July, 2023

★★ Useful for ★★

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

22nd JULY, 2023

Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023

- **Context:** The Rajasthan government has tabled the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023.

Key Highlights:

- Its aim is to cover the entire adult population of the state with guaranteed wages or pension.
- The Bill has three broad categories: right to minimum guaranteed income, right to guaranteed employment and right to guaranteed social security pension.
- Government anticipates an additional expenditure of Rs 2,500 crore per year for this scheme, which may increase with time.
- Each adult citizen of the state has been guaranteed a minimum income for 125 days a year through the Rajasthan government's flagship Indira Gandhi Shahri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana for urban areas and through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in rural areas.
- Government will provide eligible categories such as aged, disabled, widows, and single women with a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month. Importantly, the pension will be increased at the rate of 15 per cent each year.
- According to the Right to Employment, once the work in a rural or urban employment schemes are finished, the entitled minimum wages must be paid weekly or not later than a fortnight.
- To implement this, a Program Officer will be appointed by the State government. In rural areas, the officer must not be below the rank of a Block Development Officer (BDO). In urban areas, they must be an Executive Officer of the relevant local body.
- The officer will ensure that the work site is within a five-kilometer radius of the location in which the job card is registered in both rural and urban areas.
- The Program Officer must also ensure the applicant gets work within 15 days of receiving the application.

If not, the applicant is eligible for unemployment allowance on a weekly basis and in any case not later than a fortnight.

Desiccation-Tolerate Vascular (DT) Plant

- **Context:** Recently, 62 Desiccation-tolerate vascular (DT) plant species discovered in India's Western Ghats that can survive extreme dehydration.

Key Highlights:

- Desiccation-tolerant vascular (DT) plants are those plant species that are able to withstand extreme dehydration.
- They can lose up to 95% of their water content and can revive themselves once water is available again.
- This unique ability allows them to survive in harsh, arid environments that would be uninhabitable for most other plants.
- These plants are found in both flowering and non-flowering species and in both temperate and tropical climates.
- The global population of these species ranges between 300 and 1,500.
- The discovery of the desiccation-tolerant (DT) vascular plants has potential applications in agriculture.
- Desiccation-resistant vascular plants can be used particularly in areas where water is scarce.
- Desiccation-resistant vascular plant genes can be used to develop a high temperature tolerant crop variety to boost climate resilience
- Indian desiccation tolerant plants are primarily found in forest rock outcrops and partially shaded tree trunks.
- Ferricretes (a hard, erosion-resistant layer of sedimentary rock) and basaltic plateaus (plateaus produced by volcanic activity) seemed to be the preferred habitats.
- A study has recently found 62 desiccation-tolerant vascular plant species in Western Ghats. Of these, 16 are endemic to India while 12 are exclusive to Western Ghats outcrops.

- Among these discovered, nine genera of DT plants are reported as new also in a global perspective. They are identified as Pyrrosia, Aleurites, Corallodiscus, Arundinella, Bhidea, Bothriochloa, Danthonidium, Dimeria and Glyphochloa.

23rd JULY, 2023

India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS) 2047

- **Context:** NITI Aayog has launched the revamped version of India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS) 2047.

Key Highlights:

- IESS is an open source web based tool launched by Niti Aayog. It has been designed with the help of IIT Bombay.
- Its purpose is to assess the integrated impact of various green energy policies of the Government of India.
- To analyze emissions, cost, land and water requirements of India till 2047 by assessing the demand and supply of energy in the country.
- The tool will be updated on a yearly basis.
- It is user-friendly interactive tool that can help ministries/ departments to develop a variety of energy transition scenarios to achieve net-zero.
- The tool is also flexible enough to provide many permutations and combinations of net-zero pathways.
- It can also help in computing the energy needs and estimates of the country and hence reduce India's dependency on external agencies for the estimates.

e-FAST India

- **Context:** NITI Aayog has organized the e-FAST India event on the sidelines of the 14th Clean Energy Ministerial.

Key Highlights:

- e-FAST India launched in September, 2022.

