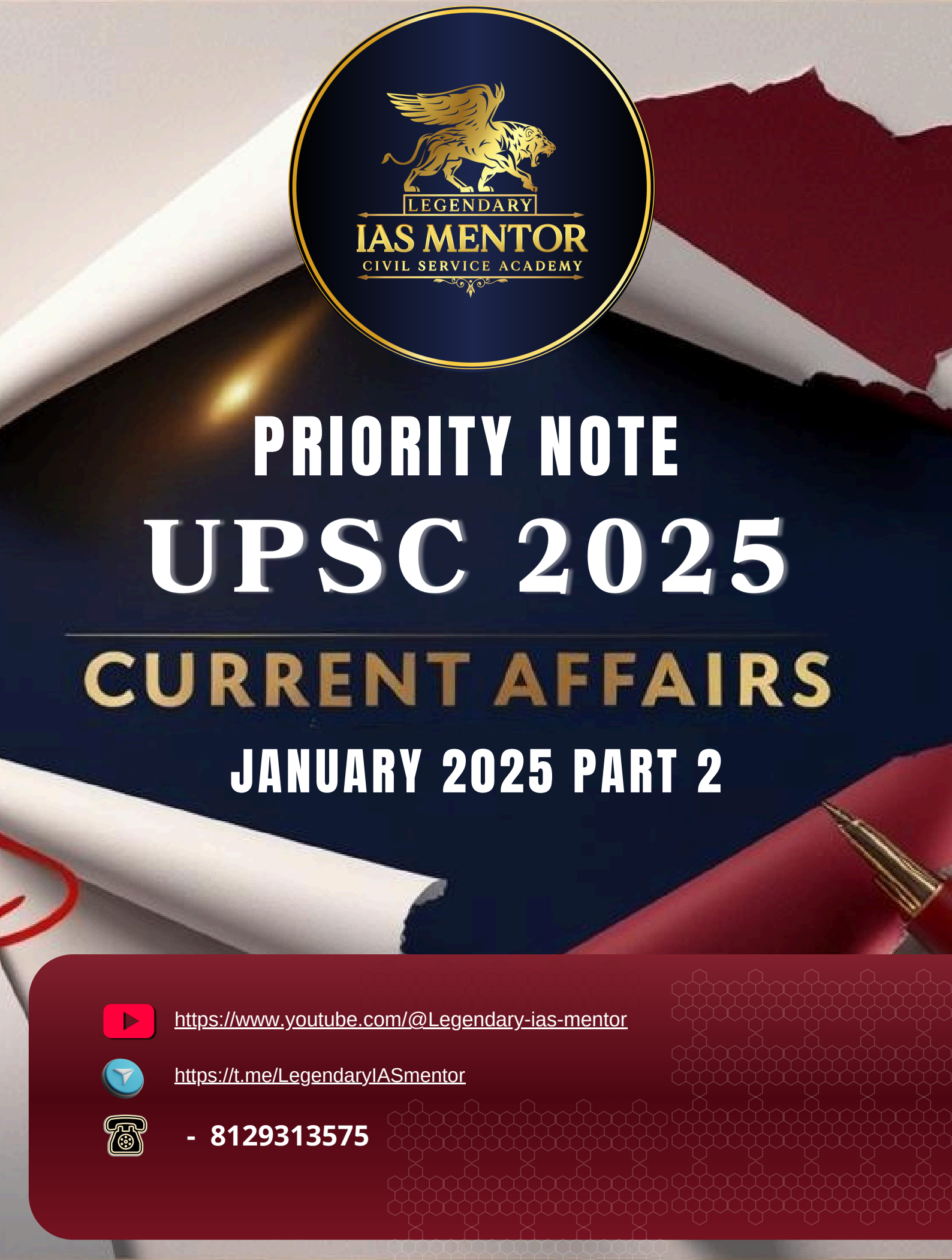

PRIORITY NOTE

UPSC 2025

CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY 2025 PART 2

https://www.youtube.com/@Legendary-ias-mentor

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- 8129313575

National Turmeric Board

Recently, the union Minister for Commerce and Industry inaugurated the National Turmeric Board in New Delhi.

