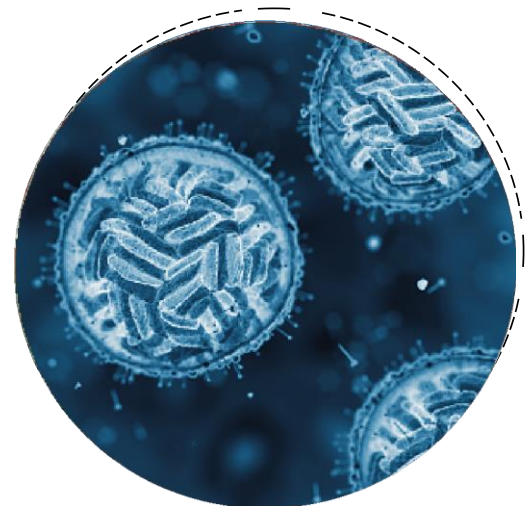


- It amends **CGST Act, 2017** to change **qualification for members of GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)** and **raise age limit of President and Members of GSTAT**.
- CGST Act 2017 provides for **levy and collection of CGST on intra-state supply of goods and services**.
 - ⊕ Act also **allows central government to set up GSTAT** on recommendation of GST Council.
- GSTAT is the **second appellate authority within GST framework** for hearing appeals against orders passed by Appellate Authority under CGST Act, 2017 and State GST Acts.
 - ⊕ **GSTAT composition: President, a judicial member, and two technical members.**
 - ◆ Persons eligible to be appointed as judicial member are **a judge of High Court, or a district judge or additional district judge having served for at least 10 years.**
- **Key changes introduced by Bill**
 - ⊕ **Change in qualification for members of GSTAT:** Allows **advocates with at least 10 years of experience** to be appointed as **judicial member**. They must have **substantial experience in matters relating to indirect taxation**.
 - ◆ **Minimum age** to be appointed as a **member or president of GSTAT** will be **50 years**.
 - ⊕ **Increases age limit for president of GSTAT from 67 to 70 years**, and for **members from 65 to 67 years**.

World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognizes Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)

- Following a recommendation of Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for NTD, WHO recognise Noma as an NTD.
 - ⊕ This recognition aims to **amplify global awareness, catalyse research, stimulate funding, and boost efforts to control Noma** through multi-sectoral and multi-pronged approaches.
- Noma (cancrum oris) is a severe **gangrenous disease of mouth and face**.
 - ⊕ It mainly affects **children aged 2–6 years old suffering from malnutrition, living in extreme poverty** with poor oral health.
 - ⊕ **Africa is most affected continent.**
- NTDs are a **diverse group of 20 conditions** that are mainly **prevalent in tropical areas**, where they affect more than **1 billion people who live in impoverished communities**.
 - ⊕ **Caused by a variety of pathogens** including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins.
 - ⊕ **NTDs include:** Dengue and chikungunya; Rabies, leishmaniasis; leprosy; lymphatic filariasis etc.
 - ⊕ **India has successfully eliminated certain NTDs** like guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws.
- **Initiatives taken by India to tackle NTD's**
 - ⊕ **Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic filariasis, 2018.**
 - ⊕ **National Kala-Azar (Visceral leishmaniasis) Elimination Programme.** ⊕ **National Vector Borne Disease (like Dengue) Control Programme.**



Global Initiatives to tackle NTDs London

- **Declaration on NTDs.**
- **Kigali declaration on NTDs adopts targets to eradicate or control NTDs by 2030.**

Kunming - Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) Completes one year

- ▶ KMGBF was adopted at the **Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) 15th Conference of Parties (CoP15)**.
 - ⊖ It replaced **Aichi Biodiversity Targets** (time period 2011-2020). ⊖ It is **legally non-binding** in nature.
- ▶ **Key highlights of KMGBF**
 - ⊖ **Four overarching goals for 2050:**
 - ◆ **Halt human-induced species extinction**
 - ◆ **Sustainable use of biodiversity**
 - ◆ **Equitable sharing of benefits**
 - ◆ **Closing the biodiversity finance gap** of \$700 billion per year.
 - ⊖ **It has set 23 Global Targets for 2030**, it includes-
 - ◆ **30 % conservation of land, sea, and inland waters,**
 - ◆ **30 % restoration of degraded ecosystems,**
 - ◆ **Integration of biodiversity into policies,**
 - ◆ **Halving the introduction of invasive species,** etc.
 - ⊖ **Funding: Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Fund, a Special Trust Fund by Global Environment Facility (GEF).**
 - ◆ **GEF** was established at Rio Earth Summit (1992) and World Bank serves as the GEF Trustee.
 - ⊖ **Monitoring and Reporting:** Countries to monitor and report progress every 5 years or less on a set of indicators.
- ▶ **Progress made by KMGBF:** It led to adoption of the **Treaty on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)**.

