

Current Affairs Summary | January 2023

1. First All India annual state ministers conference on water

- Ministry of Jal Shakti organized the “1st All India Annual State Ministers Conference on Water” with the theme “Water Vision@2047” in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh on 5th & 6th January, 2023.
- The primary objective of the 2-days Conference was to gather inputs for the India@2047 and 5P vision from the different water stakeholders of the states, water being a state subject, and also to improve engagement and partnership with the states and to share the initiatives and schemes of the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- ‘5P’ mantra includes Political will, Public financing, Partnerships, Public Participation and Persuasion for sustainability.
- The Conference had 5 thematic sessions viz.
 - Water Security in Water Deficit, Water Surplus and Hilly Regions;
 - Water Use Efficiency including Reuse of Waste Water/ Grey Water;
 - Water Governance;
 - Climate Change Resilient Water Infrastructure, and
 - Water Quality.

2. K9-Vajras

- The defence ministry has started the process for procurement of 100 more K9 Vajras.
- K9 Vajra is a tracked self-propelled howitzer which offers high rate of fire at long-range and is compatible with Indian and standard NATO ammunition.
- A howitzer is a short gun for firing shells on high trajectories at low velocities.
- K9-Vajra is built by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) using technology transferred from South Korean defence major K9 Thunder, built by Hanwha Defence Co. Ltd.
- The induction of Dhanush, K9-Vajra and M777 Ultra Light Howitzers has enhanced the reach of artillery firepower on the northern borders.

3. The Deepfake technology

- Deepfakes are digital media – video, audio, and images edited and manipulated using AI. These are created to inflict harm on individuals and institutions.
- These have clear benefit in some areas, such as accessibility, education, film production, criminal forensics, etc.
- The first case of malicious use of deepfake was detected in pornography. 96% of deepfakes are pornographic videos, targeting women.

- Deepfakes can be used by non-state actors, such as insurgent groups and terrorist organisations, to show their adversaries as making inflammatory speeches.
- Media literacy, and meaningful regulations are required.

4. Electronic national agriculture market won platinum award in the digital empowerment of citizens category

- e-NAM, a flagship initiative of the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, has won the Platinum Award in the Digital Empowerment of Citizens Category in Digital India Awards 2022.
- **e-NAM is a digital platform integrating 1260 APMC mandis across 22 States and 3 UTs to facilitate online trading of 203 agriculture and horticulture commodities** to enable farmers to realize better remunerative prices for their produce.
- As on 31.12.2022, more than 1.74 Crore farmers & 2.39 Lakh traders have been registered on e-NAM portal. A total trade consisting of 69 million metric tonnes of worth Rs. 2.42 lakh crore has been recorded on e-NAM platform.
- Digital India Awards (DIA) has been instituted by MeitY, under the aegis of National Portal of India to encourage and honour innovative digital solutions/ exemplary initiatives by various government entities in the realm of Digital Governance.

5. SC majority ruling finds no flaw in 2016 demonetisation process

- A majority of four judges on a constitution bench of the supreme court found no flaw in the union government's demonetisation decision of 2016.
- The judgement was passed with a 4:1 majority. Justice BV Nagarathna disagreed with the majority, saying the govt's decision issued under section 26(2) of the RBI Act was unlawful.
- The other four judges pronounced that the statutory procedure under section 26(2) was not violated merely because the centre had taken initiative to advice the central board to consider recommending demonetisation.
- **Section 26(2) of the RBI act states that the central government may declare any bank note denomination as illegal tender, on the recommendation of the central board.**

6. Draft rules for online gaming?

- The ministry of Electronics and IT has released draft amendments in relation to online gaming.
- The proposals are aimed at safeguarding the interests of users by introducing set procedures and norms for verification and user engagement.

- It defined online gaming as a game that is offered on the internet and is accessible by a user through a computer resource if he makes a deposit with the expectation of earning winnings.
- The proposal endeavours to provide for greater transparency.
- Operators would have to inform the user about the policy related to withdrawal or refund of their deposit.
- Before hosting or publishing a game, the platform would have to verify it from the self-regulatory body associated with it.