- It will **provide leadership on turmeric related matters**, augment the efforts, and facilitate greater coordination with Spices Board and other Government agencies in development and growth of the turmeric sector.
- **Composition of Board**
    - A **Chairperson** to be appointed by the Central Government.
    - A **Secretary** to be appointed by the Department of Commerce.
    - Members from the Ministry of AYUSH, Departments of Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Commerce & Industry of the Union Government.
    - Representatives from the top two turmeric growing states of **Maharashtra and Telangana** and from the state of Meghalaya. States will be represented on the **Board by rotation.**
    - Select national/state institutions involved in research, representatives of turmeric farmers and exporters.
- **Mandate**
    - The Board will focus on key areas such as **research and development, value addition to turmeric products**, and promoting awareness of the spice's medicinal and essential properties.
    - It will also work on **improving turmeric yield**, enhancing logistics and supply chains, and exploring new international markets for turmeric.
    - Ensuring quality and safety standards for turmeric production and exports will also be a critical aspect of the Board's mandate.
- **Headquarter:** Nizamabad, Telangana

Status of Turmeric in India

- Turmeric, often referred to as **the "Golden Spice,"** holds immense economic potential for Indian farmers, particularly those in 20 states including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, and Meghalaya.
- The **largest producing states** of Turmeric are Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

- The **leading export markets** for Indian Turmeric are Bangladesh, UAE, USA and Malaysia.
- **India is responsible** for over **70% of the world's turmeric production**, with 30 varieties of turmeric being grown in the country.

MUD VOLCANO

A mud volcano eruption in the Caspian Sea created a temporary 'ghost island' in early 2023, only for it to erode away by the end of 2024.

- It is a **small volcano-shaped cone of mud and clay**, of height usually less than a few meters and often a few decimeters.
- The **craters are usually shallow** and may **intermittently erupt mud.**
- These **eruptions continuously rebuild the cones**, which are eroded relatively easily.
- **Some mud volcanoes** are **created by hot spring activity** where large amounts of **gas and** small amounts of **water react chemically with the surrounding rocks** and **form boiling mud.**
    - Variations are the porridge pot (a basin of boiling mud that erodes chunks of the surrounding rock) and the paint pot (a basin of boiling mud that is tinted yellow, green, or blue by minerals from the surrounding rocks).
- **Other mud volcanoes**, entirely of a **non - igneous origin**, **occur only in oil-field regions** that are relatively young and have soft, unconsolidated formations.
    - **Under compactional stress, methane** and related **hydrocarbon gases mixed with mud force their way upward** and burst through to the surface, spewing mud into a conelike shape.
    - Because of the compactional stress and the depth from which the mixture comes, the **mud is often hot** and **may have an accompanying steam cloud.**
- Mud volcanoes are **not real volcanoes** and are **not as hazardous as real volcanoes** since they can only emit warm mud and only very locally (a few hundred meters around them).
- The **largest mud volcanoes** actually do **pose hazards**, but not of the usual volcanic kind. Instead, the **sheer volume of mud** erupted **can flood the landscape, displace people**, and bury infrastructure and agriculture.

- **Approximately 1,000 mud volcanoes** have been identified **on land and in shallow water.**
    - In **Europe and Asia**, mud volcanoes are known to **exist in southeastern Ukraine,Italy, Romania, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, and China**.
    - In North and South America, mud volcanoes have been documented in Alaska, California, the Island of Trinidad, Venezuela, and Colombia.

CENTRAL SUSPECT REGISTRY

Since the launch of the online 'Central suspect registry',the Centre has declined six lakh fraudulent transactions and saved Rs 1,800 crore.

It is an initiative to strengthen **fraud risk management** by creating a registry of identifiers.

- It was created based on the **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal** (NCRP).
- It contains data of 1.4 million cybercriminals linked to financial fraud and various cyber-crimes.
- It has been developed by the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre** (I4C), and can be accessed by states and UTs as well as central investigation and intelligence agencies.
- The registry was developed with collaboration from the banks/financial institutions and using it as a central-level database with consolidated data on cybercrime suspects

HYDROCLIMATE WHIPLASH

According to a study by climate attribution group ClimaMeter, three wildfires that have devastated large parts of Los Angeles city are mainly due to a 'hydroclimate whiplash'.

