

**IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

❖ **Europe's concerns about the U.S. IRA**

➤ **CONTEXT: French President Emmanuel Macron during his two-day visit to the U.S. questioned Joe Biden about clean energy subsidies in the new Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which European countries believe are discriminatory to non-American companies.**

- Addressing lawmakers at the Library of Congress, Mr. Macron described the IRA as “super aggressive” toward European companies. The EU has asked for a resolution of its concerns before the Act kicks in on January 1 2023.

➤ **What is the U.S. IRA?**

- Signed into law on August 16 2022, the IRA is a \$430 billion package of federal spending, tax breaks, credits, and levies, aimed at fighting climate change, reducing healthcare costs, and making large corporations pay their “fair share” in taxes.

- The Act is a scaled-down version of Mr. Biden's ambitious Build Back Better plan that did not get the Senate's approval in 2021. Besides its goal of bringing down inflation, the Act is the biggest climate action package in U.S. history — earmarking \$370 billion for climate-focused funding and investments aimed at cutting emissions by around 40% below 2005 levels by 2030.

- The IRA combines climate action goals with industrial policy, aiming to transition to clean energy by incentivising local manufacturing of renewable energy components. It also seeks to reduce American reliance on China for materials and components for the clean energy industry.

- In order to bolster clean energy development in the U.S., the IRA provides consumer and industry-side incentives. To promote the use of electric vehicles (EV) and to secure domestic supply chains for their manufacturing, the federal tax incentive policy for EVs has been changed.

- Now, only passenger EVs assembled in North America are eligible for a \$7,500 tax credit incentive. Those who buy used EVs will be eligible for a \$4,000 tax credit if 40% of the critical minerals in the car batteries are extracted, processed and recycled in North America or a country having a free-trade agreement with Washington.

- The Act offers \$10 billion investment tax credit to build clean technology manufacturing facilities, two billion dollars in grants for refurbishing existing auto manufacturing facilities to make zero-emission vehicles, and up to \$20 billion in loans to build new EV manufacturing facilities across the country. It also offers billions in federal procurement to American-made clean technologies.

➤ **What are Europe's concerns?**

- Europe's high energy dependence on Russia led to energy shocks in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, leading to energy shortages, skyrocketing power prices, and a harsh winter.

- The EU fear that the IRA tax credits and subsidies to EVs and other green product makers in North America and free-trade partner countries put European companies at a disadvantage and may push these companies to move critical parts of their supply chains to America.

- The EU's own new green plan 'Fit for 55' is targeting to cut CO2 emissions from cars by 55% and vans by 50% by 2030 and all emissions from cars by 2035. For this, it will need to significantly increase its uptake of EVs.

- Although China dominates the EV purchasing market, Europe has also been posting high growth in EV demand vis-a-vis the total auto demand, even faster than the U.S.

- According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), nine of the top 10 countries by share of EVs in the total car stock are in Europe. To meet its emissions targets, the EU will benefit from its local automakers ramping up manufacturing, but the IRA raises fears of automakers moving to the U.S. Europe's fears may not be unfounded as several automakers, battery makers and energy companies have already made announcements or shown interest in setting up shop in America. South Korea and Japan have also raised similar concerns.

- For instance, Reuters reported that Swedish battery maker Northvolt was set to establish a lithium-ion battery factory in Germany, but after the IRA, the company's CEO said that it could get up to 800 million euros (\$836 million) in U.S. state subsidies, which was nearly four times what the German government was offering.

- EU members claim that around 200 billion euros of the subsidies are for locally produced content provisions, which they say potentially violates the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.

➤ **What is the U.S.'s stand?**

- At a joint press conference during Mr. Macron's visit, President Joe Biden said that there was room for “tweaks” in the IRA to “make it easier for European countries to participate” and that it was “never intended” to exclude cooperating countries. However, he stressed that the “U.S. makes no apology” for promoting American manufacturing and would continue to create jobs for its people.

**PRELIMS**

**1. Akash Weapon System**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) hands over Authority Holding Sealed Particulars of Akash Weapon System (Indian Army Version) to Missile Systems Quality Assurance Agency.