About CBD

- ⊖ It is an **international legal instrument (ratified by 196 nations, including India)**.
- ⊖ Adopted in 1992 at **Rio Earth Summit** (enforced in **1993**).
- ⊖ **Key objective-** Conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity etc.
- ⊖ **Main Protocols:**
 - ◆ **Nagoya Protocol** on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and **Equitable** Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization.
 - ◆ **Cartagena Protocol** on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the global economy report released by NITI Aayog

- ▶ Report emphasized on **'Reshaping Global Finance Architecture for Sustainable Growth'**. ▶

Need of Reshaping Global Finance Architecture:

- ⊖ **Fragmented global financial architecture:** Current global system is contributing to **disparities** in **economic recovery** between developed and developing regions.
 - ◆ Global debt architecture is informal and inefficient, with many low-income countries in or nearing a debt crisis.
- ⊖ **Finance Requirement:** There is need of USD 3 trillion over the next decade to **finance green growth**.
 - ◆ Poor mobilisation of private resources.

▶ Recommendations:

- ⊖ **Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs):** Reforming their structure to improve **capital mobilisation, better project implementation** and making **sustainable infrastructure** an asset class.
- ⊖ **Establishing multilateral creditor club:** For managing **debt sustainably** in a transparent manner.
- ⊖ **Flexibility Missions:** Countries in Global South need them as they will provide them with the means to adapt and innovate in response to impacts of climate change.
- ⊖ **Expand bilateral swap lines** and IMF contingency lines to make capital flows safer.
 - ◆ Also, making Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation rule-based and less discretionary.
- ⊖ **Other long-term solutions:** Creating resilience funds, promoting circular economies, joint technological development, enhancing green energy security and transition partnerships.

West Bengal tops acid attack cases for third year in a row: Crime in India Report 2022

- Report was released by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**.
- Most of the victims are girls, many below the age of 18, who have rejected marriage proposals (226th report of **Law Commission of India**).
- **Initiatives Taken to Prevent Acid Attacks:**
 - ⊕ **Laws:** Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 inserted **section 326A** (Voluntarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid, etc.) and **326B (Attempt to acid attack)** in **Indian Penal Code**.
 - ⊕ **Regulation of Acid sale: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** issued **directions** to all states on how to regulate acid sales.
 - ◆ For instance, maintaining logbook (without it, over-the-counter sale is not allowed).
 - ◆ These direction are issued under **Model Poisons Possession and Sale Rules, 2013** under the **Poisons Act, 1919**.
 - ⊕ **Compensation and Rehabilitation:** Payable by the State Government under section 357A and free treatment in hospitals.
- **Challenges in Controlling Attacks despite Stringent Laws:**
 - ⊕ **Easy Availability:** Sale is poorly regulated by the states.
 - ⊕ **Low Conviction rate:** 35.9% including other incidents of hurts.
 - ⊕ **Non-uniformity of laws:** It varies from one States/UT's to other.

Government of India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$250 million loan for Industrial Corridor Development in India

- \$250 million policy-based loan will **support industrial corridor development (Subprogramme 2)** to-
 - ⊕ **Develop alternative financing solutions**, such as green finance for industrial cluster development;
 - ⊕ **Improve industrial workplace safety** and integrate environment and climate change practices.
- This loan builds on **Subprogramme 1 loan of \$250 million approved by ADB in October 2021** to strengthen policy frameworks for **National Industrial Corridor Programme (NICP)**.
 - ⊕ ADB (HQ: Manila, Philippines) is a **multilateral financial institution** that is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and Pacific.
- **Industrial corridors** offer effective **integration between industry and infrastructure**, leading to overall economic and social development.
- **Significance of Industrial Corridors**
 - ⊕ Position India as a **strong player in Global Value Chain** and **enhance India's competitiveness in manufacturing** by creation of quality infrastructure.
 - ⊕ Create **better jobs** and contribute to **alleviation of poverty in corridor states**.
- NICP is aimed to **development of futuristic industrial cities in India** which can **compete with best manufacturing and investment destinations** in world.
 - ⊕ Government has approved **development of 11 Industrial Corridors with 32 Projects** in four phases as part of NICP.
 - ⊕ These Corridors will be **implemented through National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust**.

Also in News



Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)

- RBI tightens norms to prevent evergreening of loans via investments in AIFs.
- AIFs means any **fund established or incorporated in India** which is a **privately pooled investment vehicle** which **collects funds from sophisticated investors**, whether Indian or foreign, for investing.
- Three Categories of AIFs**
- **Category I: Investment in start-up, social ventures, small & medium enterprises (SME) etc.** E.g. **Venture capital funds, SME Funds etc.**
- ⊕ **Category II: Investment in equity and debt securities.** E.g. **Real estate funds, Private equity funds etc.**
- ⊕ **Category III: Investment aimed at short-term returns** achieved
 - ⊕ by employing complex trading strategies. E.g. **Hedge funds, Private Investment in Public Equity (PIPE) Fund** etc.