- It is a rare meteorological condition wherein an **extremely wet season** is **succeeded by** an **extremely dry season.**
    - It's kind of this paradox that as the **atmosphere gets warmer**, both the amount of water vapour in the atmosphere can increase, and the deficit of water vapour in the atmosphere can also increase exponentially.

    - Consequently, as the atmosphere warms, it is able to hold much more water – for a longer period – before it is eventually released as precipitation.
    - It is this relationship **between global warming** and the atmosphere which leads to the **extended periods of dry spells** and more **intense rainfall** when it eventually occurs.
- **Impacts**
    - Increases the number of **droughts and floods.**
    - Fires created by the dry condition exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular diseases through their polluting smoke.
    - **Human health:** Flooding creates conditions for waterborne illnesses such as cholera, leptospirosis
- Such 'hydroclimate whiplash' conditions have increased by 31-66 per cent in three-month periods (sub-seasonal) and by 8-31 per cent in 12-month periods (inter-annual) across the world since the middle of the 20th century.

ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

The government recently re-constituted the Atomic Energy Commission.

- It is the **governing body of** the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE),** Government of India.
- **AEC** was **first set up in August 1948 in the Department of Scientific Research**, which was created a few months earlier in June 1948.
- The **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE**) was **set up on August 3, 1954, under** the **direct charge of the Prime Minister through a Presidential Order**.
    - As per this order, **all businesses** of the Government of India **related to atomic energy** and to the functions of the Central Government **under the Atomic Energy Act, 1948,** were directed to be **transacted in the DAE.**
    - DAE encompasses **all the areas related to power and non-power applications of atomic energy.**
    - The Department has the **mandate of development of nuclear power technology** which includes exploration, identification and processing of uranium resources and atomic minerals,

fabrication of nuclear fuel, production of heavy water, construction and **operation of nuclear power plants**, **nuclear fuel reprocessing** and **waste management**.

- DAE is also responsible for **research and development of fast reactors and fusion technologies,** accelerator and laser technology, **advanced electronics and instrumentation, materials science, biological sciences, etc.**
- As part of **non-power applications of atomic energy**, the Department carries out cutting-edge research and development for the application of isotopes and radiation technologies for health care, food & agriculture, industry, and the environment.

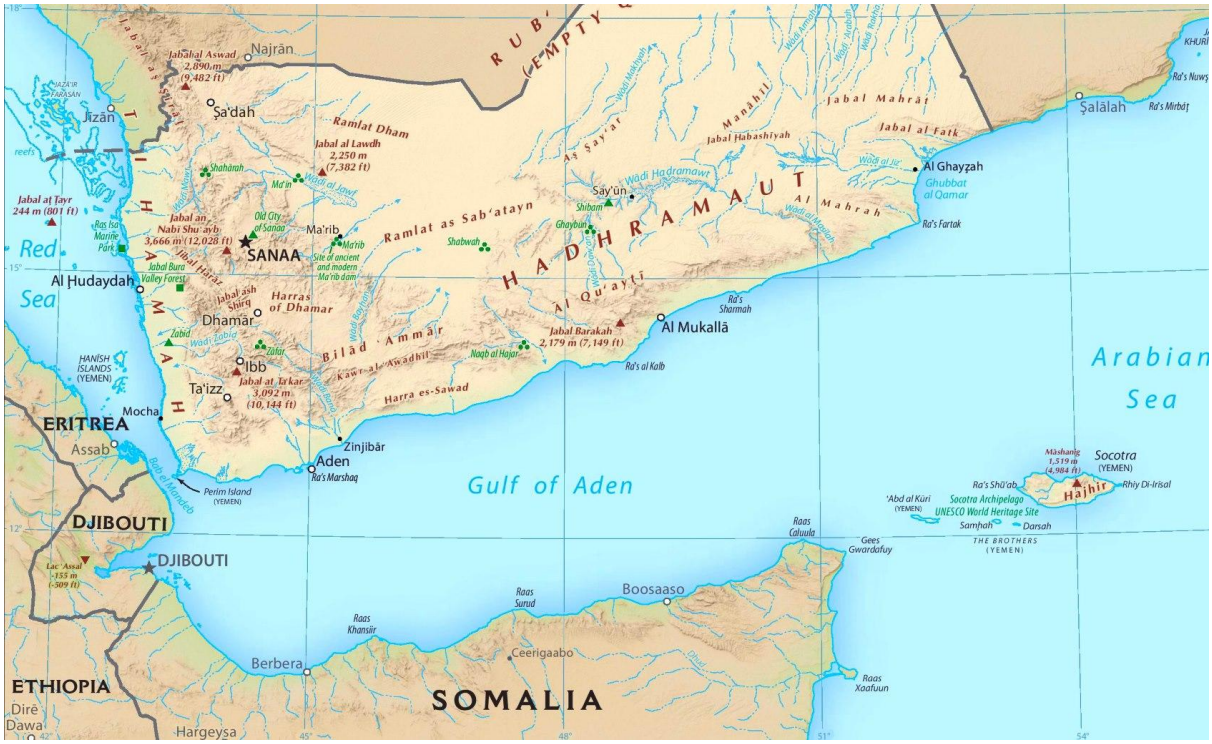
- Subsequently, in accordance with a **government resolution dated March 1, 1958**, the **Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)** was **established in the DAE.**
  - The AEC is **responsible for formulating the policy of the DAE.**
  - The **secretary to the** government of India in **the DAE is ex-officio chairman of the AEC.**
  - The **other members** of the AEC are **appointed** for each calendar year **on the recommendation of the AEC chairman** and **after approval by the Prime Minister**.
  - **Headquarters: Mumbai**, Maharashtra