- Akash is the first state-of-the-art indigenous surface-to-air missile system which has been with Armed Forces for nearly a decade
- The development of the Akash was started by the DRDO in the late 1980s as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.
- Named after the original Sanskrit term for sky or space, Akash is primarily a Short Range Surface to Air Missile built to provide air defence cover to the vulnerable areas.
- The Akash weapon system can simultaneously engage multiple targets in group mode or autonomous mode.
- It has built-in Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM) features, which means that it has mechanisms on-board that can counter the electronic systems that deceive the detection systems.
- The entire weapon system has been configured on a mobile platform.
- A full Akash missile system comprises: a launcher, set of missiles, a control centre, an built-in mission guidance system, a C4I (command, control communication and intelligence) centres, supporting ground equipment along with a radar named Rajendra which accompanies each of the missile batteries.
- According to the Ministry of Defence, the Akash Missile system is 96 per cent indigenised, one of the highest proportions of the indigenisation.
- In 2020, the cabinet approved the Akash missile for exports after many friendly foreign countries showed interest in it during various international exhibitions.

➤ **The advanced versions of Akash**

- **Akash Prime:** The initial version of the Akash has an operational range of 27-30 km and a flight altitude of around 18 km.
- ✓ The Akash Prime has the same range as that of the earlier version but has a crucial new addition — that of an indigenous active Radio Frequency (RF) seeker for improved accuracy to hit aerial targets.
- ✓ Other improvements in the system ensures more reliable performance under low temperature environments at higher altitudes.
- **Akash-NG:** Akash-NG is a new generation SAM, primarily designed with an aim of intercepting high maneuvering aerial threats that have low Radar Cross Section (RCS), which is the electromagnetic signature of the object.
- ✓ The NG version has an extended range of up to 70 km, is sleeker, lighter and has much smaller ground system footprint.
- ✓ The RF seeker of the NG version operates in the Microwave Ku-band.
- ✓ The missile has a propulsion system of solid-fueled dual-pulse motor.
- ✓ Akash NG is canisterised, which means that it is stored and operated from specially designed compartments.
- ✓ In the canister, the inside environment is controlled thus along with making its transport and storage easier, the shelf life of weapons also improves significantly.

**2. Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Five states account for more than half of the 1,080 “legacy landfill sites” for which authorities are yet to propose remediation plans under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, which aims to clear all legacy dump sites by 2026, according to Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry’s SBM-U dashboard.

- Old waste at landfill sites that has remained dumped for more than three months is considered “legacy” dump sites.
- Launched in 2021, the second iteration of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban has the targets of creating “garbage-free cities” and 100% remediation of all legacy landfills by the end of the mission’s five-year cycle.
- The dashboard, is being updated as and when action plans are submitted by cities through the respective state governments to the ministry. As of December 6, the dashboard showed that 1,854 sites across the country, spread over 47,456.66 acres and with 18.67 crore tonnes of waste, were yet to be remediated. Of 1,080 sites for which

**TOP 5: STATES WHERE NO ACTION PLAN PROPOSED**



State	Total no. of dumpsites	*No. of sites	** Total waste
Karnataka	194	136	1,80,08,229
Rajasthan	152	128	1,19,09,240
Andhra Pradesh	123	115	75,28,688
Madhya Pradesh	175	111	51,79,192
Telangana	111	101	34,20,772

\*where remediation not proposed yet \*\*yet to be remediated (Ton)

remediation was yet to be proposed, 591 were in five states: Karnataka (136), Rajasthan (128), Andhra Pradesh (115), Madhya Pradesh (111), and Telangana (101).