7. Protecting the great Indian Bustard

- A SC appointed committee has recommended to reroute or make underground power lines that are proposed in Thar and Kutch deserts, to protect the Great Indian Bustards.
- The 7,200km of proposed overhead lines are meant to transfer solar power into the grid.
- The existing lines have been harming the birds, which have been dying in collision with the lines or from electrocution.
- The Great Indian Bustard is a grassland bird, mostly confined in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- It is listed as critically endangered by the IUCN Red List, and is listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

8. Centre clears ₹19,744 cr. Green Hydrogen Mission

- The union cabinet approved the national green hydrogen mission with an outlay of ₹19,744 crore.
- The mission aims at making the country a global hub to produce, utilise and export green hydrogen and its derivatives.
- The government expects to abate nearly 50 million tonnes (MT) of annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and cumulatively reduce fossil fuel imports estimated at over Rs 1 lakh crore.
- Hydrogen is said to be green if all its inputs are produced by renewable sources. Combusting hydrogen releases only heat and steam.
- The production mode of choice of green hydrogen is through the electrolysis of water. India currently lacks the required electrolyzers and needs cheaper renewable energy.
- 60% of India's energy comes from fossil fuel sources.

9. Jallikattu

- A batch of petitions seek to strike down a 2017 Tamil Nadu law that protects jallikattu, a traditional event involving bulls.

- Jallikattu had been allowed in Tamil Nadu through the Tamil Nadu regulation of jallikattu Act 2009.
- The Supreme Court had banned the practice of jallikattu in 2014. However, there were massive agitation in Chennai in 2017 to Anil the ban. Tamil Nadu passed the prevention of cruelty to animals ordinance in 2017 in that effect.
- The primary question involved is whether jallikattu should be granted constitutional protection as a collective cultural right under article 29(1). This article protects the educational and cultural rights of the citizens.
- In Tamil Nadu, jallikattu is both her religious and cultural events celebrated by the people of the state and its influence extends beyond the confines of caste and creed.

10. High-power Ladakh committee

- The ministry of Home Affairs has constituted a high powered committee for UT of Ladakh, to –
 - Discuss measures to protect the regions unique culture and language taking into consideration its geographical location and strategic importance.
 - Ensure protection of land and employment for the people of Ladakh.
 - Strategise inclusive development and discuss issues related to empowerment of the Ladakh autonomous hill district councils of leh and Kargil.
- As per 2011 census, nearly 80% of population in Ladakh are tribals. Civil society groups in Ladakh have been demanding protection of land, resources and employment since the removal of article 370.
- The 6th schedule under article 244 of the constitution protects the autonomy of tribal populations through creation of autonomous development councils which can frame laws on land, public health and agriculture.
- The government is not keen to give any special status to Ladakh. The ministry of Home Affairs has informed a parliamentary standing committee recently that the objective for inclusion of tribal population under the 6th schedule is to ensure their overall socio economic development.

11. UGC unveils draft norms to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India

- The university grants Commission has announced draft norms for facilitating foreign universities and educational institutions to set up campuses in India.
- A foreign university with a rank among the top 500 global rankings or a foreign educational institution of repute in home jurisdiction can apply to the UGC to set up a campus in India.
- The application will be considered by a standing committee appointed by the UGC which will submit its recommendation within 45 days.
- The initial approval will be for 10 years, which can be extended.

- Autonomy in determining fees and a 90 day approval process Archie highlights of the draft.

12. Kuki-chin refugees from Bangladesh

- Several members of Kuki-chin community were pushed back by the border security force.
- Kuki-Chin people are from Bangladesh and they share ethnic ties with the Mizos.
- They flat their homes following armed conflicts between Bangladesh army and an ethnic insurgent group Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA).
- In India, all undocumented nationals are governed as per the provisions of the foreigners' act 1946, the registration of foreigners' act 1939, the passport act of 1920 and the citizen act of 1955, as the country is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on refugees.
- Rajya Sabha member from parliament assert it that not allowing the 'Ethnic Mizos' from Bangladesh would amount to discrimination on ethnic grounds as in the 1970s thousands of displaced chakmas from Bangladesh were allowed to enter India and settle in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

13. Supreme Court directs committee to build a framework to ensure road safety

- The Supreme Court directed its committee led by a former judge to meet with the road transport secretary within two weeks and workout a framework to mould state specific guidelines for electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety.
- A bench of Supreme Court led by the Chief Justice agreed that urgent steps need to be taken to enforce section 136A of the motor vehicles act 1988, which deals with electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety.
- The provision to keep an electronic eye on errant drivers was introduced in 2019 in the act.