GULF OF ADEN

Threats in the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and in waters adjacent to the East African countries might increase and the Indian Navy is striving to boost its presence and keep the sea routes safe, Defence Minister said recently.

- It is an **extension of the Indian Ocean**, located **between the Arabian Peninsula** (north) **and the Horn of Africa** (south).
- It **connects** the **Red Sea to the Arabian Sea** and ultimately the Indian Ocean.
- The gulf is named after "**Aden**," a **port city on Yemen's** coast.
- It is approximately 900 km long and 500 km wide and covers roughly 410,000 sq.km.

- It is **bounded** to the south **by Somalia** and the **Socotra Islands (part of Yemen),** north by **Yemen**, east by the **Arabian Sea**, and west by **Djibouti**.
- The gulf is **connected to the Somali Sea** to the south **by the Guardafui Channel**, and **to the Red Sea** on the west **by the Strait of Bab el Mandeb**.
- **In the west,** it **narrows into the Gulf of Tadjoura,near Djibouti.**
- It is **demarcated from** the **Arabian Sea by the Horn of Africa** and the **Socotra Islands.**
- The dominant relief feature of the gulf's terrain is the **Sheba Ridge,an extension of the Indian Ocean ridge system**, which extends **along the middle of the gulf**.
- Compared to the neighbouring Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden has a lower saline content.
- Some of the **major cities** near the gulf include **Aden, Mukalla, Ahnwar,** Balhaf, **Berbera**, Bosaso, and **Djibouti City**.
- **Major Ports:Aden** in Yemen, and **Berbera** and **Bosaso in Somalia.**
- It is also a critical **part of the Suez Canal shipping** route, which connects the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.
- An estimated **11% of seaborne petroleum passes** through the Gulf of Aden en route to the Mediterranean or Arabian Seas.



SCOT MISSION

The Prime Minister recently lauded the Indian space startup Digantara at the success of Mission SCOT.

- **SCOT (Space Camera for Object Tracking) is Digantara's** (an **Indian space startup) inaugural mission** dedicated to **space surveillance.**
- It is one of the **world's first commercial Space Situational Awareness (SSA) satellites**.
- It was **launched aboard SpaceX's Transporter-12 mission.**
- SCOT is **built to track Resident Space Objects (RSOs).**
- It is purpose-built to monitor smaller RSOs, deliver higher revisit rates, and provide better tracking accuracy—filling a gap left by current systems.
- SCOT will be **deployed in a sun-synchronous orbit**, allowing it to t**rack objects in Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** with more efficiency than existing sensors, which are restricted by fields of view (FoV), weather conditions, and geographic limitations.
- Unlike these traditional systems, SCOT will ensure surveillance of objects as small as 5 cm orbiting the Earth to ensure safer space operations.
- **Backed by Aditya Birla Ventures and SIDBI**, it aims to **support national security and space operations.**
- **Alongside Digantara, two other Indian space startups** have **provided their satellites on SpaceX's Transporter-12 rocket** that lifted off from Vandenberg, California, US.
- **Bengaluru-based Pixxel deployed** the **first three satellites of its Firefly constellation**, **alongside ELEVATION-**1, a satellite for US-based Almagest Space Corporation, which was wholly **designed and developed by Hyderabad-based XDLINX Spacelabs**.