- e-FAST stands for Electric Freight Accelerator for Sustainable Transport – India.
- It is India's first electric freight platform.
- Its aim is to galvanize the transition towards cleaner and greener freight transportation (Freight transport is the movement of goods from one place to another).
- It is led by NITI Aayog and supported by the collaborative efforts of 12 knowledge partners.
- The platform will help strengthen partnerships and identify and support innovative freight solutions.
- The platform also aims to promote freight electrification, supported by ground-based demonstration pilots and research that is supported by evidence.
- Additionally, it will assist with scalable trials and provide information for policymakers that aim to hasten India's freight electrification.

About Clean Energy Ministerial:

- The Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) was launched at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties in Copenhagen in 2009.
- It is a high-level global forum to promote policies and programs for the development of clean energy technology. It also aims to share experience & best practices encouraging the transition to a global clean energy economy.
- **Member Countries:** 29 Countries. India is a member.

India and Sri Lanka deepen economic ties

- **Context:** The President of Sri Lanka has paid an official visit to India. During the visit, India and Sri Lanka adopted a 'vision document' for a deeper economic partnership between the two countries.

Key Highlights:

- The vision document has been called 'Promoting Connectivity, Catalysing Prosperity: India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision'.

- Its aim is to strengthen bilateral and economic partnership between India and Sri Lanka.
- The document outlines cooperation in development of ports and logistics at Colombo, Trincomalee and Kankesanthurai, with an aim to consolidate regional logistics and shipping. It also talks of resumption of passenger ferry services between Nagapattinam in India and Kankesanthurai in Sri Lanka besides working towards early resumption of ferry services between Rameswaram and Talaimannar.
- Currently, there is a single flight a day between Chennai and the northern Lankan city of Jaffna. The two countries agreed to expand this flight to Colombo as well as explore connectivity between Chennai and Trincomalee, Batticaloa and other destinations in Sri Lanka.
- The two countries have plans to establish a high-capacity power grid interconnection. This is to enable bidirectional electricity trade between Sri Lanka and other regional countries, including those of the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) initiative.
- The document also talks of expediting implementation of understanding reached on the Sampur Solar power project and LNG infrastructure and exploring cooperation in Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia.
- The two countries will also be working on a multi-product petroleum pipeline from India's South to Sri Lanka.
- They will also undertake a mutually agreed joint exploration and production of hydrocarbons in Sri Lanka's offshore basins to develop Sri Lanka's upstream petroleum sector.
- The two sides will undertake discussions on the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement with an aim to comprehensively enhance bilateral trade and investments in new and priority areas.
- They have decided to designate Indian Rupee as currency for trade settlements between the two countries.
- Both sides also agreed to operationalise UPI-based digital payments for further enhancing trade and transactions between businesses and common people.
- The two countries have planned to promote awareness and popularize India's Buddhist circuit, and Ramayana trail as well as ancient places of Buddhist, Hindu and other religious worship in Sri Lanka for enhancing tourism.

24th JULY, 2023

Biofortification is projected to reach \$217.21 million by 2030

- **Context:** According to a report, the global market of biofortification is projected to reach \$217.21 million by 2030 from the current \$100.84 million (in 2022).

Key Highlights:

- Biofortification is the process of improving the nutritional quality of food crops. This can be achieved through agronomic practices, conventional breeding or biotechnology based approaches like genetic engineering and genome editing.
- Biofortification of staple crops such as rice is intended as a sustainable, cost-effective and food-based means of delivering target micronutrients to populations who do not have access to or cannot afford diverse diets and other existing interventions such as fortified foods and supplementation.
- It is identified by the Copenhagen Consensus as one of the highest value-for-money interventions for micronutrient deficiency
- On World Food Day 2020, the Prime Minister dedicated to the nation 17 biofortified seed varieties of eight local and traditional crops, including wheat and paddy rice. These varieties have been developed by utilizing the local landraces and farmer's varieties.

