

1. Cyclone Asani

Topic: Geography

In News: Cyclone Asani is expected to bring heavy rain in and strong winds in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

More on the Topic:

- The name Cyclone Asani was suggested by Sri Lanka.
- Cyclone Asani is the first cyclone of 2022 is set to hit Andaman and Nicobar.
- Over the North Indian Ocean region, covering the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, the pre-monsoon months of March to May remain an active cyclone season.
- On average, 5-6 tropical cyclones make landfall in India each year.
- The subcontinent with a long coastline of **8041 kilometres** is exposed to nearly **10 per cent of the world's tropical cyclones**.
- Of these, majority of cyclones have their initial genesis over the **Bay of Bengal** and strike the East coast of India.



About Cyclones:

- Cyclones are caused by **atmospheric disturbances around a low-pressure area** distinguished by swift and often destructive air circulation. Cyclones are usually accompanied by violent storms and bad weather.
- The air circulates **inward in an anticlockwise direction in the Northern hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern hemisphere**.
- Cyclones are classified as: (i) extra tropical cyclones (also called temperate cyclones); and (ii) tropical cyclones.

How Cyclones are Named?

- In 2000, a group of nations which is called **WMO/ESCAP (World Meteorological Organisation/United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific)**, decided to start naming cyclones.
- The group is comprised of **Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand, region**.

- The WMO/ESCAP expanded to include five more countries in 2018 — **Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.**
- Each country sent in suggestions and they were finalized to prepare a list by the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones (PTC).

Source: Indian Express

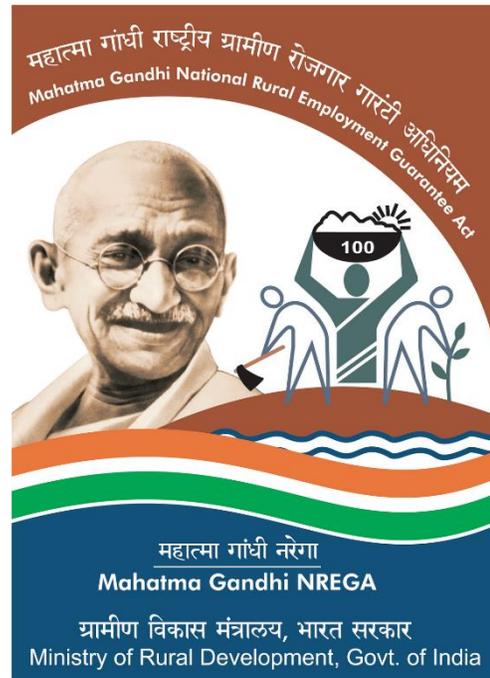
2. MGNREGA

Topic: Government Schemes

In News: The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj has submitted its report on the functioning of the MGNREGA to the Lok Sabha recently.

More on the Topic:

- Following are the critical observations by the committee.
- There are unproductive works due to lack of planning and effective supervision.
- There is Wide disparity in the wage rate between one state to another.
- There is delay in releasing funds.
- Technical challenges to transfer of funds exist. It is due to either a dormant Aadhaar or the bank account not being functional.
- The Gram Sabha is not conducting regular social audits of all projects taken up within the Gram Panchayat.



Recommendations:

- Increase the number of guaranteed working days from 100 to at least 150.
- There is a need for regularly reviewing the scope and nature of work permitted under the MGNREGA.
- It emphasised the need to increase the permissible work taking into account the local geographical terrain and local requirements to avoid unproductive work.

About MGNREGA:

- The scheme was Enacted in 2005 with the ambitious aim of **providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household**, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- The scheme has become a powerful tool for ensuring inclusive growth in rural India.
- The Act covers the entire country except for districts that have a 100% urban population.

Implementation of the scheme:

- Within 15 days of submitting the application or from the day work is demanded, wage employment will be provided to the applicant.
- Right to get unemployment allowance in case employment is not provided within fifteen days of submitting the application or from the date when work is sought.
- Social Audit of MGNREGA works is mandatory, which lends to accountability and transparency.
- The Gram Sabha is the principal forum for wage seekers to raise their voices and make demands.
- It is the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat which approves the shelf of works under MGNREGA and fix their priority.

Source: Indian Express

3. 'Finlandization'

Topic: International Relations

In News: Despite several rounds of talks between the representatives of Russia and Ukraine, it remains unclear when and how the war might end. Among the scenarios that have been seen as potentially workable is the "Finlandization" of Ukraine.