TYPES OF ORBITS (VALUE ADDITION)

1. Low Earth Orbit (LEO)

- Altitude: 180 km – 2,000 km
- Time to Orbit Earth: ~90-120 minutes
- Examples: International Space Station (ISS), Starlink satellites
- Applications:
  - ✅ Earth observation
  - ✅ Remote sensing
  - ✅ Communication (e.g., satellite internet)

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2. Medium Earth Orbit (MEO)

- Altitude: 2,000 km – 35,786 km
- Time to Orbit Earth: ~2-12 hours
- Examples: GPS, Galileo, GLONASS satellites
- Applications:
  - ✅ Navigation (GPS)
  - ✅ Communication
  - ✅ Science missions

3. Geostationary Orbit (GEO)

- Altitude: 35,786 km
- Time to Orbit Earth: 24 hours (synchronous with Earth's rotation)
- Examples: Weather satellites (INSAT), Communication satellites (GSAT)
- Applications:
  - ✅ TV broadcasting
  - ✅ Weather monitoring
  - ✅ Military surveillance

4. Sun-Synchronous Orbit (SSO)

- Altitude: 600-800 km (LEO)
- Time to Orbit Earth: ~90-100 minutes
- Special Feature: Passes over the same point on Earth at the same local time daily.

- Examples: Earth observation satellites (Cartosat, Landsat)
- Applications:
  - ✅ Climate monitoring
  - ✅ Spy satellites
  - ✅ Remote sensing

5. Polar Orbit

- Altitude: 200-1,000 km (LEO)
- Inclination: 90° (passes over both poles)
- Examples: NOAA weather satellites
- Applications:
  - ✅ Global mapping
  - ✅ Reconnaissance
  - ✅ Scientific research

EXERCISE LA PEROUSE

The indigenously designed and built guided missile destroyer INS Mumbai is participating in the Exercise LA PEROUSE.

- It is the **fourth edition** of the multinational exercise.
- **Participating organizations:** This edition will witness participation of personnel/ surface and sub-surface assets from various maritime partners including **Royal Australian Navy**, **French Navy, Royal Navy, United States** Navy, **Indonesian** Navy, Royal **Malaysian Navy**, Republic of Singapore Navy and Royal Canadian Navy.
- It aims to **develop common Maritime Situational Awareness** by enhancing the cooperation in the field of **maritime surveillance, maritime interdiction operations** and **air operations** along with the conduct of progressive training and information sharing.
- The exercise provides an opportunity for like-minded navies to develop closer links in planning, coordination and information sharing for enhanced tactical interoperability.

- The exercise will **witness complex and advanced multi-domain exercises** including surface warfare, anti-air warfare, air-defence, cross deck landings and tactical manoeuvres, as also the constabulary missions such as VBSS (Visit, Board, Search and Seizure) operations.
- Participation of the Indian Navy in the exercise showcases the high levels of synergy, coordination and interoperability between the like-minded navies and their commitment to a rules-based international order in the maritime domain.
- This visit is in consonance with India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) to enhance maritime cooperation and collaboration for safer and secure Indo-Pacific Region.

SAGAR DOCTRINE

The **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) Doctrine** is India's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean region, first articulated by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015** during a visit to Mauritius.

Key Pillars of the SAGAR Doctrine:

1. **Safeguarding India's National Interests**
    - Ensuring **maritime security** and **freedom of navigation** in the Indian Ocean.
    - Combating **piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing**.
2. **Strengthening Maritime Partnerships**
    - Enhancing cooperation with **Indian Ocean littoral states** (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Bangladesh, Myanmar, etc.).
    - Engaging with major maritime players like the **US, France, Japan, and Australia**.
3. **Promoting Blue Economy**
    - Encouraging sustainable development of **marine resources, fisheries, and oceanic trade**.
    - Strengthening regional trade and connectivity.
4. **Disaster Response and Humanitarian Assistance**
    - Providing swift disaster relief to neighbors (e.g., India's aid after the 2015 Nepal earthquake and 2019 Mozambique cyclone).
    - Supporting island nations vulnerable to climate change.