- Further, to encourage biofortification amongst farming communities, Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) has started the Nutri-Sensitive Agricultural Resources and Innovations (NARI) programme for promoting family farming linking agriculture to nutrition.
- Government is seeking the private sector's help to popularize the biofortified foods. The private industry wants separate branding of biofortified foods, similar to what has been done for "organic" products.

RBI Guidance on Loan write-offs

- **Context:** According to the Reserve Bank of India, banks have written off bad loans worth over Rs 2.09 lakh crore during the year ended March 2023 taking the total loan write-off by the banking sector to Rs 10.57 lakh crore in the last five years.

Key Highlights:

- The RBI guidance on write-offs says that in a deregulated credit environment, banks have been advised to take credit related decisions including waiving off bad loans as per their commercial assessment of the viability of the loans in terms of their board approved policies subject to prudential norms issued by the RBI.
- The policy on loan recoveries is required to lay down the manner of recovery of dues, targeted level of reduction (period-wise), norms for permitted sacrifice or waiver, factors to be taken into account before considering waivers, decision levels, reporting to higher authorities and monitoring of write-off and waiver cases.
- However, the recovery process can take years as most of the loans involved in write-offs belong to wilful defaulters and shady promoters who generally don't pay back to the banks.
- The bank writes off a loan after the borrower has defaulted on the loan repayment and there is a very low chance of recovery. The lender then moves the defaulted loan or NPA out of the assets side and reports the amount as a loss.

- After the write-off, banks are supposed to continue their efforts to recover the loan using various options. They have to make provisioning as well.
- Once recovered, the provisions made for those loans flow back into the profit and loss account of banks.

About Loan write-offs:

Writing off a loan essentially means it will no longer be counted as an asset. By writing off loans, a bank can reduce the level of non-performing assets (NPAs) on its books. An additional benefit is that the amount so written off reduces the bank's tax liability.

25th JULY, 2023

India's first Cannabis Medicine Project

- **Context:** India's first Cannabis Medicine Project is going to be set up in Jammu.

Key Highlights:

- Cannabis is a generic term used to denote the several psychoactive preparations of the plant *Cannabis sativa*. The major psychoactive constituent in cannabis is delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).
- The Mexican term 'marijuana' is frequently used in referring to cannabis leaves or other crude plant material in many countries.
- Cannabis is by far the most widely cultivated, trafficked and abused illicit drug. Half of all drug seizures worldwide are cannabis seizures.
- About 147 million people, 2.5% of the world population, consume cannabis (annual prevalence) compared with 0.2% consuming cocaine and 0.2% consuming opiates.
- The central law that deals with cannabis (weed or marijuana) in India is the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- The NDPS Act prohibits the sale and production of cannabis resin and flowers, but the use of leaves and seeds of the cannabis plant is permitted, with the states having the power to regulate and form the state rules for it.

- For instance, Odisha is a state in which weed is legal in India and people commonly use 'chillums' to smoke weed within the state's territory. Uttarakhand is the first state in India to allow commercial cultivation of Hemp.
- Cannabis Medicine Project is Initiative of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu.
- The project is under public-private partnership (PPP) with a Canadian firm.
- Purpose of the project is to produce export quality drugs meant for different kinds of neuropathies, diabetic pains etc.
- To spread awareness that this substance of abuse has diverse medicinal uses especially for the patients suffering from malignancies and other diseases.
- The project has the potential to produce medicines that are currently imported from foreign countries, thereby promoting indigenous production and reducing dependency on external sources.

India's methane emissions

- **Context:** The Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has informed Lok Sabha about the measures the government is taking to reduce methane emissions.

Key Highlights:

- India is a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and its Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Paris Agreement (PA).
- As a Party to the UNFCCC, India periodically submits its National Communications (NCs) and Biennial Update Reports (BURs) to the UNFCCC which includes national Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory containing information on methane emissions.
- As per India's third Biennial Update Report, India's methane emissions in 2016 (excluding LULUCF) were 409 million tone CO₂e of which, 73.96% was from Agriculture sector, 14.46% from Waste sector, 10.62% from Energy sector and 0.96% was from Industrial Processes and Product Use sector.