14. Bird Flu in Kerala

- Five outbreaks of avian flu have been reported in Kerala in the last three or four months alone.
- This has critically hit the poultry industry and the livelihood of hundreds of farmers.
- Kerala's wetlands, which habitats more than 80% of duck population, are under threat due to outbreaks of bird flu. Many of these wetlands come under Ramsar sites.
- There is no effective vaccination against bird flu.
- Experts are demanding diagnostic studies to control the infection.

- Avian influenza or Bird flu is a disease caused by Avian Influenza (AI) Type A virus.
- It is a zoonotic disease.

15. Mercury as a superconductor

- In 1911, Dutch physicist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes discovered superconductivity in mercury.
- Superconductors are materials that conduct electricity with no resistance. They can carry current without losing any energy.
- Currently, superconductors can be made only at temperatures far below zero.
- At a very low temperature, called the threshold temperature, solid mercury offers no resistance to the flow of electric current.
- Scientists later classified mercury as a conventional superconductor as it could be explained by the Bardeen-Cooper-Schrieffer (BCS) theory.
- Recently, a group of researchers projected a clear picture of how superconductivity emerges in mercury.
- In BCS superconductors, vibrational energy released by the grid of atoms encourages electrons to pair up, forming so called Cooper pairs which can move like water in a stream facing no resistance to their flow at the threshold temperature.
- One electron in each pair in mercury occupied a higher energy level than the other which lowered the coulomb repulsion between them and nurtured superconductivity.

16. Generative AI

- Generative AI is a technological advancement that uses machine learning and artificial intelligence to create new forms of media, such as text, audio, video and animation.
- It has the potential to revolutionise many industries by automating the creation of content and enabling the generation of new ideas.
- It can also help create and simulate complex engineering, design and architecture.
- However, it also raises ethical concerns about the potential for biased or inaccurate content to be generated and disseminated.

17. 13th ministerial level meeting of the India-United States Trade Policy Forum (TPF)

- Highlights -
 - Bilateral trade in goods and services continued to rise rapidly and reached about \$160 billion in 2021

- India appreciated the resumption of inspections by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and asked the U.S. side to also resume inspections of new facilities and non-priority areas at the earliest.
- The Ministers welcomed the finalization of the Turtle Excluder Device (TED) design.

18. The rights of same-sex couples

- The Supreme Court has transferred to itself petitions pending in several high courts seeking legal recognition of same sex marriage.
- Petitioners are looking for an authoritative ruling legalising same sex marriage, especially on the question of whether it will be brought within the ambit of special Marriage Act of 1954.
- Petitioners argue that denying the community the same rights as heterosexual couples violates article 14, 19 and 21 of the constitution.
- It also violates article 16 of UDHR, which states that men and women of full age have the right to marry without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion.
- The special Marriage Act of 1954 was formulated to validate inter cast and inter-religious marriages of Indian nationals.

19. Ozone layer healing, hole will mend by 2066, says UN

- According to a new UN report, the ozone hole above Antarctica will heal in about 43 years.
- This was asserted in the scientific assessment, that is held once in every 4 years.
- The Antarctic ozone hole was discovered in 1985 by Farman, Gardiner and Shanklin.
- It was caused by the chemical reactions on polar stratospheric clouds in the cold Antarctic stratosphere, due to excess of chlorine and bromine in the atmosphere.

20. Remote Voting Machines

- The election Commission of India has announced its intention of introducing remote voting across the country.
- This will enable voters who are residents elsewhere to vote in their home constituencies.
- Remote voting machines will be used for the purpose.
- For this, instead of a fixed ballot paper sheet, the machine has been modified to have an electronic dynamic ballot display which will present different

candidate lists corresponding to the constituency number of the voter read by a constituency card reader.

- However, various aspects regarding electoral rolls, validation, counting and VVPAT audit, polling agents, etc. are still unanswered.
- **The Election Commission is a constitutional body, established by article 324 of the Indian constitution.** It has the powers of superintendence, direction and control of elections.