5. **Countering Chinese Influence**
    - China's **String of Pearls strategy** (developing ports in Gwadar, Hambantota, Djibouti, etc.) is a concern for India.
    - India counters this through projects like **Sagarmala, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and Quad cooperation**.

Impact and Developments

- India has deepened defense and maritime ties with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, and Mauritius.
- The **Indo-Pacific construct** now integrates SAGAR with broader strategies like **Quad and ASEAN** engagements.
- SAGAR is also linked with India's **Act East Policy**, expanding its influence in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

RATNAGIRI

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has discovered significant Buddhist remains during renewed excavations at the historic Ratnagiri site in Jajpur district adding another chapter to its 1,200-year-old legacy.

- **Location:** It is located 100 km northeast of Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- The site stands on a **hill between Birupa and Brahmani rivers** and is Odisha's most famous — and the most excavated Buddhist site.
- It is part of the famous **Diamond Triangle** of Odisha along with Udaygiri and Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri – translated as the 'Hills of Jewels'
- **Time Period:** Experts date Ratnagiri to the **5th and 13th Century**, although the peak period of construction is dated between the 7th and 10th centuries.
- It was a center for **Mahayana and Tantrayana** (also known as Vajrayana) Buddhism.
- There are some studies that suggest that the renowned Chinese **Buddhist monk and traveller, Hiuen Tsang**, who visited Odisha, during 638-639 AD.
- It was **first documented** as a **historical site in 1905.**
- So far ASI have unearthed a **colossal Buddha head, a massive palm, an ancient wall and inscribed Buddhist relics**, all of which are estimated to date back 8th and 9th Century AD.

Buddhism in Odisha and links with Southeast Asian countries

- In Odisha, Buddhism is stated to have particularly flourished under the **Bhaumakara dynasty**, which ruled parts of the state in **between the 8th and 10th Century.**
- **Mauryan Emperor Ashoka** is believed to have **invaded Kalinga in 261 BC** but, deeply moved by the bloodshed in the war, he eventually embraced Buddhism.
- Odisha has long enjoyed **maritime and trade links** with Southeast Asian countries: according to historians, pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, silk, camphor, gold, and jewellery were popular items of trade between the ancient kingdom of **Kalinga and Southeast Asia.**
- The state also annually holds **Baliyatra, literally 'voyage to Bali'** – a seven-day festival to commemorate the 2,000-year-old maritime and cultural links between Kalinga and Bali and other South and Southeast Asian regions such as Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Burma (Myanmar) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

NVS-02 SATELLITE

India's space agency,Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has rolled out its Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) rocket, carrying the NVS-02 satellite, as part of the NavIC navigation system.

About NVS-02 Satellite

- It is the **second of the five second-generation satellites** developed by the space agency to replace the existing satellites in the country's navigation constellation **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System.**
- It will be placed in a **Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit** by **GSLV-F15.**
    - **NVS-01** was launched on board GSLV-F12 **in 2023** and for the first time, an indigenous atomic clock was flown in NVS-01.

NVS-02 Satellite Features

- It weighs 2,250 kg and has a power capacity of around 3 kW.
- It is configured with navigation payload in **three frequency bandsL1, L5 and S** bands in addition to ranging payload in C-band like its predecessor-NVS-01

- It also has a precise **atomic clock** called the **Rubidium Atomic Frequency Standard (RAFS)** for accurate timekeeping.
- It has a longer **lifespan of 12 years** and also equipped with indigenously developed, more accurate atomic clocks.
- It will replace an **older NavIC satellite, IRNSS-1E,** and be positioned at 111.75°E in orbit.
- It is designed, developed, and integrated at the **U R Satellite Centre (URSC).**

NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)

NavIC is **India's regional satellite navigation system**, developed by **ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation)** to provide accurate positioning services over India and the surrounding region. It is India's answer to GPS, similar to other global navigation systems like **GPS (USA), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (EU), and BeiDou (China)**.