Government measures taken to reduce methane emissions:

- 1. National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA):** It is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. It involves climate resilient practices including methane reduction practices in rice cultivation. These practices contribute to substantial reduction of methane emissions.
- 2. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** under National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project has developed several technologies with mitigation potential for methane from rice such as:
 - 3. System for Rice Intensification:** This technique has potential to enhance rice yield from 36-49% with about 22-35% less water than conventional transplanted rice
 - 4. Direct Seeded Rice:** This system reduces methane emissions as it does not involve raising nurseries, puddling and transplanting. Unlike transplanted paddy cultivation, standing water is not maintained in this system and
 - 5. Crop Diversification Programme:** Methane emissions are avoided due to diversion of paddy to alternate crops like pulses, oilseeds, maize, cotton and agro forestry.
 - 6. Capacity building programmes** are conducted through Krishi Vigyan Kendras across the country for creating awareness on climate resilient practices.
- 7. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD)** is implementing the National Livestock Mission which includes Breed Improvement and Balanced Rationing. Feeding livestock with a superior quality balanced ration is helping to reduce methane emissions from the livestock.
- 8. Government of India promotes green fodder production,** silage making, chaff cutting, and total mixed ration under National Livestock Mission with a view to reduce methane emissions from livestock.

9. **Cattle waste utilization** is being incentivised through initiatives like 'The Gobar (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) –Dhan' scheme and New National Biogas and Organic Manure Programme.

India's First Gig Workers' Rights Bill

- **Context:** The Rajasthan government has passed the Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023. It is the first legislation of its kind in India outlining welfare schemes for the State's approximately three lakh gig workers.

Key Highlights:

- The bill defines a gig worker as a person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship and who works on contract that results in a given rate of payment, based on terms and conditions laid down in such contract and includes all piece-rate work.
- The Bill applies to "aggregators" (digital intermediaries connecting buyers and sellers) and "primary employers" (individual or organizations engaging platform-based workers).
- The Bill proposes a Welfare Board. The Minister in charge of the Labour Department will be the chairperson of the board and at least one-third of its nominated members will be women. It will also have two members each from gig workers and aggregators to be nominated by the state government.
- The board will ensure registration of gig workers and aggregators operating in the state and establish a social security and welfare fund for gig workers.
- The Welfare Board will create a "Social Security and Welfare Fund" comprising contributions made by individual workers, State government aids, other sources and a 'welfare cess' a cut from each transaction which the aggregator is required to pay.

- The rate of the welfare cess will not exceed 2% nor fall short of 1% of the value of each transaction and aggregators are required to submit the amount within the first five days of a month.
- The Bill provides gig workers access to general and specific social security schemes and opportunity to be heard for any grievances and appropriate grievance redressal mechanism.
- The aggregator's duties under the Bill include: depositing welfare cess on time, updating the database of gig workers and documenting any variations in numbers within one month of such changes.
- If they fail to comply, they will be fined up to 5 lakh for the first offence and 50 lakh for further violations; primary employers will pay up to 10,000 for the first offence and 2 lakh for subsequent violations.

26th JULY, 2023

OneWeb to set up India's first satellite network portal site

- **Context:** The Gujarat government's Department of Science and Technology (DST) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with One Web India Communications Pvt Ltd to establish a 'satellite network portal site' in Mehsana, Gujarat.

Key Highlights:

- OneWeb Network Access Associates Limited is a communications company that aims to build broadband satellite Internet services. The company is headquartered in London.
- It is powered by a constellation of 648 low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites.
- It enables high-speed, low latency connectivity for governments, businesses and communities everywhere around the world.

- India's Bharti Enterprises is a major investor in OneWeb group.
- The portal site will serve as a signal and data downlink and uplink terminal or base station on the ground, an intermediary for data transmission through satellite tracking antenna systems.
- The portal site will aim to provide affordable connectivity to various sectors including the government, offering continuous and secure satellite internet at affordable rates nationwide.
- The setting up of this portal site will require a slew of regulatory approvals from the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) and spectrum allocation from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
- The decision to set up the satellite network portal site in Gujarat was based on geographical and business interests, with Gujarat's long coastline making it suitable for maritime sector coverage.