21. No change in air quality in most cities covered by national programme

- Air quality has improved in only 49 out of 131 cities, even after 4 years since the introduction of the national clean air program.
- Only 38 of the 131 cities that were given annual pollution reduction targets managed to meet the targets for 2021- 22.
- **The NCAP aims to bring 20%- 30% reduction in pollution levels from PM2.5 and PM10 particles by 2024, using 2017 pollution levels as a base.**
- It covers 132 of India's most polluted or so called non attainment cities.
- A non attainment city is defined as a city whose air quality did not meet the national ambient air quality standards of 2011 to 2015.

22. 83rd All India Presiding Officers Conference

- The 83rd All India presiding officers conference began on 11th January.
- **The main agenda in the conference were the following – India's G20 leadership, relations between judiciary and legislature, effective functioning of parliament and assemblies, etc.**
- The conference also discussed steps on making parliament and legislature more effective and accountable.
- The All India Presiding Officers' Conference (AIPOC) is the apex body of the Legislatures in India. It is the largest gathering of presiding officers of the countries legislative bodies.
- The conference is chaired by the Lok Sabha speaker.

23. ₹2,600 crore initiative for banks to promote digital payments

- The union cabinet has approved and **outlay of Rs 2600 crore to promote payments using RuPay cards and UPI.**
- Banks will be provided this incentive money to **promote such digital payments.**
- The fund will be paid to banks in view of the lack of a merchant discount rate for UPI and RuPay transactions. Merchant discount rate is a Commission on digital transactions.

- Rupee and Payment (RuPay) is a debit and credit card payment network of India. Currently, it can function in Singapore, Bhutan, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, along with India.
- Unified Payment Interface (UPI) is a cashless payment system that links multiple bank accounts into a single mobile app, for faster payments. It was launched in 2016 by NPCI.

24. UNIGME Report

- The UNIGME report released on 10th January, estimates that globally 5 million children died before their 5th birthday in 2021.
- India's share in these child mortalities was estimated at about 7 lakh under-5 deaths.
- The sample registration system 2022 showed that the infant mortality rate in Madhya Pradesh was sixfold of the rate in Kerala.
- There are two root reasons for child deaths –
 - Children being born too early (preterm births). They are at 2-4 times higher risk of death after birth.
 - Stillbirths – a baby who dies anytime after 22 weeks of pregnancy but before or during the birth.
- For reducing still births and preterm births, the focus must be on improving access to family planning services, antepartum services, counselling and identification, management of risk factors. The interventions can be best delivered if data on pre time births and stillbirths are better recorded and reported.
- United Nations Inter-agency Group for child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME) was formed in 2004 to share data on child mortality. It is led by UNICEF.
- It releases two reports annually – 'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality', and 'Never Forgotten'.

25. The Joshimath crisis

- By January 11, 723 houses from the town of Joshimath had developed major or minor cracks. About 145 families have been temporarily moved to safer locations.
- Since the town is built on the deposits of an old landslide, the slopes can be destabilised even by slight triggers.
- Joshimath's geological setting combined with unplanned and rampant construction has resulted in the land subsidence.
- The town is also in zone V, which denotes the highest risk of seismic activity. Moreover, it is prone to extreme weather.
- The floods of June 2013 and February 2021 heightened erosion in the area, which worsened the subsidence and vulnerability to landslides.

- Residents have blamed **NTPC's Tapovan Vishnugad Hydro Power Project** for the incident.

26. Three multi-state societies to procure and distribute seeds

- The union cabinet has approved the setting up of 3 national level multi state cooperative societies to act as an apex body for procurement, processing, marketing and distribution of seeds.
- The societies will help protect indigenous natural seeds from extinction.
- These **societies will be formed under the provisions of Multi-state cooperative societies (MSCS) Act, 2002.**
- Multi state cooperative societies are such cooperative societies that function in more than one state. Their board of directors contain representatives from all the state where the MSCS functions.
- **Maharashtra has the highest number of MSCSs in India.**

27. Health ministry data on community health centres

- **India has a shortfall of nearly 80% of the required specialists at community health centres,** according to a report of the Union Health Ministry.
- The CHCs are 30 bed block level health facilities which are ideally supposed to provide basic care related to surgery, gynaecology, Paediatrics and general medicine.
- **There are about 6064 CHCs across India.**
- The requirement of specialist doctors has increased by 63.8%, whereas there is only an increase of 26.3% in the actual number of specialists.
- **The rural healthcare system in India comprises of –** Sub Centres (SCs) - the most peripheral and first contact point between the primary health care system and the community; Primary Health Centres (PHCs) - the first contact point between village community and the Medical Officer and Community Health Centres (CHCs) - established and maintained by the State Government under MNP/BMS programme.
- A CHC is required to be manned by four Medical Specialists i.e. Surgeon, Physician, Gynaecologist and Paediatrician.

