

➤ **UNSC, established by UN Charter in 1945, is one of the six principal organs of UN with a primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.**

⊕ UNSC is composed of **15 members**: 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members. (refer image) ⊕ Each Member has **one vote**.

⊕ Under UN Charter, **all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.** ⊕

Security Council has **power to make binding decisions on member states.**

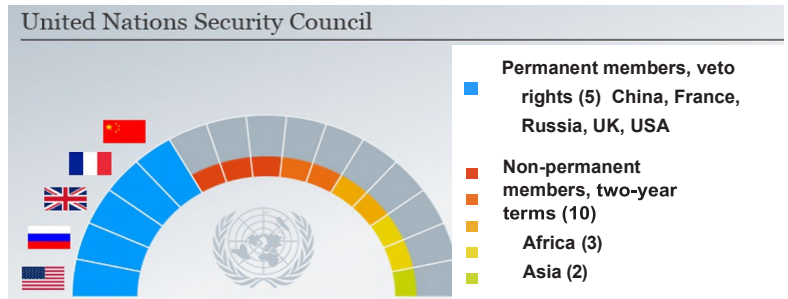
➤ **Need for UNSC Reforms**

⊕ Security Council **retains same five permanent members since its creation in 1945** and does not reflect contemporary reality.

⊕ Council paralysis driven by **geopolitical rivalry amongst permanent members and misuse of Veto power.** Example: Russia has vetoed UNSC resolutions on Ukraine.

⊕ **Inadequate regional representation** highlighted by lack of permanent members from either Africa or Latin America.

⊕ UNSC decisions (resolutions) are binding on all member states **encroaching sovereignty of states.**



➤ **India's key demand on reforms**

⊕ **Abolition of veto.**

⊕ **Equitable geographical representation** of every region.

⊕ **Expansion in both permanent and non-permanent memberships.**

⊕ **Permanent membership to G4 members** (Germany, Brazil, Japan and India).

World's first white rhinoceros In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) pregnancy could save subspecies

➤ Scientists have announced the **first successful embryo transfer in white rhinoceros using IVF method** that could save **Critically endangered northern white rhino subspecies**

⊕ **Bio-banks** store biological samples (cell, tissues etc.) for research and as backup resource to preserve genetic diversity.

⊕ **Biosynthesis** creates substitutes for animal-derived products like safer fungicides from printed DNA to protect endangered species.



⊕ **Gene drive** can be harnessed to eliminate invasive species like rats with high efficiency and minimal harm to native wildlife.

➤ **About Rhino**

⊕ **Five species of rhino**: 2 African (White Rhino, Black Rhino) and 3 Asian (Greater One Horned Rhino (Indian rhino), Sumatran Rhino, and Javan Rhino).

⊕ **Threat**: Habitat loss, poaching for horn, climate change etc.

Difference between White Rhino and Indian Rhino

Features	White Rhino (African Rhino)	Indian Rhino (Asian Rhino)
		
Size	➤ Second-largest land mammals after elephants	➤ Largest of all Asian rhino species
Appearance	➤ Barrel-shaped with a flat back ➤ 2 Horns ➤ Wallow in mud	➤ Knobby skin that appears to be armor-plated ➤ One Horn ➤ Good swimmers
Habitat	➤ Long and short grass savannah areas in grasslands	➤ Tropical and Subtropical Grasslands, Savannas, and Shrub-lands
Distribution	➤ Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda etc.	➤ India (Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh), Nepal etc.
Conservation status	➤ Near threatened (IUCN) ➤ (Southern white rhino subspecies is Near threatened)	➤ Vulnerable (IUCN) ➤ Schedule I (Wildlife Protection Act, 1972)

UNCTAD raises alarm on Global Trade Disruptions

- ▶ UNCTAD said that recent attacks on ships in the **Red Sea**, geopolitical tensions in **Black Sea** and impacts of climate change on **Panama Canal**, is affecting key trade routes.
 - ⊕ **Panama Canal is grappling with unprecedented drought** due to combined effect of climate change and periodic El Niño events, resulting in **36% reduction in total transit**.
- ▶ **Global Implications**
 - ⊕ **Container ship transit:** Decline in container, tanker, and gas carrier transits due to surge in spot freight rates, insurance premiums, etc.
 - ◆ **Increased transit time and cost** due to rerouting of ships from Suez and Panama Canal.
 - ⊕ **Geo-Economic:** Reshaping established trade patterns and substantial shift in oil and grain trades.
 - ◆ Prolonged interruptions pose direct threat to **global supply chains**, raising the risk of delayed deliveries and higher costs.
 - ◆ **Surge in energy prices**, global food prices, etc.
 - Environmental:** Increased carbon footprint of maritime shipping.
- ▶ **Impact on India**
 - Energy insecurity:** India imports around 85% of its petroleum requirements.
 - International connectivity:** Impact on projects like **India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, etc.
 - Other impacts:** Trade disruption as European Union is India's 2nd largest trading partner (2022), risk of inflation, etc.