Meri Maati, Mera Desh campaign

- **Context:** The Union government has launched the Meri Maati, Mera Desh campaign.

Key Highlights:

- The Meri Maati Mera Desh campaign is envisaged as a culminating event of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebration of 75 years of Indian Independence.
- A memorial called "Shilaphalakam" will be built in every village or panchayat across the country to pay tribute to those who laid down their lives during the freedom struggle or defence personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty to mark 75 years of Independence.
- The memorials will be inaugurated between August 9 and August 15, 2023.
- A solemn pledge will be taken by people at the memorial site, affirming their commitment to the country.
- Work for the memorial may be executed through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), leveraging local materials and resources.

- Veeron Ka Vandan will facilitate freedom fighters, and the families of deceased freedom fighters.
- Vasudha Vandhan envisages every gram panchayat or village renewing "Mother Earth by planting 75 saplings of indigenous species.
- Volunteers have been tasked with collecting "mitti" — earth — from each of the panchayats or villages and bring them to the block level. From each block, a "mitti kalash", or an urn carrying this earth, will be carried to Delhi. The soil from all parts of the country will be utilized to develop a unique garden, called Amrit Vatika.
- In urban areas, events will be organized at local bodies, notified area councils, Cantonment Boards, and town panchayats from August 9 and 15 and in bigger municipalities and municipal corporations from August 16 to 20.

CERT-In cautions against ransomware 'Akira' attack

- **Context:** The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has issued a warning about a new internet ransomware virus named 'Akira.'

Key Highlights:

- A new Internet ransomware virus called 'Akira' has surfaced in cyberspace, designed to steal crucial personal information and encrypt data, thereby coercing individuals into paying ransom money.
- This ransomware operates by targeting both Windows and Linux-based systems. Initially, the group gains unauthorized access to victims' environments. Once inside, they proceed to steal sensitive information from the victims.
- After extracting the data, the ransomware executes a two-pronged attack. Firstly, it encrypts the victim's files, effectively blocking their access to their own data and system. To coerce the victim into paying the ransom, the attackers engage in double extortion tactics.

27th JULY, 2023

Silvopasture systems

- **Context:** In light of the global deterioration of natural resources and forests, silvopasture systems offer a relevant solution to deforestation trends.

Key Highlights:

- Silvopasture is an ancient and proven practice that harmoniously integrates trees, forage and livestock on the same land. By combining these elements, silvopasture brings numerous environmental advantages, including improved local climate resilience.
- Silvopasture practices currently cover a vast expanse of 550 million hectares worldwide.
- Silvopasture can play a vital role in reversing the negative trend of deforestation for pasture land.
- The trees on silvopasture lands act as natural carbon sinks, sequestering five to 10 times more carbon than pastures without trees.
- Silvopasture systems also regulate local climatic conditions, buffering against temperature and wind extremes, providing a favorable living environment for livestock.
- The extensive root systems of trees within silvopasture plots contribute to nutrient cycling, improved soil stability and quality while effectively combating erosion.
- Soil infiltration rates in silvopasture systems surpass those of open pastures, enhancing water storage potential.
- The cattle utilized the silvopasture landscape more evenly as there was more shading throughout the plot, reducing heat stress during the warm-weather portions of the year.

Instant Settlement of Trades

- **Context:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has said it is working on real time settlement of transactions in the Indian stock exchange.