- Delhi, where the three legacy landfills at Ghazipur, Bhalswa and Okhla has action plans approved for all three sites. About 84% of the 2.80 crore tonnes of legacy waste is yet to be remediated.
- The government has increased the funding for Delhi to clear its legacy landfills from Rs 436 crore to Rs 1,180 crore.
- Under the mission, municipalities are required to submit action plans for bio-remediation of legacy landfills. Depending on the composition, the waste is divided into refused derived fuel (RDF) for waste-to-energy plants, construction and demolition (C&D) waste for recycling by C&D plants and bio-soil that can be used to fill gaps in road construction.
- After clearing the dump sites, municipalities are required to firm up plans for alternative use of the land, which, according to the dashboard, is over 47,000 acres of urban land.
- **About SBM-U 2.0**
- SBM-U 2.0 envisions to make all cities 'Garbage Free' and ensure grey and black water management in all cities other than those covered under AMRUT, make all urban local bodies as ODF+ and those with a population of less than 1 lakh as ODF++, thereby achieving the vision of safe sanitation in urban areas.
- The Mission focus on source segregation of solid waste, utilising the principles of 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), scientific processing of all types of municipal solid waste and remediation of legacy dumpsites for effective solid waste management.
- **Features**
- Ensuring complete access to sanitation facilities to serve additional populations migrating from rural to urban areas in search of employment and better opportunities over the next 5 years (through more construction of public toilets).
- Complete liquid waste management in cities with less than 1 lakh population, this will ensure that all wastewater is safely contained, collected, transported and treated so that no wastewater pollutes our water bodies.
- Material Recovery Facilities, and waste processing facilities will be set up, with a focus on phasing out single-use plastic.
- All statutory towns will become at least ODF+; and all cities with <1 lakh population ODF++. Systems and processes will be in place so that all waste water is safely treated and optimally reused and no untreated wastewater pollutes water bodies.
- Regarding Solid Waste Management, it is expected that all cities will achieve at least 3-star Garbage Free certification under SBM-U 2.0.
- Special focus will be put on the well-being of sanitation and informal waste workers, through the provision of personal protective equipment and safety kits, linkages with government welfare schemes along with their capacity building.

### 3. Open Standard Digital Trunking Radio System' (OS-DTRS)

➤ **CONTEXT:** The Delhi Police will soon move to a more efficient internal communication system, aimed at faster exchange of information and bigger networks. The force is set to design, install and supply the 'Open Standard Digital Trunking Radio System' (OS-DTRS) and will phase out the current tetranet wireless network services.

#### ➤ **About**

- It will be a more efficient internal communication system, aimed at a faster exchange of information and bigger networks.
- The trunking system provides multiple channels and common groups for policemen. This way, they are communicating with more personnel using fewer groups. Groups are formed based on geographical area and function.
- It will also have a voice logger system, which can be used to describe a crime scene, interrogation details and evidence. The logs are saved in the system.
- The project's master site will be at the Delhi Police HQ.
- the master site will have OS-DTRS control and switching equipment, a network management system, 90 IP-based logger systems, 50-inch or bigger LED monitors, an antenna system, and maintenance systems.
- Equipment and services are expected to run for at least 10 years and fix network issues faced by personnel on the ground.

### 4. Major Rivers In Africa Ran Drier Than Usual In 2021, Finds WMO

➤ **CONTEXT:** According to a new UN report, the volume of water in Africa's major rivers decreased in 2021 compared to the average over the previous two decades. Water storage levels in river basins, on the other hand, have increased since 2002, a global anomaly, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

➤ **State of Global Water Resources Report**

- According to the first State of Global Water Resources report, published on November 29, 2022, the water discharge of the Niger, Volta, Nile, and Congo rivers in 2021 was less than the average calculated from 2002 to 2020.
- Since 2002, the water storage levels in these river basins, also known as terrestrial water storage (TWS), have gradually increased. The Congo and Nile river basins showed the most improvement.
- According to the report, water storage in the southern African river basins of the Zambezi and Orange was above normal.