Measures taken

- ▶ **Operation Prosperity Guardian** led by USA (India is not a member).
- ▶ **Indian Navy systematically amped up surveillance in the region.**
- ▶ **Diplomatic outreach** to crucial regional players including Iran.

Prime Minister launched citizen-centric information and technology initiatives during Diamond Jubilee celebration of Supreme Court

- ▶ These include
 - ⊕ **Digital Supreme Court Reports (Digi SCR)** will make Supreme Court judgments available to citizens of country free of cost and in electronic format.
 - ⊕ **Digital Courts 2.0 under e-Courts project** to make court records available to Judges of district courts in electronic form and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for transcribing speech to text on a real-time basis.
 - ⊕ **A new website of Supreme Court**, available in both **English and Hindi language**, redesigned with a user-friendly interface.
 - ⊕ Rs. 800 crore approved for **expansion of Supreme Court building complex**.
 - ◆ Since 2014, government has disbursed **more than Rs. 7,000 crore for upgradation of physical infrastructure of courts**.
- ▶ E-Court project is an **integrated Mission Mode Project to transform Indian Judiciary** by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enablement of Courts.
 - ⊕ It is a Pan-India Project, **monitored and funded by Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice**, for District Courts across the country.
- ▶ **Importance of ICT in judiciary**
 - ⊕ **Provide transparency in accessibility of information** to its stakeholders.
 - ⊕ **Enhance judicial productivity** to make **justice delivery system affordable and cost-effective. Reduce pendency** by effective managing of cases.

Other initiatives for improving access to justice using technology

- ▶ **National Judicial Data Grid:** Database of orders, judgments, and cases, created as an online platform under e-Courts Project.
- ▶ **National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes** developed for technology enabled process serving and issuing of summons.
- ▶ **AI-powered portal:**
 - ⊕ SUPACE (Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Court's Efficiency).
 - ⊕ SUVAS (Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software), a machine-assisted translation tool trained by AI.

Government plans to Overhaul Accreditation system for Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs)

- Recently, Ministry of Education has accepted the proposed reforms in the accreditation system of HEIs as recommended by **Dr. Radhakrishnan Committee**.
 - Committee was formed to **strengthen Assessment & Accreditation of HEIs** as envisioned in the **National Education Policy, 2020**.
 - Accreditation is assessment of quality of education.
- Key Recommendation of Dr. Radhakrishnan Committee**
 - Composite Assessment System (CAS):** Amalgamate Programme-Accreditation and Institutional-Accreditation.
 - Binary Accreditation:** Either accredited or not accredited.
 - NAAC's Executive Committee has decided to **implement it in next four months**.
 - No new applications will be accepted as per the present methodology thereafter.
 - Maturity-Based Graded Accreditation:** Level 1 to Level 5 to encourage HEIs to evolve in-depth or in-breadth in disciplines.
 - NAAC has decided to implement it by **December 2024**.
 - One Nation One Data Platform:** To ensure integrity and transparency in handing institutional data.
 - "Stakeholder validation":** To effectively integrate stakeholders as part of the accreditation and ranking process.
 - Other proposals:** Enable choice based ranking system for diverse users, bring down periodicity of re-accreditation, etc.

Existing Accreditation System for HEIs

University Grants Commission (UGC) accords recognition to HEIs under the 'UGC Act 1956'.

- NAAC is an autonomous institution of UGC for quality assurance in the functioning of HEIs.
- Multiple agencies** within the ambit of the Union Government (and even some States) have been mandated for **periodic approvals, assessment, accreditation, and ranking of HEIs**.