Key Highlights:

- 'Settlement' is a two-way process that involves the transfer of funds and securities on the settlement date. As of now, there is a lag between trade and settlement — the settlement date is different from the trade date.
- A trade settlement is said to be complete once purchased securities of a listed company are delivered to the buyer, and the seller gets the money.
- The current cycle of 'T+1' in India means trade-related settlements happen within a day, or within 24 hours of the actual transaction. The migration to the T+1 cycle came into effect in January 2023.
- India became the second country to start the T+1 settlement cycle in top listed securities after China, bringing operational efficiency, faster fund remittances, share delivery, and ease for stock market participants.
- Under the T+0 settlement cycle, if investors sell shares, they will get the money in their account instantaneously, and the buyers will get the shares in their demat accounts the same day.
- 'T+0', settlement of trades will be possible with the real-time payment system — Unified Payments Interface (UPI), online depositories, and technology stack.
- The investor's money will not get stuck with brokers or stock exchanges, they will get the money on the same day after the transactions happen.

28th JULY, 2023

Arth Ganga Model

- **Context:** Minister of State for Jal Shakti has informed Lok Sabha about the Arth Ganga Model and the initiatives taken to promote the reuse of treated water.

Key Highlights:

- In 2019, PM first introduced the concept of Arth Ganga during the first National Ganga Council meeting in Kanpur where he urged for a shift from Namami Gange (cleaning of Ganga) to the model of Arth Ganga.

- The Arth Ganga focuses on the sustainable development of the Ganga and its surrounding areas, by focusing on economic activities related to the river.
- The Arth Ganga model seeks to use economics to bridge people with the river. It strives to contribute at least 3% of the GDP from the Ganga Basin itself.

Under Arth Ganga, the government is working on six verticals:

1. **Zero Budget Natural Farming:** It involves chemical-free farming on 10 km on either side of the river, and the promotion of cow dung as fertilizer through the GOBARdhan scheme.
2. **Monetization and Reuse of Sludge & Wastewater:** It seeks to reuse treated water for irrigation, industries and revenue generation for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
3. **Livelihood Generation Opportunities by creating haats** where people can sell local products, medicinal plants and ayurveda.
4. **Increase public participation** by increasing synergies between the stakeholders involved with the river.
5. **Promote the cultural heritage and tourism** of Ganga and its surroundings, through boat tourism, adventure sports and conducting yoga activities.
6. **Promote institutional building** by empowering local administration for improved water governance.

Initiatives taken by the government to promote the reuse of treated water:

- **National Framework for Safe Reuse of Treated Wastewater:** It has been published by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG). The framework gives guidelines for the formulation of State reuse policy and is intended to build appropriate market and economic models for the reuse of treated wastewater.
- **Centre of Excellence (CoE)** on water reuse has been established in partnership with The Energy

Research Institute (TERI) on Water Reuse at the TERI Headquarters in New Delhi.

- **Thermal Power Plants (TPPs)** are required by the Ministry of Power's Tariff Policy 2016 to use treated sewage water from Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) operated by municipalities or other local authorities located within a 50 km radius.
- **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** has formulated a charter based participatory approach to facilitate the industries for water recycling and pollution prevention in major industrial sectors like Pulp & Paper, Sugar, Textile and Tannery in river Ganga main stem states.
- **Industry Specific Improvement:** Reuse and recycling of wastewater in Industries has been promoted in water intensive grossly polluting industrial units along river Ganga.

Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC)

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has launched a Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC).

Key Highlights:

- Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC) was conceived during India's G20 Presidency.
- It is an industry-led initiative that aims to promote resource efficiency and circular economy practices.
- Its aim is to facilitate and foster greater company-to-company collaboration, build advanced capabilities across sectors and value chains, bring learnings from diverse and global experiences of the coalition members and unlock on-ground private sector action to enhance resource efficiency and accelerate circular economy transition.
- The Coalition is structured around the three guiding pillars of partnerships for impact, technology cooperation and finance for scale.

- The Coalition has founding members representing 39 companies from 11 countries. Some of the founding members include companies like Maruti Suzuki, Coca Cola, Unilever, Nestle, Aditya Birla Group, Tata Power and Mahindra & Mahindra.
- RECEIC may be invited to the G20 Resource Efficiency Dialogue for annual convenings as well as sharing their experiences with the G20 and highlighting success factors to enhance resource efficiency and circular economy. RECEIC will also act as an overarching platform enabling industries to address information gaps and coordination challenges across the G20 members.

