

My Notes....

NATIONAL

THE SUDARSHAN SETU

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Sudarshan Setu, India's longest cable-stayed bridge, in the Gulf of Kutch.
- Also known as Signature Bridge, it will link mainland Gujarat with Bet Dwarka island off the Okha coast in Devbhumi Dwarka.
- Gujarat's first sea link Signature Bridge is technically a sea link, a first for Gujarat.

OPEN BOOK EXAM

- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has proposed a pilot study to check the feasibility of open book exams for Classes 9 to 12.
- In an open book exam (OBE), students are allowed to refer to their books and notes to answer questions. OBEs can be either of a restricted type or a free type.
- In a restricted open book assessment, only the study material approved by the exam-conducting authority is allowed during the exam. In a free type, students can bring any material they find relevant.

'BROAD' DEFINITION OF FORESTS

- The Supreme Court has directed governments to follow the "broad and all-encompassing" definition of forest as laid down in its 1996 judgment in the T N Godavarman case until a consolidated record of all kinds of forests across the country is prepared.
- The term 'forest land' will not only include 'forests' as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any area recorded as forest in the Government record irrespective of the ownership."

DONOR GAMETES ARE ALLOWED

- The Centre amended the surrogacy Rules on 21 February 2024 to allow couples to use donor eggs or donor sperm for surrogacy.
- This overturned a previous amendment made in March 2023 that banned the use of donor gametes.

INTERNATIONAL

FIRST GBFF COUNCIL MEETING

- The first council meeting of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) took place in Washington DC, United States.

- The delegates set down rules for the **implementation of GBFF**, which was proposed during **15th Conference of Parties (COP15) of the Convention on Biological Diversity** in 2022.
- Delegates approved the **Resource Allocation Policy and the Project Cycle Policy**, which will help the **council allocate donor funds** when they are available.
- **The GBFF Resource Allocation Policy** gives the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** chief executive the authority to approve projects **worth up to \$5 million**. It also mandates midterm reviews for **all projects above \$2 million**.

ECONOMY

DR SWAMINATHAN COMMISSION

- The **first of the 12 demands** made by protesting Punjab farmers in their email sent to the government was for a law to **guarantee the procurement of all crops for all farmers at MSP**, and for the determination of crop prices as per the recommendations of the **Dr Swaminathan Commission**.
- On 18 November 2004, **the Ministry of Agriculture** constituted a **National Commission on Farmers (NCF)** under **Prof Swaminathan**.
- The reports were deeply **sympathetic to farmers**, and **made several recommendations**, including at **least two on minimum support prices (MSP)**.
- However, **the Swaminathan Commission did not recommend** either a **legal guarantee for MSP** or the **formula for its calculation** that the farmers' unions are now demanding.

PREDATOR DRONES TO INDIA

- The US approved the sale of **31 MQ-9B armed drones to India** at an estimated cost of USD 3.99 billion, an American defence agency announced.
- The **proposed mega drone deal** was announced during the historic **State Visit of Prime Minister in June 2023**.
- **Under the deal**, India will get **31 High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) UAVs**, of which the Navy will get **15 SeaGuardian drones**, while **the Army and the Indian Air Force** will get eight each of the land version – **SkyGuardian**.
- Drones are powered aerial vehicles **that can fly autonomously** or be piloted remotely and can carry a **lethal or nonlethal payload(s)**.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO LAUNCHED INSAT-3DS

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation** was launched **INSAT-3DS meteorological satellite** onboard a **Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV)** from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** in Sriharikota.

- **GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS** is a **significant mission** as it would **monitor land and ocean surfaces** for **weather forecasting** and **disaster warning** as well as to provide **Satellite aided Research and Rescue services (SAR)**.
- The mission was crucial for the **GSLV rocket** nicknamed '**naughty boy**' due to its **inconsistent record**.

ISRO SUCCESSFULLY DE-ORBITS CARTOSAT-2

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** on 16 February 2024 announced the **completion of de-orbiting of Cartosat-2**, the **first of the high-resolution imaging satellites (generation II)**.
- **Cartosat-2** is a **series of remote-sensing satellites**. Since 2005, ISRO has launched **Cartosat-2 satellites** that were primarily used for **mapping purposes** with image resolution capacities ranging from **coarse, medium, and high resolution**.

BHARATGPT GROUP UNVEILS 'HANOOMAN'

- The **BharatGPT group** — led by **IIT Bombay** along with **seven other elite Indian engineering institutes** — announced that it would launch its first ChatGPT-like service **Hanooman**.
- **Backed by Reliance Industries Ltd** and the **Department of Science and Technology**, the group built the '**Hanooman**' series of **Indic language models** in collaboration with **Seetha Mahalaxmi Healthcare (SML)**.

4 ASTRONAUTS FOR GAGANYAAN

- Group Captain **Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair**, Group Captain **Ajit Krishnan**, Group Captain **Angad Pratap**, and Wing Commander **Shubhanshu Shukla** are India's astronauts-designate for **Gaganyaan**, **India's first crewed space mission**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced.
- The **first mission flight Gaganyaan**, the **manned mission**, which will take a **three-member crew** into a **low earth orbit of 400 km altitude** and **return to Earth after three days**.

HIGH-ALTITUDE PSEUDO-SATELLITE VEHICLES

- The **Bengaluru-based National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL)** successfully **flew a prototype** of a **new-generation unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)** that is being seen as a **huge technology breakthrough**.
- It was **no ordinary UAV**. This one **can fly at great heights**, about **20 km from ground**, runs **entirely on solar power**, and can **remain in the air for months on end**.
- The **primary utility of HAPS vehicles** is in the **field of surveillance and monitoring**, but there are other situations, like **disaster management**, wherein it can be very useful.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE BUBONIC PLAGUE IS BACK

- The **bubonic plague is back**. Recently, health officials in Oregon, US confirmed the **first case of bubonic plague** in the state since 2005.
- **The plague** is caused by **Yersinia pestis**, a **zoonotic bacteria**, i.e. **bacteria that can spread between animals and people**. **Y pestis** is usually found in **small animals** and **their fleas**.
- **Plague symptoms can manifest in a number of ways**. **Bubonic plague** specifically refers to cases **where bacteria gets into the lymph nodes**.

OPENAI LAUNCHES SORA

- **OpenAI**, the creator of the revolutionary chatbot **ChatGPT**, has unveiled a **new generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) model** that can **convert a text prompt into video**.
- The model, **called Sora**, can **generate videos up to a minute long** while **maintaining visual quality** and **adherence to the user's prompt**.

INTUITIVE MACHINES' PRIVATE 'ODYSSEUS' MOON LANDER

- **A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida carrying the private **"Odysseus" moon lander** built by **Houston-based Intuitive Machines**.
- The **Nova-C lander** deployed from the lander and is now on its way to the Moon.
- If **Odysseus completes its journey** and **soft lands on the Moon**, it will make it the **first privately-led mission to do so**.