MoU signed on Modified Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal-ERCP (PKC-ERCP) Link Project

- Union Ministry of Jal Shakti signed a MoU with state governments of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (MP) for implementation of **"Modified PKC- Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP)"**.
- About PKC-ERCP**
 - In 2022, a Special Committee for River Interlinking approved the proposal of modified PKC link project to be integrated with ERCP as a part of **National Perspective Plan**.
 - Aims at optimal utilization of water in **Chambal basin**.
 - Proposes to provide drinking and industrial water in **13 districts of eastern Rajasthan, Malwa and Chambal regions of MP**.
 - ERCP envisaged **intra-basin transfer of water within the Chambal Basin** from Kalisindh, Parvati, Mej and Chakan sub-basins and to water deficit sub-basins of Banas, Gambhiri, Banganga and Parbati.
- River Interlinking** aims to connect river/ water bodies through artificial channels to transfer water from surplus basins to deficit basins.
- Significance of River Interlinking**
 - Disaster management:** Flood and drought mitigation.
 - Economic:** Improved irrigation, Hydro-power generation, inland navigation, etc.
 - Ecological:** Restoration of river ecosystem, support to biodiversity in water deficit basins, etc.
- Concerns with River interlinking:** Loss of biodiversity, displacement of communities, etc.

National Perspective Plan

Formulated in 1980.

- By the then **Ministry of Irrigation** (now Ministry of Jal Shakti) and **Central Water Commission**.
- Envisages inter basin transfer of water to **minimize regional imbalances**.
- Comprises of **30 link projects under two components: Himalayan component (14)**
 - Peninsular component (16)**



Default Bail

- Supreme Court recently held that **statutory right to default bail cannot be availed once the charge-sheet is filed.**
- Court added that default bail **cannot be availed** on grounds of **incomplete submission of charge-sheet** or **pending investigation against other co-accused.**
- Default bail**
 - Default Bail, also known as **compulsive or statutory bail**, is provided under **Section 167(2) of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).**
 - It affords **protection to accused against detention** due to inordinate delays in completion of investigation and filing of charge-sheet within timeframe stipulated by law.



Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

- Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their immediate withdrawal from West African bloc ECOWAS.
- About ECOWAS (HQ: Abuja, Nigeria)**
 - Regional group of 15 members** (including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger) established in **1975 through Treaty of Lagos.**
 - Other members:** Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sénégal and Togo.
 - Aim:** Promote co-operation and integration, leading to establishment of an economic union in West Africa to **raise living standards of its people, enhance economic stability, foster relations-among Member States** and, contribute to progress and development of African continent.



Solid-State Batteries

- Toyota Motor Corp is aiming to roll out next-generation solid-state batteries over next three years.
- In solid state batteries, **liquid electrolyte is replaced by solid-state material** which acts as **both separator and electrolyte.**
 - This **allows ions**, which convey electricity, to **move faster, thus enabling shorter charging times.**
 - It has **higher energy density than a Lithium-ion battery** that uses liquid electrolyte solution.
 - Advantages:** Safer, faster charging, longer life span, operability at extreme temperatures etc.
 - Concerns:** High capital expenditure; cracks in electrodes and electrolyte due to repeated charging etc.



Laughing Gull

- Laughing Gull from North America **spotted at Chittari estuary in Kasaragod district of Kerala for the first time. About**
- Laughing Gull**
 - Known for its **unique laughter-like calls.**
 - Habitat:** Coastal regions, especially common around beaches and salt marshes.
 - Distribution range:** Atlantic and Gulf coasts of **North America; Caribbean** and on both coasts of Central America and northern South America.
 - Appearance:** **Slender, medium-sized gull with long wings;** Medium- gray upper-parts.
 - IUCN Status:** Least Concern.



AstroSat

- India's space telescope AstroSat has, for the first time, measured X-ray polarization from the Cygnus X-1 black hole.
- Cygnus X-1 is one of the first confirmed black hole systems** in our galaxy.
- About AstroSat**
 - Launched by **ISRO in 2015 using PSLV-C30** in Low Earth Orbit.
 - First dedicated Indian astronomy mission** with a **multi-wavelength space observatory.**
 - Five payloads** - Ultraviolet Telescope (UVIT), Cadmium Zinc Telluride Imager (CZTI), etc.
 - Objectives:** Understand the high energy processes in interacting binary systems, Detect new transient X-ray sources in the sky, etc.



SADA TANSEEQ

- It is a **joint military exercise between India and Saudi Arabia.**
- Inaugural edition will be held from January 29 to February 10 in Rajasthan.

Places in News



Jordan (Capital: Amman)

- Recently, there was a drone strike on American troops in northeast Jordan near Syrian border.
- Political features**
 - Arab country** of Southwest Asia.
 - Bounded by **Syria (north), Iraq (east), Saudi Arabia (southeast and south), and Israel (west).**
 - Al-'Aqabah, port town**, is located in southwestern part of Jordan along coasts of Gulf of Aqaba.
- Geographical features**
 - Major Rivers:** Jordan; Yarmouk, Zarqa.
 - Highest point:** Jabal Umm ad Dami.