More on the Topic:

- 'Finlandization' refers to the policy of strict neutrality between Moscow and the West that Finland followed during the decades of the Cold War.
- The principle of neutrality was rooted in **the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance that Finland signed with the USSR in April 1948.**

Ukraine and Finlandization:

- Ukraine, formerly a part of the Soviet Union, has increasingly tilted toward the West, economically and politically, while resisting Russian influence.
- In 2008, NATO said it planned eventually for Ukraine to join the alliance, a popular idea within the country, though it has never actually applied for membership and NATO officials say it would not happen any time soon.
- If Ukraine undergoes Finlandization model, following outcomes may be relevant:
- Ukraine should have **the right to freely choose its economic and political associations**, including with Europe.
- **Ukraine should not join NATO**, to avoid further invasion and attacks.

- **Ukraine should be free to create any government** compatible with the expressed will of its people.
- “Finlandization” would allow Moscow a heavy hand in Ukrainian affairs. It goes against what Ukraine has been striving for, that is joining NATO and the E.U.

Source: Indian Express

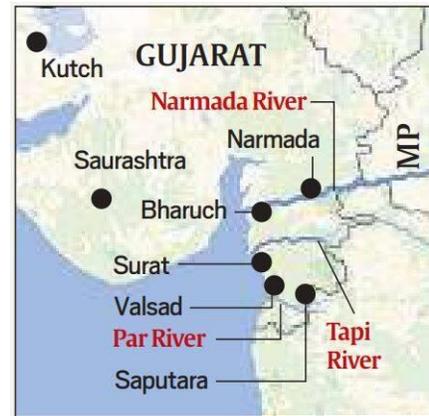
4. Par-Tapi-Narmada river-linking project

Topic: Geography

In News: The tribal communities of Gujarat are protesting against the Par-Tapi-Narmada river linking project.

More on the Topic:

- The Par Tapi Narmada link project was envisioned under the 1980 National Perspective Plan under the former Union Ministry of Irrigation and the Central Water Commission (CWC).
- The project proposes **to transfer river water from the surplus regions of the Western Ghats to the deficit regions of Saurashtra and Kutch.**
- It proposes to link three rivers namely **Par, originating from Nashik in Maharashtra and flowing through Valsad, Tapi from Saputara that flows through Maharashtra and Surat in Gujarat, and Narmada originating in Madhya Pradesh and flowing through Maharashtra and Bharuch and Narmada districts in Gujarat.**
- The link mainly includes the construction of seven dams, two tunnels, the 395-kilometre long canal and six powerhouses.



Issues with the Project:

- About **6065 hectares of land area will be submerged** due to the proposed reservoirs.
- A total of 61 villages will be affected, of which one will be fully submerged and the remaining 60 partly.
- The total number of affected families would be 2,509 of which 98 families would be affected due to the creation of the **Jheri reservoir, the only one in Maharashtra, spread over six villages.**
- The affected families may lose their lands or houses or both in the submergence when the reservoirs are created.
- The districts where the project will be implemented are largely dominated, by **tribals who fear displacement.**

Source: Indian Express

5. Zojila Pass

Topic: Geography

In News: The Zojila Pass, which provides key connectivity between the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh, was opened after a closure of 73 days as compared to the average 135 days in previous years, breaking a 60-year-old record.

More on the Topic:

- Zoji La is a high **mountain pass located in the Kargil district of Ladakh.**
- The pass links Leh and Srinagar and provides an important link **between Union Territories of Ladakh and Kashmir.**
- Zojila pass remains closed during winters due to heavy snowfall, cutting off Ladakh region from Kashmir.
- In 2018, the Zojila tunnel project was launched. The tunnel is Asia's longest and strategic bi-directional tunnel, which will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.



Source: PIB

6. UPI Lite

Topic: Economy

In News: NPCI has launched UPI Lite.

More on the Topic:

- UPI Lite will likely be used first to enable digital payments under ₹200 in rural areas.
- UPI Lite will enable feature phone users to make digital payments from their bank accounts.
- The first is a SIM overlay, and the other is a software-provisioned solution that will leverage over-the-air (OTA) updates.
- SIM Overlay is a technology that expands the functionalities of a phone's SIM card, allowing payments and other services to be carried out even without data availability.
- OTA, on the other hand, will have the solution delivered straight to the device's firmware.
- This is not the first time that the government is trying to push digital payments in rural areas.





- The NPCI has been offering UPI payments over **Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) networks** since 2012, but it hasn't picked up, primarily because it involves SMS charges, which are too high for rural users.
- There are other solutions such as **near-field communication (NFC) technology** that is being tested as well.
- **How it will Work:** A Virtual Payment Address (VPA), usually called the UPI ID, will be created through SMS. Once the UPI ID is created, the payer has to select the contact to whom a payment needs to be made.
- If the contact, too, has a UPI ID, the payer will simply need to click on the name, enter the amount and send the money.

Source: Hindu