28. Human Rights Watch report 2023

- **The World Report 2023 of the Human Rights Watch** said that Indian authorities had **'intensified and broadened'** their crackdown on activist groups and the media throughout 2022.
- It added that rights groups were harassed by the Indian authorities throughout the country through tax raids, use of FCRA, and other allegations.

- The report noted the increasingly liberal steps taken by the SC in India, citing the ruling to halt colonial sedition law, and the banning of two finger test.
- The Human Rights Watch is an international NGO, that conducts advocacy on human rights. It is headquartered in New York.
- It was founded in 1978.
- It releases its World Report annually, analysing the status of human rights in the countries worldwide.

29. Kollam – the first constitution literate district

- The Kollam district panchayat, District Planning Committee and the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) had jointly launched a seven month constitution literacy campaign.
- Around 16.3 lakh people in the district above the age of 10 have been educated on various aspects of the constitution.
- The process involved 2200 trainers which were called ‘senators’.
- Kollam was officially declared India’s first constitution literate district by chief minister of Kerala on 14th January.

30. MV Ganga Vilas

- The Prime Minister flagged off the world’s longest river cruise- MV Ganga Vilas.
- The cruise runs from Kashi to Dibrugarh.
- MV Ganga Vilas is the first indigenously made cruise vessel in India, having a capacity of 36 tourists with all the modern amenities.
- It will cover a distance of 3200 kilometre in roughly 51 days of reaching Assam’s Dibrugarh through Bangladesh.
- The project has been supported by the inland waterways authority of India (IWAI). However, the cruise is operated by Antara cruises, a private player.

31. Voice of Global South Summit

- Voice of Global South Summit–2023 was themed as “Energy Security and development: Roadmap to Prosperity”.
- The summit was inaugurated by Hon’ble Prime Minister on 12th January 2023 as an important group of nations to collaborate on political, economic, social, environmental, cultural, and technical issues.
- The session served as a platform to generate ideas from the developing world for achieving energy security, which is affordable, accessible and sustainable.
- The Voice of Global South Summit is aimed at achieving “Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose” and is in line with Hon’ble Prime Minister’s vision to shape a

positive G20 agenda through consultation with G20 countries and members of the global south.

32. The Venus mission 'Shukrayaan 1'

- ISRO is yet to receive approval from the union government for the Venus mission. The mission could be postponed to 2031.
- ISRO's Venus mission, Shukrayaan 1, was expected to be launched in December 2024.
- It will be an orbiter mission. It is expected to study Venus geological and volcanic activity, emissions on the ground, wind speed, cloud cover and other planetary characteristics.
- Both the US and the European Space agencies have Venus missions planned for 2031 – VERITAS and EnVision.

33. Indian Financing assurances to IMF for Sri Lanka

- India sent financing assurances to the IMF, becoming the first of Sri Lanka's creditors to officially back its debt restructuring programme.
- This takes Sri Lanka one step closer to getting a crucial \$2.9 billion package from the IMF.
- China, Japan and India are Sri Lanka's three largest bilateral lenders.
- Financing assurance is an IMF policy to help mobilize financial support from the international banking community for countries experiencing debt-servicing difficulties.
- Under the policy, the IMF would not make its resources available to a member undertaking an adjustment program until receiving assurances that the financing for the program would be forthcoming.

34. China's population declines in 2022

- China's population declined by 8,50,000 in 2022. This was a first such fall since a nationwide famine in 1961.
- According to a UN report released last year, India will overtake China as the world's most populous nation in 2023.
- The current trends reflect changing social values in China as families choose to have fewer children.
- The government's U turn from years of harsh 'one child policy' have failed to boost birth rates.
- In 2021, Beijing's family planning authority allowed couples to have a 3rd child for the first time.

- China had introduced one child policy in 1980 to avoid economic repercussions of having large population. However, from 2016 the Chinese government finally allowed two children per couple.