➤ **Continent-wise terrestrial water storage in centimetres for the years 2002–2021**

➤ **Impact**

- Climate change may cause temperature increases in these river basins. The majority of this positive trend or increase has also resulted from an increase in TWS in a few hotspots, such as the Lake Victoria region.
- TWS was 'above normal' and 'much above normal' in Central Africa, but 'below normal' and 'much below normal' in North Africa and Madagascar.
- The pilot report is limited to streamflow conditions, terrestrial water storage, and the cryosphere's critical role and vulnerability (snow and ice cover).
- TWS decreased in all continents except Africa between 2002 and 2021, according to the report. However, the trend in other parts of the continent may indicate a different direction, it warned.
- But this does not bode well for the continent. Since October 2019, Lake Victoria's water levels have been rising to unprecedented levels.
- In Kenya, floods in 2020 displaced at least 800,000 people. The flooded rivers had diverted massive amounts of water into Lake Victoria, Africa's largest lake.
- The lake reached its highest level in decades in June 2021 as a result of long-term, intense rainfall, according to trends revealed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States.
- Climate change was blamed for the increase in water storage in Lake Victoria as a result of heavy rains.

5. **eSanjeevani**

➤ **CONTEXT: In a significant achievement, eSanjeevani, Govt. of India's free telemedicine service, has crossed another milestone by clocking 8 crore teleconsultations.**

➤ **About**

- It is a national telemedicine service that offers tele-consultations enabling patient to doctor consultations from the confines of their home, as well as doctor to doctor consultations.
- This eSanjeevani platform has enabled two types of telemedicine services viz. Doctor-to-Doctor (eSanjeevani) and Patient-to-Doctor (eSanjeevani OPD) Tele-consultations
- The former is being implemented under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWCs) programme.
- The telemedicine platform is hosting over 40 online OPDs, more than half of these are speciality OPDs which include Gynaecology, Psychiatry, Dermatology, ENT, Ophthalmology, antiretroviral therapy (ART) for the AIDS/HIV patients, Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) etc.
- eSanjeevaniOPD enables creation of Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA), which facilitate access and shareability of health data with consent of the beneficiary, with participating healthcare providers and beneficiaries as per Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
- eSanjeevani is an exemplification of the 'Make in India' initiative as it has been developed indigenously

6. **National Crisis Management Committee**

➤ **CONTEXT: The National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba met and reviewed preparedness of Central Ministries/Agencies, and State/Union Territory Governments to review preparedness for the possible cyclonic storm over the Bay of Bengal.**

- It is a committee set up by Government of India in the wake of natural calamity for effective coordination and implementation of relief measures and operations
- It is country's apex body to handle any emergency. This committee also issues directions to the Crisis Management Group which deals with matters relating to relief in the wake of major natural calamities and It includes Relief Commissioner and other nodal officers from various concerned Ministries.

➤ **Functions of the group**

- ✓ To review contingency plans formulated by various Ministries
- ✓ To review measures required for dealing with a natural disaster
- ✓ To coordinate the activities of the Central Ministries and the State Governments in relation to disaster preparedness & re

- At the national level, Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) and National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) are the key committees involved in the top-level decision-making with respect to Disaster Management (DM).
- A National Crisis Management Committee(NCMC) has been constituted in the Cabinet Secretariat.
- It deals with major crisis which have serious or national ramifications.
- **Functions:** Oversee the Command, Control and Coordination of the disaster response and give direction to the Crisis Management Group (CMG) as deemed necessary.
- **Composition of the Committee**
  - Cabinet Secretary -Chairman,
  - Secretary to Prime Minister- Member
  - Secretary (MHA)- Member
  - Other secretaries of concerned Ministries/Departments & agencies

### ANSWER WRITING

**Q. Has digital illiteracy, particularly in rural areas, coupled with lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) accessibility hindered socio-economic development? Examine with justification.**

Digital literacy is the ability to navigate the digital world. It focuses on using technology – like a smartphone, PC, e-reader, etc. – to find, evaluate, and communicate information. Digital literacy can play a powerful role in helping people connect, learn, engage with their community, and create more promising futures.

It has been reported that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in rural areas have slow uptake due to the low to no income, lack of ICT infrastructures, cultural differences, and many other reasons.