Tropospheric Emissions Monitoring of Pollution (TEMPO) Satellite

- NASA's TEMPO satellite monitors air pollution hourly over North America.
- TEMPO is NASA's **first Earth-observation satellite in geostationary orbit**.
 - ⊕ It allows scientists to **monitor air pollutants and their emission sources from space** more comprehensively than ever before.
 - ⊕ Among the pollutants tracked by TEMPO will be **nitrogen dioxide, formaldehyde, sulfur dioxide and ozone**.
 - ⊕ TEMPO's **monitoring range extends from Canada's oil sands to Yucatán Peninsula** and across Atlantic to Pacific Ocean.
 - ⊕ Data gathered by TEMPO will be **shared with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Environmental Protection Agency** to enhance air quality forecasting.



Monkeypox (Mpox)

- WHO warned an epidemic of Mpox in Democratic Republic of Congo could spread internationally.
- Mpox is a **viral zoonotic illness caused by monkeypox virus**, a species of **genus Orthopoxvirus**.
 - It was **first discovered in 1958** when two outbreaks of a pox-like disease occurred in colonies of monkeys kept for research. Primarily occurs in **tropical rainforest areas of Central and West Africa**.
 - Transmitted to humans through physical contact with someone who is infectious, with contaminated materials, or with infected animals.**
 - Common symptoms:** Skin rash or mucosal lesions, fever, headache, muscle aches, and swollen lymph nodes.



Gelephu Smartcity Project

- Bhutan is planning to build an **international city- Gelephu Special Administrative Region-** that will connect its **border with Assam**.
 - It is being projected as an **“economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India’s north-eastern States”**.
- Government of India** also agreed to build **first India-Bhutan railway line to Gelephu**, which would also **connect with roadways and border trading and crossing points** into Assam and West Bengal.
 - Over time, it would **provide Bhutan access to Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Singapore**.



Terms of Trade (ToT)

- ToT for Indian agriculture have recorded significant improvement in the last decade and a half.
- About ToT:**
 - ToT for farmers is the **ratio between Indices of Prices Received (IPR) and Indices of Prices Paid (IPP)**.
 - A **ratio above one (or 100%)** implies **favorable pricing power**, in terms of what farmers sell versus what they buy.
 - A ToT **ratio below one** indicates **unfavorable conditions** of exchange.



JN.1 Variant

- First case of a person infected with **JN.1 variant of Sars-CoV-2** was reported in India.
 - Sars-CoV-2 virus was responsible for Covid-19 pandemic.
- About JN.1 Variant:**
 - It is a sub-variant of **Sublineage BA.2.86** (also known as Pirola), is an off-shoot of the widely circulating **Omicron variant**.
 - Variant is a **genome** (genetic code) that may contain one or more mutations.
 - World Health Organization (WHO)** has classified it as a variant of interest.
 - These are strains that are worrying enough to trigger stepped up investigations of the variant by countries, like laboratory studies.



Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)

- Recently, MPEDA organized training on value-added fish products.
- About MPEDA:**
 - Works under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
 - It is a **statutory body** under the **MPEDA Act, 1972**.
 - Purpose:** Promotion of export of marine products.
 - Important Functions:**
 - Developing and regulating off-shore** and deep-sea fishing,
 - Registering fishing vessels,
 - Fixing of **standards and specifications** for marine products, etc.



Operation Prosperity Guardian

- United States has launched Operation Prosperity Guardian.
- About Operation:**
 - It is **multinational security initiative** under structure of existing **Combined Task Force 153 (CTF 153)**.
 - CTF-153 was set up in 2022 to improve maritime security in Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden.
 - It brings together countries including United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Seychelles, Spain, etc.
 - It was launched in the backdrop of escalation in attack on **commercial ships** such as recent **hijack of ship by Houthi’s** (key party in Yemen Civil war).

Places in News



Iceland (Capital: Reykjavik)

- After weeks of intense earthquake activity, a volcano has erupted on Reykjanes peninsula in Iceland.
- Political features**
 - Island country** located in **North Atlantic Ocean**.
 - A **member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** since its foundation in 1949.
 - Its coastline meets **Greenland Sea (north), Norwegian Sea (east), Atlantic Ocean (south and west), and Denmark Strait (northwest)** which separates it from Greenland.
- Geographical features**
 - Highest point:** Hvannadals Peak.
 - Longest River:** The Þjórsá River.
 - Located on Mid-Atlantic Ridge** which results in volcanoes reaching deep into unstable interior of Earth.