35. Spot bellied eagle owl

- A spot bellied eagle owl (*Bubo Nipalensis*) was spotted for the first time in the Seshachalam forest in Andhra Pradesh.
- The bird is found on large trees in thick forests and is spread across the Indian subcontinent.
- It measures 20- 25 inches in length and weighs between 1.5 kg and 2 kg.
- It feeds on small rodents and lizards.
- It is also called the 'ghost of the forest' in India and 'devil bird' in Sri Lanka, as it makes a strange scream similar to humans.
- It is registered as least concerned by IUCN.

36. ASER Report 2022

- The annual status of education report (ASER) 2022 declared that the learning gap has widened for foundational skills in reading and arithmetic as a result of closure of the schools during pandemic.
- However, student enrolment has increased significantly. Government schools have seen a sharp increase in children involved from 65.6% in 2018 to 72.9% in 2022.
- The reading ability and numeracy skills of children have dropped to pre 2012 levels.
- ASER is released by Pratham, a NGO. It is based on household survey conducted across 616 rural districts covering children of age group 3 to 16.
- The report has been brought out after 4 years.

37. Nominations for UNESCO Heritage site

- The centre has decided to nominate Assam's Charaideo Maidams for the UNESCO World Heritage Site status this year.
- Charaideo Maidams are Ahom equivalent of the ancient Egyptian pyramids.
- There is currently no World Heritage site in the category of cultural heritage in the North East.
- The Maidams of late medieval times (13th-19th century) represent the burial tradition of Tai Ahom community in Assam.
- The Ahom rule lasted for about 600 years until the British annexed Assam in 1826.
- Charaideo was the first capital of Ahom dynasty founded by Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha in 1253.

38. Employment days under MGNREGS at a five year low

- The average days of employment provided per household under MGNREGS was 42 days in this financial year. This is a five year low.
- There has been a decline in demand for jobs under this scheme, after economies revival from COVID-19.
- There are at least 9 States and union territories which have utilised less than 70% of projected person days.
- Person days are defined as the total number of workdays by a person registered under the scheme in a financial year.

39. 21 Andaman islands named after Param Vir Chakra awardees

- The Prime Minister named 21 largest unnamed islands in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago after 21 Param veer chakra awardees.
- This was done on the occasion of 126th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, celebrated as Parakram Diwas.
- To honour the memory of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Ross islands was renamed as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Dweep in 2018.
- Neil island was renamed as Shaheed Dweep Island and Havelock Island as Swaraj Island.

40. Dark sky reserve

- The district administration of Ladakh had designated six hamlets within the Chanthang Wildlife Sanctuary as 'dark-sky reserve'.
- The Changthang Wildlife sanctuary is a high altitude sanctuary located in Leh. India's first Dark Sky Reserve, is being set up by CSIR in Hanle, Ladakh, inside this sanctuary.
- Dark sky reserve refers to an area whose sky is free of light pollution.
- The night sky is becoming brighter due to 'sky glow' which has significant ecological health and cultural consequences.
- According to a research, non natural light had increased the brightness of the artificial glow of the night sky by 9.2- 10% every year between 2011 and 2022.
- Consequences of skyglow -
 - Lit beaches deter sea turtles from coming ashore to nest.
 - Sky glow keeps trees from sensing seasonal variations.
 - Clonfish eggs don't hatch when exposed to artificial light at night.

41. INS Vagir, fifth Scorpene submarine, commissioned

- The 5th scorpene class conventional submarine was commissioned into the Indian Navy as INS Vagir.
- The 6th and the last of the French origin scorpene class submarines, Vagsheer, is being built in India under technology transfers, and is currently under sea trials.
- Indian Navy now has 16 conventional and one nuclear submarine in service.
- INS Vagir is named after the Sand Fish, found in the Indian ocean. It is built under Project 75 of the Indian Navy that envisaged six scorpene class attack submarines.

The first submarine under this project, INS Kalvari, was commissioned in 2017.

42. Purse seine fishing

- The Supreme Court allowed purse seine fishing off the Tamil Nadu coast.
- It has imposed stringent conditions to regulate the extent of purse seine fishing outside the 12 nautical mile limit off TN coast.
- Only vessels registered under the marine fishing regulation law would be allowed to do purse seine fishing.
- Tamil Nadu had vehemently objected to purse seine fishing even beyond the 12 nautical mile border.
- In purse seine fishing, a large vertical net is used to catch all fishes in the open ocean. The technique has been widely deployed on India's western coasts.