Key Features of NavIC:

Coverage:

- Provides accurate **positioning services over India** and **1,500 km beyond its borders**.
- Offers **regional coverage** instead of global coverage like GPS or Galileo.

Satellite Constellation:

- Consists of **7 satellites** in orbit, with **2 additional backup satellites**.
- **3 satellites** in **Geostationary Orbit (GEO)** (fixed over India).
- **4 satellites** in **Geosynchronous Orbit (GSO)** (inclined, covering wider areas).
- Operates at **1,400 km altitude**.

Accuracy:

- **Better than GPS for India**, with an accuracy of **under 5 meters**.
- GPS typically offers **10-20 meters accuracy** in civilian applications.

Services Offered:

- **Standard Positioning Service (SPS):** Free for civilians and commercial users.

- **Restricted Service (RS):** Encrypted for military and strategic applications.

Applications of NavIC:

✅ **Navigation & Transportation:** Used in **smartphones, cars, and maritime navigation**.
✅ **Disaster Management:** Helps in **flood and cyclone warning systems**.
✅ **Fisheries & Agriculture:** Provides location services to **fishermen and farmers**.
✅ **Military Use:** Secured access for **defense and security operations**.

NavIC vs GPS:

Feature	NavIC	GPS
Coverage	India & nearby regions	Global
Satellites	7 (operational)	31+
Accuracy	~5 meters (India)	~10-20 meters
Military Use	Encrypted for defense	US-controlled
Developed by	ISRO (India)	US Department of Defense

Recent Developments:

🔹 **NavIC-enabled smartphones** (e.g., Xiaomi, OnePlus, Realme) are now in the market.
🔹 The **Indian government has mandated NavIC support** in smartphones and vehicles.
🔹 Future plans include **expanding NavIC to global coverage** like GPS.

MSME (TEAM) INITIATIVE

Recently, the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME), in partnership with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), has announced the launch of an initiative to enable small and micro enterprises to join ONDC.

- It has been launched under the "**Raising and Accelerating MSME Productivity** (RAMP)" Programme.
- It is aimed to enable **MSMEs to embrace digital commerce** and expand their market presence.
- **TEAM Initiative Funding:** The initiative has a budget of ₹277.35 crore over **3 years.**
- **Targeted beneficiaries:** It will focus on **onboarding 5 lakh micro and small enterprises**, with 50 per cent of these being **women-led businesses.**
- It will focus on
    - Connecting MSMEs with the ONDC Network.
    - Provides access to digital storefronts, integrated payment systems, and logistics support.
    - Reduce operational barriers and helps **businesses tap into wider customer bases.**
    - It emphasizes formalizing operations and **establishing digital transaction histories**, which will enhance the credibility and trust of participating MSMEs.
- Over **150 workshops** will be held across **Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities**, targeting key MSME clusters, with special attention to women and SC/ST-led enterprises.
- **TEAM Initiative Significance:** These workshops will guide businesses through the process of joining the ONDC Network, creating compliant digital catalogues, and using the ecosystem to its full potential.

ONDC PLATFORM

The **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** is an Indian government-backed initiative aimed at democratizing digital commerce and reducing platform monopolies. Launched by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, ONDC seeks to create an **open, decentralized network** that connects buyers, sellers, and logistics providers across different e-commerce platforms.

Key Features of ONDC

1. **Open Protocols** – Unlike traditional e-commerce platforms like Amazon or Flipkart, ONDC is **not a marketplace** but a network that enables interoperability across various platforms.
2. **Decentralization** – Sellers and buyers can interact across platforms without being locked into a single e-commerce ecosystem.
3. **Inclusivity** – It allows small businesses, MSMEs, and local retailers to **digitize their operations** and reach more customers.
4. **Interoperability** – Any buyer app (e.g., Paytm, PhonePe) can connect with seller-side apps (e.g., Mystore, SellerApp) to facilitate transactions.
5. **Lower Costs** – Since ONDC eliminates intermediaries and commissions charged by dominant marketplaces, it enables better pricing for sellers and customers.
6. **Logistics and Payments Integration** – Logistics and financial services are also plugged into the network, making transactions smoother.