29th JULY, 2023

Urea Gold

- **Context:** The Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched “Urea Gold” during an event in Rajasthan.

Key Highlights:

- Urea Gold is a new variety of Urea fertilizer that is coated with sulphur. It is being introduced to address the Sulphur deficiency in soil and reduce input costs for farmers.
- Urea Gold facilitates a gradual release of nitrogen, thereby enhancing its availability and uptake by crops.
- It is more economical and efficient than neem-coated urea.
- Urea Gold not only substitutes traditional urea consumption but also reduces overall fertilizer usage.
- According to a report, 15 kg of Urea Gold provides comparable benefits to 20 kg of conventional urea, making it a more efficient and effective choice for farmers.
- It will save input costs for the farmers and also raise incomes for farmers with enhanced production and productivity.

Semicon India 2023

- **Context:** The Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the ‘Semicon India 2023’ conclave in Gujarat. This is the second edition of the conference, which was first held in 2022.

Key Highlights:

- It is organized by India Semiconductor Mission in partnership with industry and industry associations.
- Its aim is to make India a global hub for Semiconductor Design, Manufacturing and Technology Development which will help propel the vision of India Semiconductor Mission.
- Its theme is “Catalysing India’s Semiconductor Ecosystem”
- India would emerge as a global hub of semiconductor and chip-making industry.
- India has made huge progress in the electronic manufacturing sector which has grown from \$30 billion to over \$100 billion.
- India’s exports of electronic manufacturing have doubled in the past few years and today has over 200 mobile manufacturing units.
- Broadband users in the country have increased from 60 million in 2014 to 800 million.
- India has identified more than 300 colleges where semiconductor courses will be available. In the next 5 years, we will have more than 1 lakh Semicon design engineers.

National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2023

- **Context:** The Lok Sabha passed the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2023.

Key Highlights:

- The Bill provides for the constitution of the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission.

30th JULY, 2023

GOBARdhan Initiative

- **Context:** Union Minister for Jal Shakti has launched the Unified Registration Portal for GOBARdhan.

Key Highlights:

- As per Budget Announcement 2023-24, 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants under GOBARdhan scheme will be established for promoting the circular economy.
- These will include 200 compressed biogas (CBG) plants, including 75 plants in urban areas, and 300 community or cluster-based plants. These plants will be established primarily by the private sector with support from stakeholder Ministries/Departments.
- It was launched in 2018
- Its full form is Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARdhan)
- Its aim is to convert waste to wealth with the aim of promoting a circular economy.
- Its nodal ministry is Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti
- Gobardhan is an integral part of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) Phase II under Solid Waste Management.
- Its objectives is to support villages safely manage their cattle and agricultural waste, and make the villages clean.
- To support communities in converting cattle and organic waste into wealth using treatment systems.
- To convert organic waste, especially cattle waste, to biogas and organic manure for use in rural areas.
- To promote environmental sanitation and curb vector-borne diseases through effective disposal of waste in rural areas.
- To promote rural employment and income generation opportunities by involving entrepreneurs, SHGs and youth groups in setting up, operating and managing GOBARdhan units.

- It will consist of 29 members. The chairperson should have a postgraduate degree in nursing and midwifery and have at least 20 years of field experience.
- Functions of the Commission include Framing policies and regulating standards for nursing and midwifery education, providing a uniform process for admission into nursing and midwifery institutions, regulating nursing and midwifery institutions, and Providing standards for faculty in teaching institutions.
- The Bill provides for the constitution of three autonomous boards under the supervision of the National Commission. These are the Nursing and Midwifery Undergraduate and Postgraduate Education Board, to regulate education and examination at undergraduate and postgraduate levels;
- Every state government must constitute a State Nursing and Midwifery Commission where no such Commission exists under state law. It will consist of 10 members.
- Permission of the Assessment and Rating Board would be needed to establish a new nursing and midwifery institution, increase the number of seats, or start any new postgraduate course.
- The Board must decide on the proposals within six months. In case of disapproval, an appeal can be made to the National Commission and a second appeal can be filed with the Central Government.
- The Ethics and Registration Board will maintain an online Indian Nurses and Midwives' Register, containing the details and qualifications of professionals and associates.
- The central government will also establish the Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Council.
- The chairperson of the National Commission shall be the chairperson of the Council.
- According to the Indian Nursing Council records, till 2022, there were around 33.41 lakh nursing personnel registered in the country therefore the bill aims to streamline nursing education in India.