43. India and Egypt ties elevated to a 'strategic partnership'

- India and Egypt have agreed to elevate their bilateral ties to a strategic partnership.
- India has invited Egyptian president as the chief guest on Republic day. Egypt has also been invited as a special guest for the G20 summit.
- The Prime Minister asserted that the defence partnership between the two countries would help stabilise the region around the Arabian Sea.
- 5 memorandums of understanding were signed covering culture, cooperation on youth matters, cyber security, information and technology and public broadcasting.

44. Private firms to be a part of Monument Mitra Scheme

- The monument Mitra scheme will be revamped to enable private firms to partner for the upkeep of 1000 ASI monuments.

- The revamped scheme would be based on the corporate social responsibility model.
- The scheme was launched a few years ago under the ministry of tourism and was recently transferred to the Ministry of Culture.
- Around 500 agreements will be signed before August 15th 2023.
- 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme was launched in 2017 to develop heritage sites and make them tourist friendly. Under this scheme, successful bidders selected for adopting the sites were called as monument mitras.

45. India France Bilateral Naval Exercise – Varuna

- The 21st Edition of the Bilateral Naval Exercise between India and France – Exercise Varuna commenced on the Western Seaboard on 16 Jan 23.
- The exercise was conducted over five days from 16 to 20 January 2023
- While the bilateral exercise between the two navies were initiated in 1993, it was christened as 'VARUNA' in 2001 and has become a hallmark of India – France strategic bilateral relationship.
- The exercise facilitates operational level interaction between the two navies to foster mutual cooperation for good order at sea, underscoring the shared commitment of both nations to security, safety and freedom of the global maritime commons.

46. Aditya L1 mission to be launched by June-July

- The Aditya L1 mission will be launched by ISRO by June- July this year.
- It is the first Indian space mission to observe the sun and the solar corona.
- The Aditya L1 mission will be launched by ISRO to the L1 orbit, which is the first Lagrangian point of the Sun-Earth system.
- L1 orbit allows Aditya L1 to look at the Sun continuously.
- Lagrange points are positions in space where the gravitational forces of two bodies is such that it produces enhanced regions of attraction and repulsion.
- The L1 point for Earth and Sun is about 1.5 million km from Earth.
- A satellite placed in L1 orbit can view the sun without any eclipses.

47. Asian Waterbird Census 2023

- The Asian waterbird census (AWC) 2023 has recorded a 65% increase in water birds in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram district.
- The annual census was jointly conducted by WWF- India.
- However concerns were raised on the quality of habitats across all the wetlands. Nearly all wetlands have been facing threats from anthropogenic activities.

- The AWC is a citizen science programme initiated in 1987 in the Indian subcontinent.
- It operates in 143 countries to collect information about water birds at wetland sites.
- In India it is jointly coordinated by the Bombay Natural History society and the wetlands international.

48. Cheetah project to bring in 12 big cats from South Africa

- India and South Africa have signed an agreement to translocate 12 cheetahs to India.
- They will be reintroduced at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh by February end.
- 8 such cats were brought from Namibia in September last year.
- The initial batch of cheetahs from South Africa will be followed by transport of batches of 12 annually for the next 8- 10 years.

49. Student enrolments in higher studies rose by 7.5% in 2020-21: AISHE data

- The data of All India survey on higher education 2020- 2021 was released recently by the union education ministry.
- It showed a 7.5% increase in student enrolments across the country from 2019- 20 figures.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic there was a 7% rise in enrolments in distance education programmes.
- There was a notable increase in OBC student enrolment since 2014- 15 of around 32%.
- Female enrolment had increased 249% of the total enrolments in 2020- 21 compared with 45% the previous year.
- The AISHE report is annually released by the department of higher education to provide the status of higher education in the country. It has been conducted since 2011.
- The survey collects detailed information on student enrolment, teacher's data, infrastructural information, financial information, etc.

50. Successful training launch of Short-Range Ballistic Missile – Prithvi-II

- A successful training launch of a Short-Range Ballistic Missile, Prithvi-II was carried out on January 10, 2023.
- Prithvi-II is an indigenously developed Surface-to-Surface Missile Short-Range Ballistic Missile (SRBM)
- A well-established system, Prithvi-II missile, has been an integral part of India's nuclear deterrence.

- The Prithvi I missiles have been in service with the Indian Army since 1994.
- Prithvi II missiles have been in service since 1996.

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