Digital illiteracy in the present time of the pandemic has hindered socio-economic development to a great extent in rural areas. It can be concluded so by:

- Children are not able to access quality education or attend virtual classrooms due to issues with internet connectivity coupled with frequent internet/electricity outages.
- Lack of digital knowledge among rural youth kept them away from capitalising on myriad of employment and income generation opportunities. For example, e-commerce, IT services, etc.
- Emphasis on digitisation and computerisation, while ignoring digital literacy, led to inaccessibility of government benefits and schemes to the vulnerable sections.
- Digital illiteracy among women and girl-child in rural areas has increased the gender imbalance. Social, cultural, and institutional barriers influence digital inclusion.

The digital divide is more than just an access issue and cannot be alleviated merely by providing the necessary equipment. The Standing Committee on Information Technology in January, 2019 concluded that the digital literacy efforts of the government are far from satisfactory.

The government needs to focus on information accessibility, information utilisation and information receptiveness. Various initiatives such as Digital India, Internet Saathi Program, DIKSHA, etc. are commendable steps that are leading to positive socio-economic development in rural areas.

### MCQs

1. With reference to World Meteorological Organization (WMO), consider the following statements:
  1. It is a United Nations specialized agency.
  2. WMO defines Terrestrial Water Storage as the total amount of water on the land surface and in the subsurface, including surface water, soil moisture, snow and ice, and groundwater.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 

a) 1 only                      b) 2 only                      **c) Both 1 and 2**                      d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. With reference to the National Crisis Management Committee, consider the following statements
  1. It is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.
  2. It works under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
  3. It is the apex body to handle emergency situations and implement relief measures during a natural calamity
 Select the correct Answer: using the code given below:
 

a) 1 and 3 only                      **b) 2 and 3 only**                      c) 2 only                      d) 3 only
3. Consider the following missiles:
 

1. Akash    2. Trishul    3. Brahmos    4. Nag    5. Prithvi

 Which of the above mentioned missiles were developed under the 'Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme' (IGMDP)?
 

a) **1, 2, 4 and 5 only**

b) 2, 3 and 5 only

c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only

d) All of the above

4. Recently seen in news "A4Revoltuion" refers to:
- Protests in Iran against country's strict female dress code.
  - Protests in China against the country's zero covid policy.**
  - JP Morgan commit climate neglect protests.
  - None of the above.
5. With reference to 'Near Field Communication (NFC) Technology', which of the following is/are correct?
- It is a contactless communication technology that uses electromagnetic radio fields.
  - NFC is designed for use by devices which can be at a distance of even a metre from each other.
  - NFC can use encryption when sending sensitive information.
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below.
- 1 and 2 only
  - 3 only
  - 1 and 3 only**
  - 1, 2 and 3
6. With reference to Yuan Wang 5 vessel of china consider the following statement
- Yuan Wang 5 designated as a research and survey vessel.
  - The Yuan Wang-class of tracking ships are used for tracking and support of satellite and intercontinental ballistic missiles by the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2**
  - Neither 1 nor 2
7. The expression "Kangaroo Court" often mentioned in news implies -
- A legal court that punishes the criminals
  - An illegal court that punishes people unfairly**
  - An official estimate
  - An approximate estimate
8. With reference to recently India-central Asia meeting of National Security Advisors consider the following statements
- This is the third time India is hosting a conclave of top security officials from Central Asian countries
  - Ajarbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan participated in the conclave
- Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2**
  - Neither 1 nor 2
9. Recently SEBI relaxes rules for government for PSUs disinvestment, with reference to disinvestment consider the following
- All the proceeds from the disinvestment of Centre Public Sector Enterprises will be channelized to National Investment Fund (NIF)
  - The Department of Economic Affairs under Ministry of finance is the nodal agency for disinvestment
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only**
  - 2 only
  - 1 and 2 both
  - Neither 1 or 2
10. The National Commission for Minorities recently held a meeting with the Sikh Intelligentsia for inviting suggestion/advice for commemoration of the "Veer Bal Diwas" , with reference to this news consider the following statements
- National commission for Minority announced in 2021 to mark December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas.
  - Decision to mark December 26 from 2022 onwards as Veer Bal Diwas in the memory of Guru Gobind Singh's sons.
- Which of the above statement/s is are not correct?
- 1 only**
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2