- For every district, the Government of India provides technical assistance as well as financial support of up to 50 lakhs to achieve the safe disposal of cattle and organic waste.

Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation Amendment) Bill, 2023

- **Context:** Lok Sabha has approved the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Key Highlights:

- The Bill amends the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 which regulates the mining sector.
- The bill seeks larger participation of the private sector in mineral exploration and production.
- The Bill brings lithium out from the list of restrictive atomic minerals which require mining grants from the Centre with only government companies given licenses.
- This would allow auction of this critical mineral used extensively for making batteries for electric vehicles.
- The bill proposes to bring eight of 12 atomic minerals, including lithium bearing minerals, zirconium bearing minerals, beach sand minerals, titanium bearing minerals, minerals of rare earth group containing uranium and thorium, into a new category – critical and strategic minerals. The Centre will have the power to give concessions for these minerals to both public and private mining companies.
- The bill empowers the central government to exclusively auction mining leases and composite exploration licenses for certain critical high value minerals such as gold, silver, platinum, copper.
- The Bill also dispenses with cumbersome forest clearances for mine reconnaissance and prospecting operations, making it easier for private firms to participate in exploration of the country's mineral resources.

- The bill empowers states to grant composite mineral license without having to get a central nod. This is expected to enable state governments to put up blocks for auction at a faster pace.

31st JULY, 2023

Worldcoin Project

- **Context:** OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has formally re-introduced the Worldcoin Project.

Key Highlights:

- Worldcoin is an iris biometric cryptocurrency project developed by Tools for Humanity. This organization was founded in 2019 by OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman, Max Novendstern, and Alex Blania.
- It is an initiative to create a digital network in which everyone can claim some kind of stake, and join the digital economy.
- The Worldcoin project uses a straightforward model that is Worldcoin volunteers known as "Orb operators" scan a person's iris pattern with a device called "Orb" to collect their biometric data and issue them with a World ID through the World app.
- With the World app, the members can claim the World Coin (WLD) crypto, which they may use for transactions or hold on to the asset in the hope that its price might rise.
- In return for signing up more people to the Worldcoin network, Orb operators get WLD, which is a token based on the Ethereum blockchain
- Worldcoin has deployed Orb operators in various locations, particularly in Delhi, Noida, and Bangalore, where people's irises are scanned to join the network
- Worldcoin explained that it wanted to include everyone in its network and that using biometric information to avoid duplication was a valid method for this.

ULLAS: Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Education has launched the mobile application of **ULLAS: Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram** on the occasion of three years of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Key Highlights:

- ULLAS stands for Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society.
- Its aim is to revolutionize education and literacy across India by fostering a learning ecosystem that reaches every individual, bridging the gaps in basic literacy and critical life skills.
- To impart basic education, digital and financial literacy and critical life skills to citizens aged 15 and above who lost the opportunity to go to school.
- It will focus on promoting functional literacy, vocational skills, and many important life skills like financial literacy, legal literacy, digital literacy, and empowerment of citizens to involve in nation-building of the country.
- The initiative operates through volunteerism. It encourages volunteers to participate as DUTY or Kartavya Bodh towards nation-building.
- Student volunteers will be incentivised with credits in school/university and appreciation through certificates, letters of appreciation, felicitation, among other means.
- According to government data, as many as 12.5 lakh students are out of school in the year 2022-23 with the number of boys greater than girls.
- The ULLAS initiative has the potential to bring these students back to learning by providing them with an open source learning platform.