Impact on India's E-commerce Landscape

- **Empowers Local Businesses:** Reduces dependency on big platforms like Amazon and Flipkart.
- **Boosts Digital Inclusion:** Brings small merchants online and gives them access to a broader customer base.
- **Competitive Pricing:** Reduces costs for businesses by cutting out middlemen, leading to better pricing for consumers.
- **Government Push for Digital India:** Aligns with the Indian government's goal of a more open and competitive digital ecosystem.

ONDC vs. Traditional E-commerce

Feature	ONDC	Traditional E-commerce (Amazon, Flipkart)
Platform Control	Decentralized	Centralized
Seller Fees	Lower	Higher (Commission-based)
Seller Onboarding	Open to all	Restricted
Customer Choice	More options across platforms	Limited to one platform's ecosystem

Current Status

ONDC has already been **rolled out in multiple cities** across India and has gained traction in **retail, food delivery, grocery, and mobility services**. Companies like **Paytm, PhonePe, Dunzo, and Ola** have integrated with ONDC, and the government aims to expand its scope further.

ONDC-MoMSME Initiative: GS3 Analysis

1. Economic Development & MSME Growth

- **Formalization of the MSME Sector:** The initiative promotes **digital onboarding**, enhancing the **visibility, credibility, and financial inclusion** of MSMEs.
- **Market Expansion & Competitiveness:** MSMEs can transcend **geographical barriers**, integrate with **digital commerce**, and compete with larger enterprises.
- **Job Creation & Women Empowerment:** With **50% targeted at women-led businesses**, this initiative promotes **gender-inclusive entrepreneurship** and enhances **employment opportunities**.

2. Digital Transformation & E-commerce Revolution

- **Enhancing Digital Infrastructure:** MSMEs will gain access to **digital storefronts, integrated payment systems, and logistics support**, reducing **operational bottlenecks**.

- **Decentralization of E-commerce:** Unlike **monopolized marketplaces** (e.g., Amazon, Flipkart), ONDC provides a **level playing field**, fostering **competition and affordability**.
- **Cybersecurity & Data Protection:** The **formalization of digital transactions** requires robust **cybersecurity measures**, aligning with **Digital India objectives**.

3. Financial Inclusion & Access to Credit

- **Building Credit Histories:** Digital transaction records can enhance MSMEs' **creditworthiness**, facilitating access to **institutional finance, loans, and government schemes**.
- **Reducing Informality:** This initiative integrates **small businesses into the formal economy**, enabling participation in schemes like **MUDRA, CGTMSE, and SIDBI support programs**.

4. Social Justice & Inclusive Growth

- **Empowerment of Marginalized Groups:** Special focus on **women and SC/ST entrepreneurs** aligns with **affirmative action policies**, promoting **economic justice and financial independence**.
- **Geographical Equity:** The **150+ workshops** in **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities** ensure that rural and semi-urban MSMEs **benefit from digital commerce**, reducing regional disparities.

5. Challenges & Way Forward

Challenges:

- **Digital Literacy & Adoption Barriers:** Many MSMEs lack awareness of **e-commerce strategies, digital marketing, and compliance requirements**.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** In **rural and remote areas**, inadequate **internet penetration and logistics support** may hinder adoption.
- **Competition from Established Marketplaces:** Dominant platforms might **resist decentralization**, posing **regulatory and operational challenges**.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthening Digital Literacy:** Implementing **capacity-building programs** for MSMEs to understand **pricing strategies, data analytics, and financial management**.
- **Enhancing Infrastructure:** Expanding **internet connectivity, fintech penetration, and logistics** to support seamless **e-commerce operations**.
- **Regulatory Support:** Ensuring **fair competition, data privacy, and grievance redressal mechanisms** to build trust in the ONDC ecosystem.

Conclusion

The ONDC-MoMSME initiative under the **RAMP programme** aligns with **AatmaNirbhar Bharat, Digital India, and MSME development goals**. By promoting **digital commerce, financial inclusion, and regional economic growth**, this initiative has the potential to transform India's **MSME landscape**, fostering **inclusive and sustainable development**. However, **policy support, capacity-building, and infrastructure development** remain critical to its success.

****

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All thanks to Legendary IAS Mentor for their well curated prelims test series. The questions are well conformed to the original prelims standards. I had faced difficulty in cracking the prelims in my earlier attempts. But each test followed by discussion and individual mentorship helped me strengthen the prelims game through logic training and content enrichment.

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